

# Mediations

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## Art and Society

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The studies collected in this volume cover fifty years of my development.<sup>1</sup> Thoughts dealing with the theory of literary history were written and published in 1910, while the manuscripts of the *Aesthetics* went to print around 1960. The half century reflected here shows not only my individual development, though it primarily shows that in an immediate sense, but also that of the age. And yet, even individual development can only be truly understood in terms of the struggle with, the acceptance of, further development or rejection of the currents of the age.

The first pieces, "The History of the Development of Modern Drama," and the summing up of its methodology, were in clear opposition to the then prevailing trends in literary history as practiced in Hungary. Geza Feleky, in his criticism of the book, referred to the fact that it proved equally uncomfortable for the official view as for the opposition. At that time the dominant official views were to a very great extent those of Zsolt Beóthy; the university regarded the invitation extended to the Taineist positivist Frigyes Riedl as an almost revolutionary deed. The majority of the literary opposition were under Taine's influence. Also positivist, though somewhat more modern, was the theory of literature and art associated with the magazine *Huszadik Század* (*Twentieth Century*). The positivism of the *Nyugat* (*West*) writers, on the other hand, often ended up in subjectivist impressionism, under the influence of French critics, and also of Alfred Kerr. My essays at that time were in sharp opposition to all these trends. It would be a mistake, however, to connect the endeavor to find an objective social foundation too closely with Marxism, though the influence of Marxism can be detected in it. A proper scholarly use of my knowledge of Marx was greatly influenced by the philosophy and sociology of Simmel, who was experimenting with the fitting in of certain aspects of Marxism into the German *Geisteswissenschaft* which was then in its early stages. The bourgeois idealist character of my writings even showed itself in the fact that it took as its starting point not the immediate and real connections between society and literature, but rather attempted to conceptualize and make conscious a synthesis of the academic disciplines — sociology and aesthetics —

which dealt with this question. No wonder that such an artificial position gave birth to abstract constructions. Although the literary historical starting point, which aims at explaining dramatic form by the immediate mass effect is a generalization of correct observations, and although the book undoubtedly contains analyses which have been proved right, the idea underlying the whole, that is dramatic (tragic) conflict as the ideological manifestation of class decline is, precisely because of its abstraction, an empty construction. Although it is undoubtedly true that real drama can only come about when in society itself moral imperatives necessarily produced by society come into an acute, mutually exclusive relationship with each other, to deduce this insight directly from the decline of a class and to make this appear necessary is nevertheless already an abstract and, consequently, an empty construction.

It was not mere chance, therefore, that at the same time, and shortly after finishing this work, I experimented with a less abstract interpretation of literary facts. (Such attempts can be found in my volume of essays *Soul and Form*.) Working toward the concrete only manifested itself in my attempt to understand the inner structure and general nature of certain typical human forms of conduct, and by depicting and analyzing the conflicts of life, to bring them into connection with literary forms. This is how I arrived at the question of making tragic conduct concrete in my paper, "The Metaphysics of Tragedy." Giving conduct such a central place in the philosophy of art did not in the least mean that I now wished to move nearer to the psychologizing of the positivists or the impressionists. Just the contrary. The basis of this attempt was the product of the constantly growing influence of Hegelian philosophy. I was influenced primarily by *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (and also by Hegel's other works) aiming to clarify it, through finding out the inner dialectic of the "Spirit" on the basis of the relationship between man (the individual) and society. This is how the analysis of tragic conduct came about; readers today can see that despite the strongly mystical nature of the discussion, it, on one hand, always deals with the essential connections of the typical conduct of man, rather than with the empirical description of ephemeral, merely individual or merely average reactions, or of immediate outward manifestations and, on the other, that this typifying interpretation of conduct always assumes and analyses an objective world state which is in a mutual dialectic relationship with it. Thus in the end — just like Hegel — it assumes the mutual influence of human and social and historical development. This tendency is manifested most clearly where it emphasizes the worldly, purely, and closely human character of tragedy, in contrast with every other-worldly, transcendental, religious world-view. I was able to produce an analysis of tragic conduct that accords with tragedy only as a Marxist. Readers can find a genuine concretization of the problem in my Chernishevsky study written forty years later.

Despite this approach this study still largely isolates the quality of tragedy from real historical events. It opposes the abstract sociological nature of my first attempts by a philosophical generalization which is no less abstract, but is abstract in the

opposite direction. My further development — naturally for the time being still under the influence of Hegel — again experimented in the direction of a concrete content. *The Theory of the Novel* is already much more expressly of the nature of a philosophy of history. Here a whole view of world history is sketched in order to illuminate the notion that the epic and the novel belong together but are, at the same time, opposites, in a philosophic manner. This widening and deepening of the problem was the result of work on philosophy and the social sciences I did in the intervening four years. This meant not merely a thorough study of Hegelian philosophy, including the writings of Kierkegaard as a criticism of Hegel, but also attempts to scrutinize the contradictions of capitalism; at that time the syndicalist writings of Sorel and the work of Tönnies and Max Weber arrested my attention. This would not, however, be a truly faithful account of the writing and the central questions of *The Theory of the Novel* if I failed to emphasize that the outbreak of the First World War and my immediate passionate rejection of it gave me the concrete impetus for writing. In contrast with the majority of the anti-war pacifists my position was opposed as much to the Western democracies as to the Central Powers. I saw the World War then as the crisis of the whole of European culture; I regarded the present — in the words of Fichte — as the period of perfect sinfulness (“*Zeitalter der vollendeten Sündhaftigkeit*”), as a crisis of culture from which the only way out was a revolution. Naturally this whole world-view still rested on purely idealist foundations and the “revolution” could accordingly only manifest itself on the intellectual plane. The period of the bourgeois novel, from Cervantes to Tolstoy, therefore is, on one hand, in a philosophical and historical opposition to the past, to the age of epic harmony (Homer) and, on the other, gives a perspective where the possibility of a future human solution to social antagonism appears. I then regarded the works of Dostoyevsky as the forerunners of this “revolution,” which — as I then saw them — were not novels any longer. In this preface I naturally cannot go into the criticism of the contradictions which arise from this approach. I must be content with outlining the ideological approach which gave rise to this work.

The selection now skips a long period (1915-1931). This is not mere chance. The events of the war, and primarily the Russian, then the Hungarian revolution, caused a deep change in my social views, in my ideology. I became a Marxist. I attempted to give a detailed analysis of this process, including the failure of my first attempt at Marxist philosophy (*History and Class Consciousness*) in the preface to the second volume of my collected works, published in German. Even a sketchy discussion of connected questions, which have no immediate reference to this collection, would take us too far. I will rest content to say that this process ended in 1930 as a result of my studies on Marx written in the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. Since the period stretching between 1918 and 1930 was also that in which I was politically active, it is understandable that aesthetic and literary questions are hardly present in my writing dating from that time. They acquire a greater role, however, in the period when I familiarized myself with genuine Marxism. In the Marx-Engels Institute I met

Comrade M. Lifshitz, with whom I then worked and discussed in a friendly fashion the basic questions of Marxism. The most important thought produced by this clarification was that a suitable systematization of aesthetic questions is also part of the systematic aspects of Marxism, in other words that there is an independent and integral Marxist aesthetic. This proposition, which is accepted as a matter of course in wide circles today, appeared to be a paradox, even for many Marxists, at the beginning of the thirties. The great debates following the revolution of 1917 revolved around political, strategic, and tactical problems; Lenin was regarded by public opinion, even within the revolutionary workers' movement, principally as an outstanding political leader, a great tactician. There were hardly any criticisms of the views that took shape in the Second International unless they were directly connected with important daily issues. In the theoretical evaluation of aesthetic facts the dominant views were, therefore, still those of Plekhanov and Mehring, neither of whom thought of aesthetics as a vital aspect of the Marxist system; Plekhanov relied mainly on French positivism and the critical traditions of the Russian revolutionary democratic movement, and Mehring on the writings on aesthetics of Kant and Schiller. These were the views which Lifshitz and I opposed, and most Marxists accepted our position within a few years with a speed which surprised us, despite the resistance shown by the Plekhanov and Mehring orthodoxy. My book, *Contribution to the History of Aesthetics*, includes an account of the theoretical debate that Marx and Engels conducted with Lassalle on the subject of the latter's play, *Franz von Sickingen*, in which this new point of view was first made public.

However necessary it is to state these facts to make my later activities comprehensible, they would nevertheless remain incomprehensible without a rudimentary outline at least of the concrete circumstances. Naturally at this point the objective delineation of circumstances meets serious objective obstacles. The history of the ideological development of the Stalin era has not yet been written. A great many are still content with a mere general denunciation of the "cult of personality," with at the most emphasizing a few officially admitted mistakes, making it appear that in the main the development of Marxism continued smoothly after Lenin's death. Bourgeois ideologists see the situation as if the Stalin period were the "logical" continuation of Marxism-Leninism. Both add to their incorrectness by interpreting the Stalin era unhistorically, seeing it not as a process of development: after Lenin's death Stalin created the "personality cult" and this was dominant until the 20th Congress put an end to it. Whether this unhistorical approach is on the side of Stalin or of those who opposed him makes no difference. The kind of Stalin criticism which nowadays attempts to justify Trotsky or Bukharin in a theoretical war, gets no nearer to real history than the view which — with fewer or more reservations — apologizes for Stalin.

Naturally this preface cannot contain even an attempt at offering a detailed analysis of this important complex of questions. I have to restrict myself to attempting

to indicate briefly those ideological developments without which the historical starting points of the positions I then assumed would remain incomprehensible. The struggle for power was decided in favor of Stalin, between Lenin's death and 1928. The question — Can socialism survive if it can only be realized in one country? — stood at the center of the ideological struggle. Stalin won, and it has to be said that he won — however many administrative measures he took in concrete party struggles — primarily because his viewpoint alone was tenable, it alone provided direction and a perspective for the building of socialism at the end of the world-revolutionary wave. What is involved here is not the theoretical and practical mistakes in the concrete building of socialism but a theoretical foundation for the whole period. The next step, as we now see it, was to ensure that in the new period thus established Stalin should be seen as a worthy successor to Lenin. However, the theoretical precondition was that public opinion should accept Lenin not merely as the great tactician of the revolutionary struggle, but as the man who put back in its rightful place and further developed Marxist theory, overcoming the ideological errors of the Second International. The philosophical debate of 1930-31 served this end and — despite every incident which could rightly be criticized later — it served this end successfully. Of course, what played the theoretically truly decisive role was that in 1931 Lenin's philosophical notes were published (mainly his criticism of Hegelian philosophy) and also the writings of the young Marx, which had not until then been published, or published only in the form of extracts, in unreliable texts. It was the study of this material which altered my intellectual outlook. Until then I attempted to interpret Marx correctly in the light of the Hegelian dialectic, now, on the other hand, I aimed at utilizing, with the aid of the Marxian and Leninist materialist dialectic, the results and the criticism of the limitations of Hegel, and of bourgeois philosophical thinking which culminated in him. While most of the leaders of the Second International saw Marx exclusively, or at least primarily, as the man who revolutionized economics, we now started to understand that a new era had begun with him in the whole history of human thought. This was made actual and effective by Lenin. The acceptance of the independence and theoretical originality of Marxist aesthetics was the first step I took toward the understanding and realization of the new change in ideology.

Those were my views when I moved to Berlin in the summer of 1931 where actual literary questions came to occupy the forefront of my interests. Two of the papers published here are a part of the ideological struggle of German revolutionary proletarian literature. As regards the opposition of tendentiousness and partisanship, it is clear that aesthetics founded on materialist dialectics had to turn against tendencies stuck on literary works from the outside. The opposition, therefore, is between the partisanship that stems from the essence of artistic conduct and creation and tendentiousness, which has no organic connection with the problems of genuine portrayal, but on the contrary, falsifies the inner truth of the persons and events depicted. The fact that the Stalin-Zhdanov theory later called precisely this sort of

tendentiousness true partisanship, that it turned an article written by Lenin in 1905 on the reform of the party press into the ten commandments of this “partisanship,” did nothing to prevent me, even subsequently, from defending the right position. Readers of my *Aesthetics* will appreciate that, in the course of several decades, I only endeavored to work out the details of this idea, without ever abandoning it. In the meantime Lenin’s widow and closest associate, Krupskaya, testified that this oft-mentioned article had not been meant to apply to literature. Another article dating from this time also deals with a topical question of basic significance, with that of true realism. Here again a motive emerges which played a leading part in my later work: skepticism as regards the fashionable trends of current bourgeois literature’s ability to help our writers in those cases when the official theory wants to divert them from the road of true artistic creation. I have never since ceased to voice this skepticism: socialist literature can only find itself through a truly artistic absorption in reality. Running after Western fashions involves no fewer inner dangers than obeisance to sectarian dogmatism.

Soon after Hitler attained power I moved to the Soviet Union where I was a staff member of *Literaturny Kritik* until the journal ceased publication (1940). My theoretical articles on the essence of realism were published without exception in this journal. It probably seems peculiar to the reader today that such articles could regularly appear at this already well-developed stage of Stalinism. Naturally, certain tactical compromises were involved; I think every one of my articles written at that time contains a few quotes from Stalin; today’s unbiased reader can see, of course, what the censor then failed to notice, that these quotes have hardly any relevance to the real, essential, content of these articles. This is, of course, a superficial explanation. I must expand it into a brief outline of the actual situation. While I was in Berlin there was a furious discussion in the Soviet Union directed against the Union of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), which dominated literature. It is well known that this discussion was aimed at the sectarian tendency of RAPP. The organizational conclusion reached was to abolish the special organization of proletarian writers and to unite all Soviet writers into one association. The literary goal was outlined at the founding congress of this association by Gorky himself, the central aim to be achieved having been named as the great art of socialism (socialist realism). This also meant a struggle against what was called literary Trotskyism, which only recognized the possibility of a propagandistic literature in the transitional period before the full realization of socialism. It does not matter how justified friends and enemies are in referring to Trotsky in this matter; such outstanding theoreticians of the Second International as Mehring unquestionably represented that point of view. The organizational solution gave away a great deal about Stalin’s real intentions as regards this complex of questions. I only mention in passing that those leaders of RAPP who were politically expressly Trotskyites, especially Averbach, who disappeared finally at the time of the Great Trials, ceased to take part in the management of literature. It

is much more important that it was possible to recruit Gorky and a few other famous writers, who were kept out by RAPP, into the union. At the same time those of the old RAPP leadership who were sectarians in literature, but politically obedient from a Stalinist point of view (Fadeyev, Yermilov, and so on) were given leading roles in the union, with the result that they aimed at realizing, within the unified organization of the whole of literature, the old RAPP line, namely, the creation of a literature that would propagate whatever were the party's latest decisions at any one time, by means which were said to be literary. However, this propaganda now had to be rechristened the great art of socialism, which gave not only Gorky far-reaching critical freedom in the last years of his life, but also made possible the following of modern Western, even anti-realist, trends as long as the writer in question accepted without reservation on any issue that had a political content, the party's concrete goals at any one time. Ilya Ehrenburg's novels in the thirties are an example.

The situation which thus arose was, of course, full of internal contradictions. For example, it proclaimed loyalty to principles, but only recognized as "principles" the party's latest decisions; it spoke of wanting artistic perfection from writers, but in fact it declared even the most pedestrian naturalism high-grade art, as long as party loyalty was maintained. Despite everything, this contradictory situation assured — for a while at least — freedom of movement for the sort of criticism which really demanded socialist realism, the great socialist art, and wanted to grasp theoretically and to carry out its artistic principles and criteria. This is how a group came into being, made up of staff members of *Literaturny Kritik*, whose intellectual focus was provided by Lifshitz, Ushievich, and myself. Other members of this group included I. Shatz, Grib, who has since died, and Alexandrov. It was as a member of this group that I wrote the bulk of the papers from this period that appear here, examining the way in which the basic aesthetic problems of artistic portrayal grow organically out of the real reflection of the problems of social existence. Naturally I can only account for my intentions here and for the circumstances which helped or hindered their realization. How far I succeeded in achieving this is not for me to judge. It is certain, however, that the circumstances depicted here made possible this sort of activity between 1934 and 1940.

In 1939-40 a vehement debate started after the publication in Russian of my work *A Contribution to the History of Realism*. (This book contains my studies of Goethe, Holderlin, Buchner, Heine, Balzac, Tolstoy, and Gorky.) The debate, which lasted almost a year, revolved mainly around the question of how far it is permissible to employ in literary criticism the principle of the victory of realism, which Marx had already raised in *The Holy Family*, which played a great role in the late letters of Engels, and which became the dominant idea in Lenin's Tolstoy studies. Is it injurious to the "principled nature" of literature if the measure of literary value is the artistically created picture of the world, as manifested in the work, and not the consciously held ideology of the writer, in which the party's given position is directly expressed? This

debate was preceded by attacks — on topical issues — against Ushievich, mainly because of an article he wrote on political poetry, in which he condemned the output of that time as most inferior, both in human and poetic terms, as compared to the poetry of Mayakovsky. It has to be said that neither debate had direct “administrative” consequences. It is a fact, though, that in 1940 *Literaturny Kritik* ceased publication, though the decision did not expressly refer to these debates.

That, however, shut the doors of the Russian literary press in practice to me; not as result of the text of the decision, just de facto. From then on I could publish literary studies only in *Internationale Literatur*, which appeared in German, and in *Új Hang* (*New Voice*) in Hungarian. Since these are not included in the collection I shall not speak of them. I merely mention that I devoted the “freedom” thus gained to philosophical studies. Nor shall I speak of my writings discussing topical questions of principle in Hungarian literature, which were published before and after my return to Hungary; I hope that one day these can be published in a separate volume. If, nonetheless, I briefly touch on my experiences in Hungary I do so chiefly because in the literary debate that took place in 1949-50 these writings played a great part. József Révai in particular attempted to show that what were called the Blum theses (1929) formed the theoretical and political basis for all my literary activities; that they were right to criticize my view of the relationship between ideology, partisanship, and artistic creation in the Russian debate; and that I was wrong in looking on the policy of the Popular Front as strategy and not merely tactics. Márton Horváth, on the other hand, found that the expression “revolutionary romanticism” does not occur once in the whole of my critical output and he is certainly right in that; and that, where I deal with socialist writers — *Quiet Flows the Don* was mentioned in particular — I select those whose conduct is not truly typical of Soviet literature and does not play a decisive role in it. Nor did he make a secret of the fact that he opposed them by the Azhaev-type novel, and defended it against the charge of naturalism, because in this naturalism, according to him, the deeply democratic character of Soviet art was manifested, et cetera, et cetera. I do not refer to these criticisms to make a debating point, but it does no harm if the reader can also see that it is not I who claim that for decades I opposed the naturalist way of portrayal, of Stalin’s day and of Western manipulated capitalism alike, but that the qualified experts on these questions had already stated that in those days.

The outcome of the Rudas debate made it possible for me to retire from direct literary activities (as critic, editor, and so on). I had to accept that the political methods introduced in “the year of the decisive turn” made impossible any literary criticism that deals with principles. The so-called self-criticism which facilitated my withdrawal was purely formal. This had already been emphasized by József Révai and Márton Horváth, and my later sectarian critics reproved the Rakosi regime for its “leniency” toward me. Since the few articles written after the debate are the direct, organic continuation of my activities up till then it is not necessary to comment

on them here. What is more important, the free time thus gained made it at last possible for me to work out my aesthetic views in detail. Although the final part of this collection includes certain of these works I do not think the reader will expect me to attempt even a brief summary of the theoretical questions connected with this systematization. What makes this even less necessary is the fact that the preface to the *Aesthetics* analyses in detail the connection between the theoretical foundation and structure of these works and the fundamental methodological questions of Marxism. If the reader is perhaps surprised that, on one hand, I attribute a decisive significance to particularity in the structure of the aesthetic world-view and, on the other hand, I connect artistic creation and the true enjoyment of works of art with the particular and correct reflection of reality, then I may be permitted a few remarks as regards these two connected questions. First of all: particularity is just as much a material, objective category of the objects and processes of reality as individuality and universality. It is one of the most important achievements of Marxism that the process of abstraction that creates universals — for example, socially necessary work as opposed to concrete individual work — is not primarily the product of intellectual abstraction; what is more, that this itself is nothing but a reflection in the consciousness of the objective social process. This situation is only one instance of man — no matter what he does — always confronting the same uniform reality (its categories and so on). On the other hand, our different ways of reacting to reality urge us to grasp and arrange these categories, as far as possible, in accordance with the nature of the aims of correct reflection. A hunter notices different things in a wood from one who goes there to gather mushrooms; the direct differentiation does not, of course, stop the shared objective reality of the total surroundings. This is the role particularity plays in all our relationships with every reality. Its prime, dominant role in artistic creation and reception serves the fulfillment of a great social need: the desire for the contradictory but inseparable unity of singularity and universality, of individuality and sociality, whose fulfillment is primarily the task of art. The more developed a human being is, the more he is an individual, but this can only be realized truly, seriously, and deeply in him if this individual is more and qualitatively different from the random combination of accidental individual features; if therefore what is manifested in him is not merely the deaf and dumb purely natural endowments of the human species, but if the species's truly human articulation gains an intelligent voice in his deeds and words; in other words if the human species's otherwise dumb continuity — transmitted by the concrete society — becomes a road toward human fulfillment, as a species, and at the same time social and individual fulfillment. The aesthetic type, therefore, in which particularity is most artistically manifested signifies the road of the concrete fulfillment of human existence as a species. It is the central category of artistic creation because it is through this category that artistic creation becomes the sensually unfolded and united concrete reflection of the embodying of a stage in the great road of the human species seeking and finding itself. An artistic category,

even the most abstract one, grows out of the deepest needs of human life, determines their — positive or negative — forms of realization, and is determined by them.

This is why the artistic reflection of reality is at the center of aesthetics. I well know: every bourgeois and bourgeois-influenced dogmatic subjectivism passionately protests against this; they see the debasement of “sacred” subjectivity and of “unrestrained” creativity in an artistic imagination tied to reality by objective necessity. Yet, if one considers the matter carefully, everything that we do, everything that we know, everything that we are is, in the final analysis, the product of our reactions to reality. Lenin, one of the most original, most individual men of action said: the road of revolution is always “more cunning” than the notion of it held before it occurs, even by the best party (and even more so by individuals!), and he regarded it as the mark of a real politician that he is able, even if only approximately, to recognize and utilize this “cunning” for his own actions. Is this not true of art also? Is not what is created by the greatest ones, a Leonardo da Vinci, a Cézanne, a Shakespeare, or a Tolstoy, “realization” in Cézanne’s sense? Is it not the stealing of the cunning with which the slope of a hillside uncovers the peculiar structure of a whole landscape in a new and unexpected manner, or of the cunning of the gesture or word through which some important aspect of the development of humanity is embodied in a momentariness that appears accidental? Man is a responding creature; in every sphere his existence and activity express their greatness and their ability to progress not by subjectivist imaginings, which are without exception weak and particular, mirror images without perspective, but of course still mirror images of a clumsily grasped piece of reality, but precisely in their ability to reformulate the “cunnings” of reality into questions addressed to it; in that they are able, by analyzing them, to find that answer in which the questions that affect man regarding the development of humanity are clearly expressed. Art is the peculiar, at once contradictorily and inseparably individual and social, and therefore typical, type-creating manifestation of this general tendency. That is why a chapter could call it already in its tide the self-awareness of human progress. If we are able to discover the road of the human species and to utilize this for our own individual development, this is due not least to art, to the realizations of artistic reflection, in the same way as we could not progress as individuals either if our individual memory and the consciousness that grows out of it were not fixing, interpreting, and evaluating our own development.

In my aesthetic writings I aimed at determining the place and function of productive and receptive aesthetic conduct and theorizing within the real order of human actions. From this point of view the supposedly insoluble dualism of the bourgeois view of the world and of art prove to be pseudo-problems. I begin with the subjectivity-objectivity duality mentioned here. Man lives his individual life also in an external world which exists independently of him. Human practice, therefore, cannot know either pure subjectivity or pure objectivity. Even the most objective discovery is the product of great and original subjective endeavors, while subjectivity can only

become diverse and profound, full and productive, through the faithful discovery of objective reality. And since these activities of man always take place within the framework of social existence, unceasingly influencing each other, every abstract duality which interprets man, as an individual and as a social being, as rigid and exclusive contrasts, see for example Heidegger's view of man "thrown into" reality, is false. According to Marx man can even become isolated only in society. Not only loneliness, the inner need for solitude, but also its feasibility down to the most subtle questions of form are the products of social progress. Truly great art and its genuine experiencing equally reject both the sectarian-dogmatic view that the human essence can only truly manifest itself in directly social activities, as if what is called private life were only its, perhaps omissible, "adjunct," and that prejudice deriving from manipulated alienation that holds that the ego in itself can be the basis of its own success or failure. Marxism is separated from bourgeois sociology, milieu-theories, et cetera not only by its radical criticism of society and historicism, but also by the recognition of this dialectical unity of individual and society: it is human activity that shapes society and the objective motion of society can only be realized through individuals. It is as a social being that man could become a human individual, and not stay a mere natural entity.

The careful and unbiased reader of the pieces assembled here will probably notice that my attempts of fifty years ago — though with faulty and in complete foundations — guessed at such questions. This is what possibly justifies their publication in the company of more mature works. Perhaps it is not entirely unconnected that their fate always repeated a pattern through the greatest crises and inner transformations: if the beginnings were uncomfortable for official literary views and those of the *Nyugat* circle alike, then the many critics of my more mature years — with Laszlo Rudas at the one and Garaudy at the other pole — react to it in the same way. Therefore, to that extent, despite all the changes that took place, my development had a certain unity of direction.

### Notes

1. Preface to a volume of selected writings, *Művészet és társaldom (Art and Society)* (Budapest: Magreto, 1968).

Essay Topic: Art, Society. Sorry, but copying text is forbidden on this website! All art " whether it be visual, music, literature, film, etc. " is affected by the specific cultural climate in which it is produced (time, place, social conventions, etc.) and is often created in reaction to "œmovements" or styles that came before it. How important is it to know these sorts of historical details to appreciate a work of art? To know the historical details of a work of art is essential because without it you would never 2. How does contemporary art reflect our society? Is it an adequate reflection of our lives and our culture? Art began when civilization started. With.Â 2. How does contemporary art reflect our society? Is it an adequate reflection of our lives and our culture? Art began when civilization started. With each civilization we form of society, a group of people with individual characteristics, philosophies and cultures within which all sorts of ideas, thoughts and opinions are always brought to challenge and evaluation.