

# THE DEMONIC SELF: MAX WEBER AND GEORG LUKÁCS

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Sibyls and prophets told it: You must be  
None but yourself, from self you cannot flee.

*Goethe*

I had long felt that some hidden springs of  
tension lay behind those last remarks [of  
Weber's "Politics as a Vocation"]... Weber  
must have had someone in mind. Who?

*Daniel Bell*<sup>1</sup>

At first sight, there is a look of *embarras de richesses* about the subject, Max Weber, the "greatest of sociologists"<sup>2</sup> and Georg Lukács, the leading Marxist intellectual of the twentieth century. In a prefatorial statement to his acclaimed classic, *Main Currents of Marxism*, Kolakowski said, "it is easy to see that my reading of Marx was influenced more by Lukács than by other commentators, though I am far from sharing his attitude to the doctrine".<sup>3</sup>

In the Lukács literature, the elective affinities between Weber and Lukács, friends turned foes by the cataclysmic events of the 1914–18 war and the 1918–19 Central European revolutions, has been noted and commented on.<sup>4</sup> However, Weber's interpretations and even biographies are characterized by a "surprisingly high degree of selectivity"<sup>5</sup> and in many instances outright silence on Lukács.<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, we still lack a systematic examination of the relationship between the two figures either at the personal or intellectual level. Naturally, this article cannot present anything even approaching a comprehensive treatment of the Weber–Lukács relationship. Our objective is to trace and substantiate the personal and intellectual rapport of Weber and Lukács.

Weber and Lukács knew each other and each other's secret for close to twenty years, from their first meeting in 1902 to Weber's death in 1920. It is Lukács who may well hold the key to Weber's explosive ambiguity. In the "value-oriented" spheres of life, from erotic-ascetic to rational-irrational,

Lukács found himself in Weber's mind, and *vice versa*. In our view, Weber's sociology is just as much a "debate with the ghost of Karl Marx"<sup>7</sup> as it is with the flesh and blood Lukács. We agree with Wolfgang Mommsen that it was "inevitable"<sup>8</sup> that Weber would confront Marx's analysis of modern capitalism. But it was just as inevitable that Weber, intent on formulating what Mommsen called an "alternative position standing in harmony with his own bourgeois-liberal ideals,"<sup>9</sup> would confront Lukács. For as Karl Mannheim once put it, reflecting on Lukács and Weber and his own relationship to them,<sup>10</sup> we understand ourselves better when we enter into "existential relationships" with others.<sup>11</sup>

That Weber and Lukács formed an "existential relationship" is confirmed by Mannheim. In his *Habilitationsschrift* (1927), Mannheim drew up a composite intellectual portrait of Max Weber, disguised as Gustav Hugo, and that of Lukács, disguised as Adam Müller.<sup>12</sup> For Mannheim, the divergent intellects of Weber and Lukács led to different roads or ways of life. Out of Weber's resignation and method of "clarification" came splendid sociology, while Lukács's radical "rebellion of the spirit" led to Marxism. Mannheim was fascinated by Lukács's "road" to Marx, whose stages included the Socratic quest for examined life; Kierkegaard's lonely, desperate "leap" to God; Nietzsche's impulse for self-creation and multiplicity of selves; Sorel's heroic bid for a myth; and Dostoevsky's haunted vision of goodness through evil.

But Lukács's most crucial stage on the road to Marx involved his close relationship with Weber. Even in the famed Weber Circle, only Lukács and Friedrich Gundolf "were able to express their ideas well enough to become independent points of interest."<sup>13</sup> Weber and Lukács had a great affection and respect for each other. Weber expected a lot from Lukács and took keen interest in his academic career. On his part, Lukács counted Weber's friendship among his "proudest possessions in objective achievements."<sup>14</sup> To the end of his life, Lukács paid homage to Weber, the "absolutely honest person" and "extraordinary scholar."<sup>15</sup> Even in his worst Stalinist tract, *The Destruction of Reason* (1954), where Lukács demonized his pre-Marxist idols, Weber was treated fairly and with respect.

Lukács's consistent admiration for Weber bears witness to a strong kinship with another *enfant terrible* from a suffocating patriarchal home.<sup>16</sup> While Weber despised his father,<sup>17</sup> Lukács openly resented his father showing respect for his wife: "My father had great respect for my mother. I valued my father for his hard work and intelligence. But his high esteem for my mother offended me, and, at times, I despised him for it. In fact, we only developed a close relationship when my father, largely at my urging, became more critical of my mother."<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Meinecke's observation that Weber can only be com-

pletely understood on the "basis of his family"<sup>19</sup> applies equally to Lukács. The distance between a precocious son and his mother could not have been greater than it was in the Lukács family. Lukács identified fully with Weber's tormented self which, caught in the relentless pressures of competing domestic allegiance, had to survive on the untrodden grounds of loneliness and void.

The peculiar quality of Lukács's early life, a disequilibrium, unhappiness, and implacable hatred of the bourgeois, pursued him to the end. The deepening crisis of Lukács's childhood within his family set up his unsurpassable prejudices against the bourgeois. Once when Lukács complained that he found more understanding with Weber at Heidelberg than at home in Budapest, he was bluntly advised by his father to "Ask yourself honestly whether you were ever as polite and gracious with anyone at home as, no doubt, you are with your friends at Heidelberg."<sup>20</sup> To escape the oppressive family environment, Lukács developed a compulsive work-habit and fanatic will-to-knowledge, whose inner treadmill is as chilling as that of Weber.

Lukács's early masterpiece, *History of the Development of Modern Drama* (1911), reveals that he raised to its highest pitch discontent with the family. There are passages in this work that clearly show how an embittered life can have an impact on what purports to be an objective work. Lukács's analysis of Frank Wedekind (1864–1918) is unmistakably autobiographical. Wedekind, like Lukács and Weber, rebelled against his father and the philistinism of bourgeois society. "He wanted to capture and express intellectually," wrote Lukács, "the chaotic modern society."<sup>21</sup> Commenting on Wedekind's tragedy, *Frühlings Erwachen*, whose theme is the awakening of sexuality of three adolescents in a stifling bourgeois milieu, Lukács wrote, "[Wedekind's drama] is about the fate of children, whose sufferings and anxieties the parents once shared, [a fate which] is incomprehensible to parents. Neither goodwill nor understanding nor reason proves to be effective. In the end, every parent stands helpless and confused when the disaster strikes."<sup>22</sup> What experience was compressed into Lukács's image in *Modern Drama* of the family as a "symphony of divergent fates"? And what festering wounds forced him to write in that work that the children suffer under the "yoke of a meaningless" life and that the parents – the objective world – do what they must?

Much as he tried, even in his works, Lukács fell back on his own dissonant and discordant self which, enthroned on loneliness, transfigures suffering in the act of willing it. There is hardly a single element in Lukács's acceptance and transformation of suffering, in the service of icy-ideals, that could not also be found in Weber. This is hardly surprising for both Weber and Lukács were initiates of Nietzsche in the alchemy of loneliness and suffering. Weber readily admitted that the "world we live as intellectual beings is largely the world

bearing the imprint of Marx and Nietzsche."<sup>23</sup> Lukács also acknowledged Nietzsche's "decisive and transforming" influence on his generation. Lukács's notion and choice of values, like those of Weber, as Alasdair MacIntyre pointed out,<sup>24</sup> derived more from Nietzsche than Marx. What makes Weber's early writings complex and fascinating is that, like Lukács's early writings, they are "reverberating with the echo of ideas from Nietzsche and Burckhardt back to Goethe."<sup>25</sup> The presence of Nietzsche in Lukács's *Heidelberg Notebooks* is as overwhelming as it is in *Modern Drama* (1911). On every conceivable topic that arrested Lukács's attention – literary style, war, pessimism, Eros, religion, fate – he consulted Nietzsche, who became the radius of Lukács's expanding intellectual life. The marginal markings in Lukács's copies of Nietzsche works, notably *Human, All Too Human* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, demonstrate an intense receptivity to Nietzschean values.<sup>26</sup> Later as a Marxist, Lukács launched furious attacks on Nietzsche. Perhaps this signified a mind's growth and maturity. But, in the light of Lukács's complex denials of his past, it is more likely they were part of his effort to dethrone his youthful idols and abandon the temples where he once worshipped.

Having announced that God is dead, Nietzsche asked, "Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is more and more night not coming on all the time?"<sup>27</sup> Lukács's response to Nietzsche is forthright and revealing, "What if God died and another, a young and different kind, relating to us differently, is being born? What if darkness without purpose is but the dusk between one God's twilight and another god's dawn?... Couldn't our loneliness mean an agonized cry and yearning for the coming god?"<sup>28</sup> The vibrant vehemence and intensity in Lukács's language betrays the inward, religious dimension of his personality, which shows spiritual kinship with Weber. It is worth emphasizing that while Weber's classic, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, revolves around "spirit," Lukács's classic, *Soul and Form*, is preoccupied with the "soul". Marianne Weber not only drew attention to the "genuine religiosity" of Weber's personality, but suggested that *The Protestant Ethic*, the first work to make "Weber's star shine" again after a serious nervous breakdown, is autobiographical because it is "connected with the deepest roots of his personality and in an undefinable way bears its stamp."<sup>29</sup>

Lukács's essays in *Soul and Form* are not only autobiographical, but are contemporary with Weber's essays of 1905–06 that form the second half of his study *The Protestant Ethic*. It may seem paradoxical that Weber, who valued "systematic work" and rationalism, admired Lukács the essayist. Yet the fact remains that Weber's work remains fragmentary not so much because of biographical accidents but because for Weber, like Lukács, life is a perpetual

staking of existence, a man mere "essay in existence" and understandable only because he is at once transition and value. One leading commentator of Weber, summing up his "vitality" as classic, wrote,

If we regard the essay as the art-form suited to the twentieth century, then Weber is immediately placed alongside authors such as Georg Simmel, Robert Musil and Georg Lukács, among others. They all shared the attempt to 'mediate', to build bridges, and thereby to open up new pathways. If, as a result, we regard the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, for example, or *Economy and Society*, as large, scientific essays, or rather collections of essays, and not as comprehensive, theoretical-empirical monographs, then many sterile, interpretational disputes over the 'unity' or 'fragmentation' of the work would become unnecessary.<sup>30</sup>

Despite their lyrical and metaphysical castings, Lukács's *Soul and Form* and Weber's *Protestant Ethic* share an intellectual perspective that was antithetical to materialistic view of history. Lukács, in fact, pitted the essay against positivism. As he put it, "The essay can calmly and proudly set its fragmentariness against the petty completeness of scientific exactitude and impressionistic freshness."<sup>31</sup> For Lukács, the essay expresses "longing for value and form" for which rational justification may not be given. Here Lukács voiced disagreement with Weber who valued the type of choice for which rational justification can be given. For Weber, reason is the criteria of value choice. By contrast, to Lukács values are created from "within" the self. But this self, contra Weber, is not fixed or solid, but problematic and diffused. As Lukács demonstrated to Weber, the self can be divided up and distributed among a set of masks – erotic, ascetic – each of which acts out the masquerade of independent and rational self. Consequently, for Lukács, value choices are expressive of longing, rather than reason. In essence, Lukács calls upon choice to accomplish what Weber's "squint-eyed" reason fails to do, namely, to locate moral commitment among competing values. As Lukács put it pointedly, "The essayist is a Schopenhauer who writes his *Parerga* while waiting for the arrival of his own (or another's) *The World as Will and Idea*, he is a John the Baptist who goes out to preach in the wilderness about another who is still to come, whose shoelace he is not worthy to untie."<sup>32</sup>

Lukács's essays in *Soul and Form* imply that the Weberian vision of the world cannot be rationally maintained, for it disguises and conceals as much as it illuminates. For Lukács, in the system of values, reason and longing, although do not stand side by side as equals, they "nevertheless coexist". Lukács's essays revolve around the value spheres of life, art, Eros, asceticism and philosophy – the compass points of the soul. And the latter, we know from Marianne Weber, "tugged at his [Weber] heartstrings" [*an die Brust branden*]

– moved, above all, by the fact that on its earthly course an idea always and everywhere operates in opposition to its original meaning and thereby destroys itself.”<sup>33</sup>

In some respects, Lukács’s essays are comparable to Montaigne’s essays, wherein the self – “I describe myself” – is faced with the task of making itself at home in existence without fixed points of support. One French reviewer of Lukács’s *Soul and Form* declared him a “worthy disciple of Nietzsche and Montaigne”.<sup>34</sup> In Montaigne, for the first time, man’s life – the random personal life as a whole – became problematic in the modern sense. But Montaigne never pushes the problematic into the realm of the tragic. By contrast, Lukács’s self is framed in tragedy because the Beatrice of his soul, Irma Seidler, whose sister Emmy was married to Emil Lederer, who belonged to Weber’s circle of friends at Heidelberg, committed suicide.

Unlike Montaigne’s, Lukács’s non-egoistic instincts, the instincts of compassion, self-denial, and self-sacrifice, are uniformly gilded, glorified, transcendentalized until they assume the absolute value that enables him to deny life and even himself. And a self that turns against itself, against life, can, while longing to transcend them, flaunt the tactics of ambition, glory in the stratagems of disguise and masks, and savor the seductive pleasure of Eros. Lukács implies that there may be “masks involved” in all parts and stages of life – especially love. Lukács’s flirtation with roles – an ascetic, Faust, Silenic-featured Socrates – stood in sharp contrast to the Weberian rational conduct of life. And veils and masks, need we add, always betray moral disturbance. Lukács spoke from the fullness of his own experience.

No wonder that Lukács’s essays, focusing on the self’s cycle of sins, repentance and seeking forgiveness, impressed Weber. Confined to the “iron cage” of rationalism and unable to consummate his marriage with Marianne, Weber led a tormented personal life, torn between erotic behavior and the ascetic code. Convalescing in Italy on the eve of the Great War, Weber read Charles-Louis Philippe’s *Marie Donadieu*, and then asked his wife to send him Lukács’s essay on Philippe, published in *Die neue Rundschau* (1911), that captured the stifled grief of the ascetic self as it seeks a natural outlet or relief in sensual love. Like Nietzsche,<sup>35</sup> Lukács found no inherent contradiction between asceticism and sensual pleasure, for his ascetic ideal was philosophical, not moral.

Lukács and Weber shared the view that asceticism, self-denial on prudential grounds, provides the condition most favorable to the exercise of one’s intelligence. Like other “servants and fanatics of their own development,”<sup>36</sup> Lukács’s ascetic ideal incarnated the wish to be different, and to be elsewhere. This also amounted to a radical evaluation of life; it pronounced judgement on

life as a whole and juxtaposed alternative forms of existence. It is striking that every new, rising social force, as Daniel Bell wisely noted, “begins as an ascetic movement. Asceticism emphasizes non-material values, renunciation of physical pleasures, simplicity and self-denial, and arduous, purposeful discipline. That discipline is necessary for the mobilization of psychic and physical energies for tasks outside the self, for the conquest and subordination of the self in order to conquer others.”<sup>37</sup> Weber took keen, personal interest in Lukács’s triumph in agony as he grappled with the relationship between the erotic behavior and the ascetic code. Lukács and Weber intellectualized eroticism, and, while freezing to death “on the ice of knowledge”,<sup>38</sup> were aware of Plato’s verdict in the *Symposium* that “He whom love touches not, walks in darkness.” But Weber, like Lukács, walked in dark even when touched by love. Weber’s marriage proposal to Marianne contained this strange passage,

I say to you: I go the course that I must, and which you now know. – And you will go it with me. – Where it will lead, how far it is, whether it leads us together on this earth, I know not... High goes the tidal wave of passions, and it is dark around us – come with me, my high-souled comrade, out of the quiet harbor of resignation, out onto the high seas, where men grow in the struggling of souls and the past falls away from them.<sup>39</sup>

When in love with Irma Seidler, Lukács wrote his essays in *Soul and Form* that contain Kierkegaard’s attitude of fascinated terror towards marriage. For Lukács, only Eros can draw reason out of its Platonic cave, but may, in the process, slip confusing love-notes between the philosopher’s pages. In Lukács’s philosophy there was no “nuptial bed” for love-struck souls. The erotic sphere, for Weber and Lukács, denoted the irrational sphere of values as compared with the rational everyday life. Erotic experience therefore spelled “life-fate” and, as Weber put it, freed one from “the cold skeleton hands of rational orders, just as completely as from the banality of everyday routine”.<sup>40</sup> Recoiling from life as if struck with leprosy, for Weber and Lukács eroticism was a gateway to life and source of value. Summing up his love-affair with Else von Richthofen Jaffe – *la belle peccatrice*, as they called her, Weber wrote, “At first our relationship was only passion, but now it represents a value.”<sup>41</sup> Weber once asked Else to define the value of eroticism. Her response, “but certainly, beauty,” intrigued Weber and led him to read Lukács’s essays that deal with art and Eros.

Undeniably, the ascent of Eros along the banks of the Neckar left its mark on Weber’s thinking. As Marianne Weber put it, “nothing stamps a person more decisively than his conduct in this [erotic] sphere”.<sup>42</sup> Weber, of course, never breathed a word to Marianne about his affair with Else. Just as Weber concealed Else in print and buried her in footnote of “Ethical Neutrality” (*Logos*, 1917)<sup>43</sup>

when analyzing man's relationship with a woman, Lukács concealed Irma Seidler in his essays in *Soul and Form*. Before leaving Heidelberg in late 1917, Lukács packed the evidence of the stages of his life's way into a suitcase, and deposited it for safekeeping at the Deutsche Bank of Heidelberg. Discovered by accident after his death, it contained various manuscripts, drafts, notes, letters, and his 1910–11 diary, documenting his tragic love-affair with Irma Seidler. Lukács never told anyone about the suitcase, not even his wife Gertrud Bortstieber.

Both Weber and Lukács wove a veil of deceit into the very center of their life. Even Karl Jaspers, who idealized Weber,<sup>44</sup> refused to believe Weber's infidelity to his wife Marianne. Having learned in 1967 of Weber's love affair with Else Jaffe, Jaspers said the more he read Weber's works, the more he saw "a titanic trouble in emptiness".<sup>45</sup> Commenting on Weber's erotic side of life, Bruce Mazlish noted, "Such details would be left private and unmentioned here except that Weber's life experiences powerfully affected his sociological work. It made him more aware of emotionalism, and helped prepare the way of his deeper understanding of charisma."<sup>46</sup> While trying to conquer the "black shadow of marriage,"<sup>47</sup> Weber conceded that marriage rarely grants the continuation of unique and supreme value.

But as a neo-Kantian with a strong sense of duty, Weber was willing to make the sacrifice that marriage demands. The erotic sphere, for Weber, carries the sentiment that love transforms itself into responsibility "up to the pianissimo of old age". Although rarely does life grant such value in pure form, "he to whom it is given may speak of fate's fortune and grace – not of his own 'merit' ".<sup>48</sup> Lukács, however, refused to yield his exclusive self in his prenuptial maneuvers with women, because none of the great thinkers – Plato, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer – were married. Weber held that anyone who does not strive toward marriage, or fails to make the sacrifice involved in it, incurs the guilt toward specific human beings, or toward the higher order which presides over all social morality. Weber knew about Lukács's guilt toward Irma Seidler, who, driven to the point of despair over Lukács's aesthetically sublimated eroticism, in May 1911 committed suicide. Irma became a black cross in Lukács's diary with the entry,

All my thoughts were flowers I brought her, they were her joy and meaning of life. All hers – and perhaps, I thought, she would notice and enjoy them... But my inability to give something of myself to her is the death sentence over my existence... I have forfeited my right to life.<sup>49</sup>

Irma's suicide shattered Lukács's faith in the Kantian postulate of a universal morality of duty and humanism, based on respect for "reason" and



the common core of humanity. In particular, Lukács felt that Kant's moral judgement, as an expression of conformity to an objective law, fails to account for the concept of love,<sup>50</sup> which for Lukács spelled destination and fate. Lukács's moral and intellectual crisis, brought on by Irma's death, wrote its dark imperative: morality demands a human sacrifice. But what if guiltless sacrifice was impossible, Lukács asked, or, what if sacrifice meant the loss of human dignity? Following with great interest Lukács's concern with the sacrifice inherent in the erotic sphere, Weber wanted to know what place Lukács would assign Eros in his concept of form. "The typographical position of the erotic must be determined," Weber told Lukács, "and I am anxious to see where it will be in your work".<sup>51</sup> After Irma's suicide, Lukács found himself, as he put it, "on the porch of Dante's hell: *non regionam di lor'ma guarda e passa*".<sup>52</sup> On this porch, Lukács wrote his philosophical confession *On Poverty of Spirit*.

Max Weber and his wife were moved by Lukács's "profound artistic" essay on the poor in spirit. Marianne Weber sent the manuscript of *On Poverty of Spirit* to Gertrud Simmel, who also found it "terribly moving". Marianne Weber wrote to Lukács,

I part reluctantly with the manuscript. Perhaps you will forward me an offprint when you know us better. What you express here moved me profoundly. Will you allow me to understand its human content and what's behind it? We feel the same way about the tragedy of life. One cannot realize simultaneously perfection in doing one's duty of goodness and perfection of work. I don't wish to say more about this, for I think I understand what you imply. I am grateful for your valuable soul-to-soul gift.<sup>53</sup>

Weber agreed with Lukács that Kantian ethics suffers from "poverty of spirit" and that bourgeois life, dominated by law and judicial norms, inhibits human intercourse. Lukács was reluctant to place human relations under legal rules, but felt that the ethical code inherent in a system of law should prescribe and substantiate the human communion that would terminate man's "eternal loneliness". Kant conceived of law as the expression of the universal moral law, and as a coercive confined to men's external relations. By contrast, Lukács in *On Poverty of Spirit* argues that the moral decision of the inner man cannot find outward expression in legality or the performance of duty. Kantian law, blind to an individual's particular inner moral life, cannot distinguish tragic responsibility and moral fault.

For Kant, there could not be a conflict of duties, since the very concepts of duty and practical law rule out inconsistency. But for Lukács the concept of "duty" no longer exerted any claim at all. He held that what contingently happens to an agent can force him morally to violate duty. Lukács agreed with

Weber that the sphere of erotic relations is a sphere of such moral conflict. In Weber's analysis:

This conflict is not only, or even predominantly, jealousy and the will to possession, excluding third ones. It is far more the most intimate coercion of the soul of the less brutal partner. This coercion exists because it is never noticed by the partners themselves. Pretending to be human devotion, it is a sophisticated enjoyment of oneself in the other. No consummated erotic communion will know itself to be founded in any way other than through a mysterious destination for one another: fate, in this highest sense of the word.<sup>54</sup>

We, of course, know from Marianne Weber that her husband had in him the amoral hedonism and intellectual superiority to "ruthlessly" subject others to his ends. Nor should we be surprised that Weber, for personal reasons, took more than academic interest in Lukács's philosophical confession, which delineates Lukács's own sense of guilt for ruthlessly exploiting his love affair with Irma by placing her between erotic and ascetic spheres of life. Both Marianne and Max Weber, desperate refugees from the ruins of a failed marriage,<sup>55</sup> fully identified with Lukács's agonized candor on the "joyless bareness" of a man who, caught between the demonic compulsion to work and the erotic sphere, leads a tormented personal life and wrecks the life of others.

It was not lost on Weber that the ethical hero of *On Poverty of Spirit* shoots himself. This act symbolizes Lukács's own denouement as the agent of Kant's categorical imperative. At the same time, the demise of the Kantian ideal allowed Lukács to devise an alternative. When the hero of *On Poverty of Spirit* kills himself, on his desk a Bible lies open at the Revelation of St. John 3:15–16. Here the angel reproaches the Church of the Laodiceans for sheltering those who burn neither hot nor cold. With Lukács's spiritual account of epiphany and conversion of the sinner, we are in the presence of Dostoevsky's God-haunted creation, a world without tragedy. And it is hardly accidental that Weber's "dramatic change"<sup>56</sup> of view on the moral alternatives coincides with Lukács's own presence on Dante's porch.

In pursuit of knowledge and learning, Weber and Lukács overstepped limits of human nature and victimized others. Nobody knew this better than Marianne Weber as she reflected on the life of Weber and Lukács:

What was the value of norms that so often stifled the magnificence of vibrant life, repressed natural drives, and, above all, denied fulfillment to so many women? Law, duty, asceticism – were not all these ideas derived from the demonization of sex by an outgrown Christianity. To shape one's future entirely on the basis of one's own nature, to let the currents of life flow through one and then bear the consequences, was better than to sneak along on the sterile paths of caution hammed in by morality.<sup>57</sup>

When Marianne wrote this she already knew the “human content and what was behind it” in Lukács’s confessional essay *On Poverty of Spirit*. It was precisely the concept of law, duty, and asceticism, standing against the erotic sphere, that set the stage for Lukács’s *On Poverty of Spirit*. His own culpability for Irma’s death forced him to examine the practical limitations of Kantian ethics. Intent on superseding Kant’s categorical imperative as the objective principle of morality, Lukács came perilously close to embracing Machiavelli’s axiom that moral evil is integral to life.

But it was Dostoevsky, not Machiavelli, who aided Lukács’s escape from the “superb prison” of Kantian ethics. Determined to lead a “pure” life, Lukács victimized Irma. And now, craving redemption, Dostoevsky taught Lukács that the “great life, the life of goodness” no longer presupposes purity. In Dostoevsky’s works, “interesting sinners” have a secure passage to “goodness.” In Lukács’s confessional prayer *On Poverty of Spirit*, the sinner does not so much repent as he uses his humility as a stage on the road to goodness. Kant defined two ends which are also duties: our own perfection and the happiness of others. But Lukács’s self-identified duty was, first and foremost, to his own perfection, which, as we have seen, bestowed tragedy on “others”.<sup>58</sup>

By 1914, Lukács was obsessed with Dostoevsky, who pointed beyond the “problematic” European culture that failed to answer his personal and intellectual needs. However, Lukács’s references to “sacred” Dostoevsky disturbed Weber. While working on his intended book on Dostoevsky, Lukács read Weber’s *Intermediary Reflections [Zwischenbetrachtung]*, published in 1915. In fact, Lukács read Weber’s essay prior to its publication. Acknowledging the reprint of Weber’s essay, Lukács said he looked forward to the publication of all these essays in a book,<sup>59</sup> adding,

I have anticipated your distaste for my “Aesthetic of the Novel.”<sup>60</sup> However, I am anxious to learn whether the subsequent elaboration made you more conciliatory. In short, whether it induced you to make your peace with the introduction. For I cannot help believing that the work contains much that would appeal to you.<sup>61</sup>

There is no denying that Weber’s *Intermediary Reflections* and Lukács’s Dostoevsky notes, ultimately published as *The Theory of the Novel*, interacted on the forms of salvation and salvation ethics. For Weber, religious salvation presupposes God, for Lukács, worldly salvation presupposes a Godless universe. As Lukács put it, “The abandonment of the world by God manifests itself in the incommensurability of soul and work, of inferiority and adventure – in the absence of a transcendental ‘place’ allotted to human endeavor”.<sup>62</sup> While Weber talks about the God-intoxicated demonic self, Lukács analyses the

“ungodly demonic self”. For Weber, religious man is granted communion with God, because he is both a “possession of God” and “possessed by God”. For Lukács, the self, confined to a world forsaken by providence and lacking transcendental orientation, assumes a demonic character and “arbitrarily” selects moments it thinks most suitable for “proving itself”. In fact, the demonic self arrogates to itself the “role of God”. No wonder that Weber minced no words about Lukács’s “sudden turn toward Dostoevsky”. He wrote to him, “I hated and still hate this work of yours” [*Theory of the Novel*].<sup>63</sup> This may well be the reason why Weber viewed Lukács as a “typical product of East European political sphere and cultural milieu”.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, it was Dostoevsky’s violent and mystical religiosity – the “new light” from Russia – that helped to shape Lukács’s total rejection of the Great War, and a reiterated renunciation of the worthless bourgeois civilization that caused it. By contrast, many of Lukács’s German friends and mentors – Paul Ernst, Thomas Mann, Georg Simmel, Max Weber – supported the war. In August 1915, Weber confessed it was misery “not to be there”.<sup>65</sup> And when Marianne Weber cited individual acts of war-heroism, Lukács retorted: “the better the worse”.

Undeniably, the Great War divided Lukács and Weber. As if to symbolize his own break with the “rational” Western culture, which preoccupied Weber, Lukács in May 1914 married the Russian-born Ljena Grabenko. During the 1905 revolution, Ljena carried a baby in her arms, borrowed for the occasion, in order to conceal a bomb in the blanket. Ljena’s spiritual imago is Dostoevsky’s Sonya – a harlot, outwardly corrupt, but whose soul strives for self-sacrifice. Imprisoned for terrorist activities, Ljena symbolized for Lukács the crushed, suffering humanity that, in Dostoevsky fashion, bears within its soul the undying seed of joyous resurrection. Like many Russian radical emigres turned artists, Ljena, ugly, emaciated, and neglected, drifted with the Bohemian crowd in Paris until she was discovered by Lukács’s close friend, Béla Balázs, the “Don Juan of Budapest,” whose appetite for female flesh was insatiable.

Balázs’s sister, Hilda, described Ljena to Lukács,

Dedicated to the revolution, Ljena wants to achieve something significant. Otherwise, she will kill herself. And she is not saying it for effect. She just will do it. That’s her greatest value. She is unemployed, but Ljena is a Russian. And in Paris that means she makes friends, is “good,” paints now and then without any system or method. I think she is a better revolutionary than an artist.<sup>66</sup>

This had a hypnotic effect on Lukács at Heidelberg. He sent a train ticket to Ljena in Paris and invited her to join him on the Italian coast for vacation. From Bellaria-Igea Maria, Lukács and Ljena travelled to Venice, and then

later joined Max and Marianne Weber in Rome. Returning from Italy in the early autumn of 1913, Lukács had announced his plan to marry Ljena. His family received the news like an obituary. In the close knit patrician circles of Budapest, where chastity for girls before marriage was *de rigueur*, Ljena made no secret – *faut tre sincère* – of her casual sex affairs. Neither Lukács's father nor his sister could prevail on Lukács to give up Ljena.

Strange as it may sound, the Webers seemed to approve the marriage. Marianne Weber wrote to Lukács,

I am so happy, so very happy, that you have chosen in favor of this solution, that you have chose a human fate [*menschliches Schicksal*] with all its wonderful happiness, tenderness and its struggles... Yes, I have with innermost sympathy and emotion felt and understood you in Rome; grateful as well, that you have shown me, even though disguised, what went on inside you. I have taken to like you a lot in Rome, as it happens when one is allowed to be near the soul of a human being... Oh, how great and wonderful you will feel in this union with a woman, when you perceive her, in the deepest sense, as the complement to your self.<sup>67</sup>

Lukács's fierce attachment to Ljena defied all reason. His father wrote him, "You have opened such an abyss between us as I have never dreamed of. I am hurt by this *fait accompli* and being told by others about your engagement." Lukács approached Marianne Weber to see if Weber could prevail on *père* Lukács. As for Lukács's "friendly request" to Weber, Marianne wrote back, "Weber was silent and made a peculiar face and at night he took a sleeping pill."<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, to legitimize Ljena, Weber claimed her as his distant relative. Although deeply touched by Weber's noble gesture, Lukács's father was no fool.

Lukács's witnesses at the marriage were Emil Lederer and Ernst Bloch. By marrying Ljena, knowing full well that she was a harlot, Lukács turned marriage into a stage upon which he could rehearse his ethical role of displaying "goodness". And goodness he needed, for his marriage became a veritable hell. In essence, Lukács's marriage was a masterpiece of bitter fury; for Ljena severed his contact with the bourgeois world, where, however eloquently he may have theorized about "forms of life," he had lived in ever-restless despair. For Lukács, Ljena's singular value was her assurance that an exceptional life, though embittered, tormented, and unhappy, can be transfigured into pure spirit and ideas. The outbreak of the war found Lukács in Heidelberg, living with Ljena and her deranged lover Bruno Steinbach. Bruno, who had been confined for a while to an insane asylum, needed more help and "goodness" than did Lukács. Reflecting on his domestic inferno, Lukács wrote to Balázs, "The tragedy of an artist is that for the sake of his work he sacrifices his soul. Faith in the homogeneity of work leads to the freezing of the soul."<sup>69</sup>

Lukács's marriage, or, more properly, the *ménage à trois* that arose from it, produced three nervous wrecks, who were treated by Karl Jaspers. Weber had warned Lukács of the dangers involved in living his "essence" through others. What worried Weber was that Lukács's demon, that was to "hold the fibers of one's life," was given free reign by marrying Ljena. Indeed, she led him to the works of Boris Savinkov (1879–1925). Under the pseudonym, V. Ropshin, Savinkov wrote *The Pale Horse* [Kon bledny, 1909] from which Ljena translated passages into German. Lukács acknowledged that it was through Savinkov that he learned and understood the "modern Russian soul". As a terrorist and nihilist, Savinkov masterminded the assassination of the Russian minister of the interior V. K. Plehve (1904), and the czar's uncle, Sergey Alexandrovich (1905). Savinkov himself fascinated both Lukács and Churchill. Churchill included Savinkov among the "Great Men of Our Age":

Boris Savinkov's whole life had been spent in conspiracy. Without religion as the Church teaches it; without morals as men prescribed them; without home or country; without wife or child, or kith or kin; without friend; without fear; hunter and hunted; implacable, unconquerable, alone. Yet he had found his consolation. His being was organized upon a theme. His life was devoted to a cause. The cause was the freedom of the Russian people. In that cause there was nothing he would not dare or endure. He had not even the stimulus of fanaticism. He was that extraordinary product – a Terrorist for moderate aims.<sup>70</sup>

And Lukács declared:

I do not see any evidence of a disease in Boris Savinkov. I see in him a new expression of the ancient conflict between the first ethics (duty to society) and the second ethics (imperative of the soul). Inevitably, the order of the priorities produces dialectical complications when the soul embraces humanity rather than itself. Both the politician and the revolutionary must sacrifice the soul in order to save it.<sup>71</sup>

Lukács's growing infatuation with Savinkov and the "Russian soul" disturbed Weber. The "ancient conflict" between the two ethics, of "responsibility" and "conviction," that Lukács referred to, was very much on Weber's mind in his two famous lectures, *Science as a Vocation* (November 1917), and *Politics as a Vocation* (January 1919).<sup>72</sup> In both essays, the presence of Lukács is unmistakable. This is all the more significant because, as Ernst Robert Curtius noted, Weber's *Science as a Vocation* is a "clearly profiled expression of his moral personality".<sup>73</sup> The background of Weber's famous lectures, amounting to his political testament, is the collapse of Germany, the rise of Bolshevism, and the chiliastic excitement of some of his former students who had trouble meeting the sober demands of the day, most notably Lukács. The

parting of Lukács and Weber unfolded against the cataclysmic events of the 1914–18 war and the 1918–19 Central European revolutions. By 1918, it seemed that the problems of the meaning and mastery of the disenchanting world, the subject of so many intense, but polite discussions in Weber's house on Sunday afternoons, defied the solution offered by the ethic of "responsibility" and the ethic of "conviction". Weber sought guidance and consolation in the Book of Job and the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, the "titan of holy invective" against the rulers of his own people.<sup>74</sup>

The pathos of inner loneliness overwhelmed Weber, as it did Lukács. Both Weber and Lukács, whose personality can only be defined in terms of their relationship to ultimate values, lived in a world of permanent tragedy. In 1920, Karl Jaspers, close friend of Weber and Lukács, remarked that Weber was the "richest and deepest realization of the meaning of floundering in our time".<sup>75</sup> And at least up to 1908, as W. J. Mommsen noted, Weber used the concept of "culture" rather than "society".<sup>76</sup> Nothing intrigued Weber more than Lukács's critical evaluation of modern culture, as evident in Bloch's jealous query, "Just what exactly does Weber understand in you [Lukács]?"<sup>77</sup>

Lukács acknowledged that what contributed to his good relationship with Weber was his statement, "Kant claims that aesthetic judgement is the essence of aesthetics. I say *Sein*, not aesthetic judgement, is an a priori."<sup>78</sup> This made a great impression on Weber who, in *Science as a Vocation*, cited with approval Lukács's adoption of Kant's presupposition about aesthetics. Weber and Lukács were critical of the "Eudämonisten" who equated economic development with human happiness. Compare Weber's repudiation of the "last men," who invented happiness,<sup>79</sup> with Lukács's diary entry (1911): "I am the cause of everything, or what made me what I am: hungry for happiness, unable to live without it, and yet unable to lead a happy life."<sup>80</sup>

Aware of Lukács's growing interest in Russian collectivism as an alternative to Western individualism, Weber wrote:

One thing became evident to Lukács when he looked at the paintings of Cimabue – who painted at the beginning of the Italian Renaissance, but who had a closer relation to the Middle Ages than to the Renaissance – and that was that culture can exist only in conjunction with collective values.<sup>81</sup>

Reflecting on his relationship with Lukács, Weber said about his friend and later adversary, "Whenever I have spoken to Lukács, I have to think about it for days."<sup>82</sup> Beyond all doubt, the revolutionary events of 1918–19 strained and broke their friendship. They responded differently to what their favorite poet, Goethe, called the "demands of the day." While Weber maintained an

inner, intellectual distance from the political cataclysm of his time,<sup>83</sup> Lukács seized the wheel of history. In 1916, Weber still hoped that Lukács would pursue an academic career in Germany. While visiting Budapest in May to discuss the issue of tariffs with the leading industrialists in Hungary, Weber stayed in the Lukács villa. Lukács's father implored Weber to remove his "unfortunate" son from the harmful environment he was in, and lure him back to academic life. This harmful environment included the Lukács Circle, also known as the Sunday Circle, whose cast of spiritual *virtuosi* was anathema to *père* Lukács. The ravens of gloom seemed forever to flap their wings over Lukács's circle of elect, who, in Balázs's words, were "happy in unhappiness". By late 1915, Lukács's writings were sounding the alarm over the void at the heart of Western civilization. He saw nothing but ruins: the ruins of society and the ruins of his own marriage. The circle became his life and conferred meaning on the void. The circle's Socratic air, its non-linear discourses on aesthetics and Eros, Dostoevsky and alienation, appeared to outsiders more subversive than lyrical. As Lukács's reputation grew in the circle, he was referred to as an "aesthetic pope" or "saint Lukács".

Others saw it differently. And it included Weber, whose two celebrated essays, "Science" and "Politics" show that he was well informed on Lukács and his circle's "sterile excitation" with the soul, and mystic flight from reality. Convinced that "man's fate today is to live in a time without god and prophet," Weber's query, which of the "warring gods should we serve?"<sup>84</sup> was also addressed to Lukács, who, by December 1918, wagered his salvation on Bolshevism. It is often alleged that Weber's personal and political ideals, based on rational life-conduct, are only compatible with the ethic of "responsibility," which is superior to the ethic of "conviction". But Weber, like Lukács, could not resist the lure of politics, and he confided to his mistress, Mina Tobler, that politics was his "secret love".<sup>85</sup>

In our view, Weber's concept of value-decisions also accords legitimacy to Lukács's ethic of "conviction". It should be kept in mind that Weber juxtaposed the two political ethics – ethic of "responsibility" and ethic of "conviction" – to religious ethic. In the political variety, force and power, as Lukács argued, are crucial in determining human action and conduct. For Weber, the exercise of domination by force and charisma are legitimate. But domination, contra Lukács, stands in opposition to religious ethics. Consequently, Weber's reference in *Politics as a Vocation* to the devitalization of the soul in the interest of collective power – proletariat – is addressed to Lukács.

At the same time, Weber's preference for a politics of "responsibility" is not without an ambiguity. While warning against the Lukácsian "salvation of the soul" through revolutionary politics, Weber acknowledges that the demon of



politics lives in an inner tension with the god of love, and can, at any time "lead to an irreconcilable conflict".<sup>86</sup> Careful reading of Weber's essay on "Politics" not only shows that it concludes on the note of reconciliation between conviction and responsibility, but that Weber was impressed, if not moved, by Lukács the *Gesinnungsethiker* [a man guided by an ethic of ultimate ends].

This is not to deny that Weber's main objection to Lukács's politics of pure conviction was that it presented not only moral and political problems, but also aesthetic and metaphysical ones. And aesthetic judgment, as Weber knew all too well from Kant, is not a responsible or accountable action. It should not surprise us then that when Lukács returned to Heidelberg in August 1916, Weber advised him to put his "cards on the table" and forget about aesthetics, and especially Dostoevsky and the "Russian soul". Addressing the question of whether Lukács was really only an essayist, and not a systematic thinker as Emil Lask and others contended, Weber was forthright:

A very good friend of yours, Lask is of the opinion that as a born essayist you will not be content with a systematic work and, therefore, you should not habilitate... If the completion of a systematic work is an unbearable pain to you, then I recommend that you forget about habilitation. Not because you do not deserve it, but because in the end it will help neither you nor your students. Then your road would be different.<sup>87</sup>

But Lukács's pursuit of academic career appeared half hearted, and he was frankly ambivalent about it. While assuring Weber of his intent to study sociology, Lukács insisted on lecturing in aesthetics. As for his doctoral dissertation in sociology, Lukács said it would mean at least two years of "toil" at a time when, he informed Weber, the "personal problems" of his friend [Béla Balázs] made great demands on his time. Still, Weber persisted and confided to Lukács, "I want you to become one of my colleagues as much as I have wanted anything. The question is: how to go about it?"<sup>88</sup>

Weber's colleagues at Heidelberg, however, were less enthusiastic about Lukács candidacy. Even Lukács complete work, *Theory of the Novel* (1916), had a rather mixed reception in Heidelberg. Complaining of the book's "transcendental" topography, Jaspers said that Lukács's austere thinking makes heavy demands on the reader.<sup>89</sup> And Ernst Troeltsch, finding the book "full of abstractions," claimed it was very difficult to read.<sup>90</sup>

Running into rather stiff opposition at Heidelberg, and completely worn out by the "reality" of his marriage,<sup>91</sup> Lukács poured out his heart to his friend Frederick Antal. He advised Lukács to "terrorize" Weber by threatening to leave Heidelberg, unless he could earn his degree in philosophy.<sup>92</sup> Lukács formally submitted, in May 1918, his application and supporting

materials. In his supporting statement, he said that while “none of the professors” at the University of Budapest influenced his development, his German professors – Dilthey, Simmel, Windelband, Ricker, Lask, and Max Weber – had inspired him greatly.<sup>93</sup>

However, Lukács’s academic hopes were quickly dashed. His application was rejected on the grounds that the University of Heidelberg could not “admit a foreigner, especially a Hungarian citizen, to *Habilitation*.”<sup>94</sup> Discussing the mad hazard of German academic life in *Science as a Vocation*, Weber remarked, “If the young scholar asks my advice with regard to habilitation... if he is a Jew, of course one says *lasciate ogni speranza*.” Lukács duly acknowledged the dean’s “friendly” letter and withdrew his application. Closing his letter, Lukács added that he could not return to Heidelberg anyway because in the meantime he had placed himself at the “disposal of the Hungarian government”. What Lukács did not tell the dean is that in the “meantime” he had joined the newly formed Communist Party of Hungary.

If anything, it was the Hungarian Republic of Councils of 1919, where Lukács rose to prominence as deputy commissar of public education, that strained his friendship with Weber. Shortly before his death, in his last letter to Lukács, Weber wrote:

My esteemed friend, of course we are separated by our political views. I am absolutely convinced that these experiments can only have and will have the consequence of discrediting socialism for the coming one hundred years... Whenever I think of what the present political events – since 1918 – have cost in terms of unquestionably valuable people, regardless of the “direction” of their choices (e.g. Schumpeter and now you), I cannot help feeling bitter about this senseless fate.<sup>95</sup>

As death was closing on Weber (June 1920), he edited and reorganized his most systematic work, *Economy and Society*, which Guenther Roth called “the sum of Max Weber’s scholarly vision of society.”<sup>96</sup> But as Weber worked on the galley-proofs of *Economy and Society*, he also took issue with Lukács. Weber was familiar with at least three of Lukács’s Marxist essays, notably *What is Orthodox Marxism?* (March 1919), *The Changing Function of Historical Materialism* (June 1920), and *Class Consciousness* (March 1920). These essays re-appeared, though in revised form, in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). In his “Introduction” to *Economy and Society*, Roth specifically states that in his work Weber took issue, among others, with “the Marxism of the time.” Internal evidence in *Economy and Society* confirms that when Weber drew the line “against Marxism” in that work<sup>97</sup> he drew it against Lukács. Analyzing the distribution of power in terms of class and party, Weber pointedly reminded Lukács, who claimed that history had entrusted the

proletariat "with the task of transforming society consciously,"<sup>98</sup> that not all "power entails social honor."<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, to treat "class" philosophically or conceptually, in Weber's view,

must not lead to that kind of pseudo-scientific operation with the concepts of class and class interest which is so frequent these days and which has found its most classic expression in the statement of a talented author, that the individual may be in error concerning his interest but that the class is infallible about its interest.<sup>100</sup>

This "talented author" was Lukács. In *What is Orthodox Marxism?* Lukács declared Marx's theory of reality as superior to that propounded by the apostles of *Realpolitik*. These apostles, Lukács wrote, swaying "like reeds in the wind, judged their actions solely by the 'facts,' changed tactics after every victory, or every defeat, and then stood helpless when they had to make real decisions."<sup>101</sup> Weber was the leading "apostle" of *Realpolitik*. Indeed, Lukács's reference to Weber as standing "helpless" when he had to make decision is laced with irony. Lukács was referring to Weber, who, as member of the German peace delegation at Versailles, not only participated in the negotiations in Paris concerning Germany's responsibility for the war, but argued that the Treaty of Versailles, which he called the "treaty of shame" must be rejected "whatever the risks".<sup>102</sup>

As a revolutionary, Lukács broke with the diabolical cycle of European power politics. But Weber, whom Friedrich Meinecke called the "German Machiavelli,"<sup>103</sup> whose utilitarian concept of the state combined with passionate nationalism, could never really free himself from Germany and its "old majesty". Despite the collapse of imperial Reich, Weber's political views remained unshaken. Summing it up, Mommsen wrote:

He stood by his principles and could still see no errors in the principles of political power that had guided German policy in the past (or that he would have liked to see guide it). In 1918 and 1919, at a time when there was a general retreat from the belief in power characteristic of the Wilhelmine epoch, he expressly advocated power as the means and presupposition of all policy, and sharply attacked pacifism.<sup>104</sup>

Not surprisingly, Weber's *Politics as a Vocation* names three pre-eminent qualities for politicians: passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion.<sup>105</sup> Weber left no doubt that intellectuals who invoke the proud name of revolution lack objective responsibility. Indeed, Weber reminded Lukács, without actually naming him, that he was blind to reality because he justified the ethics of conviction by the claim that the "purpose hallows the means," when, in essence, the purpose cannot even be achieved. And yet, it is

by no means obvious that Weber embraced unequivocally the ethics of "responsibility". As a matter of fact, Roth stated, "Weber's critical stance appeared so deeply rooted in an ethics of ultimate ends that Lukács could exclaim: 'Max Weber would be the right man to free socialism from the miserable relativism' of the Revisionists."<sup>106</sup>

It is also worth emphasizing that Weber's intellectual and philosophical disputes with Lukács are confined to and concealed in his most challenging and difficult works. Weber's two essays, "Science" and "Politics," comprise "rhetorical masterpieces." Yet the very compactness of the essays, with their poignant synopsis of his philosophical and political outlook, "impedes easy comprehension". And *Economy and Society* is the most demanding "text" yet written by a sociologist. This work, as Roth put it, is a "continuous challenge at several levels of comprehension".<sup>107</sup> These works of Weber, however, provide internal evidence that he was familiar with Lukács's politics of the soul. Conversely, we know that Lukács read Weber's 1918 series of articles, fraught with excerpts from the still unpublished *Economy and Society*.

The "battle of gods" unfolded in Weber's political debate with Lukács on the "future" of European civilization shaken by war and revolution. Facts alone cannot prove the truth of their respective standpoints. It was world-views and visions that collided in Weber and Lukács. Both struggled for ultimate principles and values, and exemplified scholarship and commitment. Lukács considered the Communist Party, the mentor of true consciousness, to be the final arbiter of truth and reason. To Weber, the political party, including the Communist Party, is but a "form of domination".<sup>108</sup> Party-oriented action, said Weber, involves association. By contrast, Lukács equated such action with conspiracy. As for Lukács's claim that the Communist Party resides in the sphere of morality, Weber countered with Nietzsche's observation that the pariah people's group-action is fueled by "ressentiment". The party for Lukács defined values or life-meanings, not "ressentiment". Weber, of course, insisted that rationality is the true realm of free, value-oriented action. Consequently, he saw the Communist Party as Lukács's "iron cage". Weber's lecture on socialism in 1918 was remarkable for its clear-sighted statement that in socialism organizations dominate men, a dominion which is an example of what Simmel called the "tragedy" of culture.

It has been suggested that Lukács influenced Weber's understanding of Marx. Allegedly, Weber shows a more "sophisticated" understanding of Marx in *Economy and Society* than one can find in *The Protestant Ethic*.<sup>109</sup> Apart from the fact that Weber never had a Marxist phase,<sup>110</sup> there is no textual proof that Weber, battling Lukács, changed his mind on Marx. In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber attempts to demonstrate how sectarian convictions of

a rationalist kind promoted "methodological conduct" in all spheres of life, including the economic realm. Nonetheless, he rejected monocausal explanations in *The Protestant Ethic* as well as in *Economy and Society*.

Unlike Marx and Lukács, Weber saw rationalization as the revolutionary process in Western civilization. Like Marx, Weber was concerned with the concept of change and this, in one way or another, involves analysis of class and power. Weber's believe in developmental necessity, however, was not anticipatory of the historical likelihood of socialism. The trouble with Marxism, as Weber saw it, was its fusion of natural-law beliefs with a deterministic social theory. Weber's sociology is devoid of "deterministic perspective" inherent in Marxism. And Lukács could not impart any "determinist perspective" to Weber, for the simple reason that Lukács, even as a Marxist, focused on values that inspired ethical and spiritual conduct. It is not material interests that define Lukács's intellectual core, but values, whose rational and irrational spheres play crucial role in Weber's sociology.

Just why rationality obsessed Weber, that is identified with his name, has so far, to my knowledge, eluded us.<sup>111</sup> Marx was not sympathetic to irrationalism, whereas the pre-Marxist Lukács was the leading proponent of the irrational spheres of life. Some scholars have traced Weber's "dread fascination" with absolutist values and otherwise irrational vectors to his suffocating family atmosphere<sup>112</sup> and his sense of "duty" in being a scholar and remaining true to his primary sources. Although there is no reason to dispute this, we believe it was also due to Lukács that Weber introduced the concept of irrational into his scholarly work. This is not to deny Weber's attempts to quench Lukács's "flame of pure intentions". In sharp disagreement with Lukács, Weber equated revolution with usurpation and non-legitimate domination. In contrast to Lukács, who dwelled on the "movement of the whole,"<sup>113</sup> Weber's sociological focus remained the "charismatic leader". It is safe to assume that Weber had also Lukács in mind when he inserted this passage in the galley-proofs of *Economy and Society*:

Previous to this situation every revolution which has been attempted under modern conditions failed completely because of the indispensability of trained officials and of the lack of its own organized staff... See below, the ch. on the theory of revolution [Unwritten].<sup>114</sup>

Had Weber lived a few months longer, he most likely would have written his "theory of revolution" in response to Lukács's revolutionary politics. Unlike Weber, whose intellectual integrity convinced him that nothing is gained by yearning for prophets and saviors, Lukács made the leap of faith

into *vita nuova*. Between two Sunday Circle meetings, as it were, Lukács converted to communism. *Consummatum est*. The deed was done. Lukács rationalized his conversion by quoting Kierkegaard's saying that sacrificing one's life for a cause is always an irrational act. "To believe," said Lukács, "means that man consciously assumes an irrational attitude toward his own self."<sup>115</sup>

Lukács was already in exile in Vienna, and under the sentence of death in post-revolutionary Budapest, when *père* Lukács made his last appeal to Weber to rescue Lukács from revolutionary politics and entice him back to Heidelberg. In his response, Weber wrote:

The reaction here to the communist regime of the Spring 1919 is still very strong. And even I am exposed to student demonstrations. The academic world has become extremely reactionary and also radically anti-Semitic.<sup>116</sup>

It speaks of Weber's integrity that when strong pressure was exerted on Austria to extradite Lukács, Weber intervened on behalf of his friend turned foe. But Weber refused to sign the public appeal, "Save Georg Lukács," spearheaded by Thomas Mann, among others. As Weber explained it to Lukács, "I did not sign the recent public appeal because I had written earlier to the minister of justice in Budapest on your behalf. I also indicated that I would not join in any public action."<sup>117</sup>

Although *père* Lukács's appeal to Weber is understandable, it is inconceivable that Lukács would have heeded Weber's call of returning to academic life. In Weber and Lukács the "daemon" – *das Dämonische* – was present as fate, which decreed "from self you cannot flee". Weber's intellectual testament, *Science as a Vocation*, concludes with Goethe's concept of duty to meet the "demands of the day" in human relations as well as in our vocation.<sup>118</sup> Accepting the Goethe Prize, Lukács, already mortally ill, also defined his life in terms of duty to meet the "demands of the day" by

...cast[ing] ourselves into the torrent of time  
 Into the whirl of eventfulness  
 ...It is restless action makes the man.<sup>119</sup>

## Notes

1. Daniel Bell, "First Love and Early Sorrows," *Partisan Review*, 48 (1981, No. 4), pp. 533–51.
2. Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Boston, Mass., 1960), p. 423.
3. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism* (3 vols. New York, 1978), Vol. 1, p. vi.
4. See especially, Lee Congdon, *The Young Lukács* (Chapel Hill, 1983); pp. 84–86, 111–13; Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and his Generation 1900–1918* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 184–87; Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York, 1979), pp. 116–18, 122–23; Michael Lowy, Georg Lukács, *From Romanticism to Bolshevism* (London, 1979), pp. 37–43. Among the major works on Weber that examine his relationship to Lukács, see Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber* (Chicago, 1989); Wolfgang Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion and Domination* (California, 1989); Harvey Goldman, *Max Weber and Thomas Mann* (California, 1988); Lawrence A. Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage* (California, 1989); Alan Sica, *Weber, Irrationality and Social Order* (California, 1988); Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York, 1969). For a comprehensive overview of contemporaries, including Lukács, who shaped, and were in turn influenced by Max Weber, see, Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, ed., *Max Weber and his Contemporaries* (London, 1987).
5. Dirk Kasler, *Max Weber* (Chicago, 1988), p. 212.
6. There is not a single reference to Lukács in such major works on Weber as, for instance, Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (New York, 1960); Julien Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber* (New York, 1968); Randall Collins, *Max Weber* (Beverly Hills, 1986).
7. Donald G. MacRae, *Weber* (London, 1974), p. 52.
8. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber* (Chicago, 1989), p. 53.
9. Mommsen, p. 53.
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11. Cited by Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought* (Princeton, N.J., 1991), p. 276.
12. For this information I am indebted to Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*, pp. 279–85.
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19. Quoted by Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, p. 307.
20. Father to Lukács, 13 August 1912, LAK.

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24. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue – a Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, 1981), pp. 24–27.
25. Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, p. 68.
26. For Nietzsche's influence on Lukács, see Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács*, especially ch. 4: "The Nietzschean Moment."
27. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (New York, 1961), p. 14.
28. Lukács, *Ifjúkori művek (1901–1918)* [Early works], ed. Árpád Timár (Budapest, 1977), p. 660.
29. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p. 335.
30. Kasler, *Max Weber*, p. 215.
31. Lukács, *Soul and Form* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p. 17.
32. Lukács, *Soul and Form*, p. 16.
33. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p. 337.
34. See F. Bertaux's review in *La Nouvelle revue française* 5 (January 1913), p. 169.
35. Nietzsche's third essay, "What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?," in the *Genealogy of Morals* made a lasting impression on Lukács and Weber.
36. Lukács, *Soul and Form*, p. 48.
37. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York, 1976), p. 82.
38. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 195.
39. Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, pp. 89–90.
40. From Max Weber, p. 347.
41. Martin Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters* (New York, 1974), p. 170.
42. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p. 371.
43. Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters*, p. 170.
44. Dieter Henrich, "Karl Jaspers: Thinking with Max Weber in Mind," in *Max Weber and his Contemporaries*, pp. 528–43.
45. Karl Jaspers, *On Max Weber* (New York, 1989), p. xx.
46. Bruce Mazlish, *A New Science. The Breakdown of Connections and the Birth of Sociology* (New York, 1989), p. 223.
47. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p. 372.
48. From Max Weber, p. 350.
49. Lukács, *Napló – Tagebuch (1910–11)* (Budapest, 1981), p. 41.
50. It is interesting to note that among the Anglo-Saxon moral philosophers who turned against Kant, Iris Murdoch specifically states, "We need a moral philosophy in which the concept of love, so rarely mentioned now by philosophers, can once again be made central." See Murdoch's essay, "On 'God' and 'Good'," in *Revisions*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas & Alasdair MacIntyre (Indiana, 1983), pp. 68–91.
51. Max Weber to Lukács, 10 March 1913, LAK.
52. Lukács, *Napló – Tagebuch*, p. 53.
53. Marianne Weber to Lukács, 31 July 1912, LAK.
54. From Max Weber, p. 348.
55. See Randall Collins, *Max Weber* (California, 1986), pp. 18–27; Julien Freund, *The Sociology of Max Weber* (New York, 1968), pp. 32–35.



56. Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, p. 287.
57. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, pp. 370–71.
58. Lukács, *Modern Drama*, Vol. 1, p. 161.
59. See Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. 1.
60. See Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, tr. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).
61. Lukács to Max Weber, [December] 1915, LAK.
62. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 97.
63. Weber to Lukács, 14 August 1916, LAK.
64. Paul Vermes, "The Buber–Lukács Correspondence (1911–21)," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute of Jews from Germany*, 27 (1982), pp. 369–78.
65. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890–1920* (Chicago, 1984), p. 195.
66. Hilda Bauer to Lukács, 4 August 1912, LAK.
67. Marianne Weber to Lukács, 15 November 1913, LAK.
68. Marianne Weber to Lukács, 6 June 1913, LAK.
69. Béla Balázs, *Napló* [Diary] (2 vols. Budapest, 1982), Vol. 2, p. 173.
70. Winston S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries* (New York, 1937), p. 104.
71. Lukács to Paul Ernst, 4 May 1915, LAK.
72. On dating Weber's lectures, see Wolfgang Schlichter's excursus in his study co-authored with Guenther Roth, *Max Weber's Vision of History* (California, 1979), pp. 113–16.
73. See Ernst Robert Curtius, "Max Weber on Science as a Vocation" in *Max Weber's Science as a Vocation*, ed. Peter Lassman, Irving Velody (London, 1989), p. 73.
74. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p. 594.
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76. Wolfgang Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspective on the Sociology of Max Weber* (New York, 1974), p. 3.
77. Ernst Bloch to Lukács, 16 August 1916, LAK.
78. From Max Weber, p. 154.
79. From Max Weber, p. 143.
80. Lukács, *Napló–Tagebuch* (1910–11), p. 71.
81. Paul Honigsheim, *On Max Weber* (New York, 1968), p. 27.
82. Honigsheim, *On Max Weber*, p. 28.
83. For Weber's letter of resignation in April 1920 from a major committee in the German Democratic Party, see Bruce B. Frye, "A Letter from Max Weber," *The Journal of Modern History*, 39 (June 1967), pp. 119–25.
84. From Max Weber, p. 153.
85. Mommsen, *The Political and Social World of Max Weber*, p. 7.
86. From Max Weber, p. 126.
87. Max Weber to Lukács, 14 August 1916, LAK.
88. Max Weber to Lukács [23 August] 1916, LAK.
89. Karl Jaspers to Lukács, 20 October 1916, LAK.
90. Ernst Troeltsch to Lukács, 10 January 1917, LAK.
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92. Frederick Antal to Lukács, October 1916, LAK.
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108. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 2, p. 939.
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111. See Sica, *Weber, Irrationality and Social Order*, esp. Ch. 1.
112. See Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, 39-74, and Martin Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters*, pp. 3-11.
113. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 24.
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115. Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács*, p. 203.
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