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ON "SOUL AND FORM"

IAN FAIRLEY

'The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it.'

Oscar Wilde

In the first part of my essay I shall offer an historical and philological account of the writing of György Lukács' *Soul and Form*: my purpose here is to detail the revision of Lukács' text between its Hungarian and German editions. I shall then discuss the function of this critical 'revisionism', focusing on Lukács' attempt to establish the authority of 'judgement' by appeal to some higher, aesthetic court.

I would like to place *Soul and Form* within the context of Lukács' work from 1902 to 1918, and to propose that the book, first published in Hungarian in 1910, marks a transition in the concerns of its author, from literary criticism to philosophical critique. This reading is borne out by an inventory of the projects undertaken by Lukács during these years.

His early drama criticism (1902–1903), and his involvement with Budapest's Thália theatre group (1904–1907), founded on the model of the Freie Bühne, provided a practical grounding for his first major work, *The Evolution of Modern Drama*, which was written between 1906 and 1907, and reworked by late 1909, although only published, in Hungarian, in 1911. The essays collected in *Soul and Form* were written between 1907 and 1910, and the book itself, conceived in early 1909, was revised and enlarged for its second German edition of 1911. Behind this project, and unelaborated except in note-form, is an unwritten book on Romanticism, planned between 1907 and 1911. Lukács also published a large number of articles, studies and reviews, most of which are described by the category of 'cultural criticism'. Ten of these articles, written between 1908 and 1911, were collected in *Aesthetic Culture* (1912); many of the others are, in effect, satellites of the drama book. Eight studies of the poet and dramatist Béla Balázs, dating from 1910 to 1918, were published in 1918 as *Béla Balázs and his critics*.

Lukács left Budapest for Heidelberg in May 1912, a physical and intellectual departure which announced his endeavour to develop a properly philosophical account of literature and art. During his five years in Germany, Lukács wrote the two unfinished (and posthumously published) aesthetics, known as the *Heidelberg Philosophy of Art* (1912–14), and *Heidelberg Aesthetics* (1916–18), which were intended to qualify him for his university habilitation. The best-known work of this period is *The Theory of the Novel*, the prolegomena to an unwritten study of Dostoevsky, which first appeared in the *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* in 1916. All three works were written in German, as were most of the occasional articles which Lukács published during

his Heidelberg years. When, in December 1918 – shortly after his request for habilitation had been turned down – Lukács joined the recently created Hungarian Communist Party, he abandoned any formal, vocational engagement with literature for the next decade.¹

Lukács identified philosophy with a bid for intellectual ‘maturity’, in contrast to which his earlier work was consigned to an homogeneous and subsequently disclaimed ‘youth’: ‘everything comes back to the old question: how can I be a philosopher?’² Philosophy was, in these terms, an autonomous critical discourse, which takes its object as already given, and asks its questions secure of that givenness. Thus Lukács’ *Philosophy of Art* claims, in its first sentence, to have reversed the priorities of Kantian aesthetics, and to have removed judgement – from the sphere of inquiry: ‘Works of art exist – how are they possible?’³ His earlier work, however, which was both formally and methodologically subordinate to its chosen object, remained within the problematic of judgement, and for that reason was held to lack a coherent critical self-identity: ‘(The essayist) is delivered from the relative, the inessential, by the force of judgement of the idea he has glimpsed; but who gives him the right to judge? It would almost be true to say that he seizes that right, that he creates his judgement-values from within himself. But nothing is separated from true judgement by a deeper abyss than its approximation, the squint-eyed category of complacent and self-satisfied knowledge’.⁴ *Soul and Form* stands on the threshold of Lukács’ turn towards philosophy; it testifies both to its own theoretical problems and anxieties, and to those underlying the sociological and literary-historical methodology of the drama book. *Soul and Form* thereby throws into relief the differential relations between those critical approaches – the essay, sociology, and philosophical aesthetics – which Lukács explored up to 1918.

I shall discuss *Soul and Form* as a text in crisis. This crisis, in the function of criticism, was registered by Lukács in terms of his own intellectual vocation; its existential aspect is that of a subject encumbered with judgement, whose dilemma lies in the formulation of the very subjectivity to which he, as a critic, lays claim. The subject is unable to establish a separate identity over and against that of his object; as Adorno says of cultural criticism: ‘The insufficiency of the subject. . . which in its contingency and narrowness passes judgement on the might of the existent, becomes intolerable when the subject itself is mediated down to its innermost make-up by the notion to which it opposes itself as independent and sovereign’.⁵ Lukács’ attempt to overcome this insufficiency, and to achieve, in the essay, a ‘philosophically valid. . . “objectless” style’,⁶ can, I believe, be demonstrated in the passage of *Soul and Form* from Hungarian to German, its migration to a language and culture in which philosophy is ‘at home’.⁷

There are a number of differences between the Hungarian and German editions of the book:⁸ the order of the essays was changed, as were their titles; the conclusion to the introductory essay, ‘*On the Nature and Form of the Essay*’, was completely altered; and two new essays, on Charles-Louis Philippe and Paul Ernst, were added to the collection. With the exception of the essay on Paul Ernst, which Lukács wrote in German, the second edition was largely a translation of the first; the Philippe essay had been published separately in Hungarian.⁹ Lukács himself played a relatively minor role in the translation, which indicates, perhaps, his preoccupation with an altogether different imperative: the need to change the terms of his own intellectual practice, and to write immediately in

German.¹⁰ The effect of the translation was, however, to produce for Lukács a compositely German authorial identity.¹¹

Lukács first mentioned the possibility of collecting his essays in a letter addressed to Leó Popper of 22 May 1909.¹² The volume was to include four essays already published in the Hungarian literary journal *Nyugat* [West], on Novalis, Rudolf Kassner, Stefan George and Richard Beer-Hofmann, and Lukács planned to write two more essays specially for the collection, on Theodor Storm and the correspondence of the Brownings. An introduction, possibly framed as a letter to Popper, would discuss the form of the essay and seek to justify its lyrical nature 'on scientific, psychological and formal grounds'.¹³ The title which he proposed for the volume was (and remained) *A lélek és a formák. Kísérletek*; Lukács insisted on the latter term over the more conventional *esszé*, which was rejected as 'boring and abstract'. This suggests that he initially located *Soul and Form* very much on the near side of philosophy: *kísérlet* can mean either 'attempt', 'endeavour' or 'essay', and is used as a Hungarian alternative to the literary loan-word in a manner comparable to the German *Versuch*; in addition to this, it has the scientific sense of 'trial' or 'experiment' (as in *kísérleti lélektan*, 'experimental psychology'). *Kísérlet* is a term which operates in the realm of the actual, as opposed to that of the abstract; it intends a positive, demonstrable content, and it was on this basis that Lukács first intended to justify his own 'essayism'.

The first published version of *Soul and Form* contains one change and one addition to the above-mentioned plan. Instead of the essay on the Brownings, Lukács wrote on 'Søren Kierkegaard and Regine Olsen', thus replacing the motif of creative union in marriage with one of creative renunciation, and ensuring that 'woman' is consistently identified in the book as that which art must negate — 'life'. In conclusion to the volume, Lukács provided a *Dialogue on Laurence Sterne*, which counterpoints a debate between two male students on the merits of Goethe and Sterne (representing 'form' and 'formlessness'), with their attempts to win over the girl who is a silent witness to their conversation.

Upon completing the Kierkegaard essay, Lukács wrote to Popper with the order of contents he envisaged for the book. The major sequence was to be the following: Novalis (death), B.H. (death as a symbol of separation and alienation), Kierkegaard (separation and alienation in life), George (the poetry of separation and alienation), Sterne (a satyr play on the two types of alienation, in content and in form).¹⁴ These were to be preceded by the introduction and the essays on Kassner and Storm; but while the latter connects with Novalis by virtue of the 'sacral background' common to each, Lukács regrets that no such bond exists between it and Kassner. It seems that Lukács wished to frame those essays whose subject was the refusal of 'life', in its immediacy, by 'art' (which attempts to create a tragic ethos from this refusal), with those whose point of view is a stoic or ironic acceptance (and even celebration) of life as it is, and which, in their turn, refuse to countenance tragedy. At the same time, the two prefatory and complementary 'essays on the essay' stand somewhat apart from the rest of the collection, and cannot, for that reason, be read as an interpretative key to the whole. Rather, the essay is conscious of itself as a form which must be subjected to the same critique that it applies to other forms.

This critique is the site of an important ambivalence towards the heritage of romanticism. It is most fully expressed in the essay on Sterne, which supplies both an ironic rejoinder to the tragic view of life and an indictment of the failure to achieve, in art, the authentic image of that life through capitulation to the 'bad infinity' of romanticism: 'Only contrast brings things really to life; only constraint brings forth real spontaneity, only in something that is formed do we feel the metaphysic of formlessness; only then do we feel that chaos is a world principle.'¹⁵ Lukács regarded *Soul and Form* as itself a fragment which had 'split off' from part of a larger project on Romanticism (also formulated as a book on Friedrich Schlegel), which he envisaged as 'a prolegomenon to a metaphysics of form'; a prolegomenon merely, because 'it would offer only a critique of the concept of form. . . which reached its peak in the aesthetics of German Romanticism. . . It would tell of the tragedy of this world-view, which strives for the ultimate concept of form, but which, at one and the same time, 'is obliged to dissolve each individual form'. A prolegomenon, because all Lukács can do at this point is to question form as a 'universal', as something which both orders a 'view of life' (*világkép*), and is ordered within one; were he to ask this question correctly, he would 'already have arrived at an aesthetics of literature'.¹⁶

Soul and Form, the *dissecta membra* of an unwritten prolegomenon, has recourse in its turn to the ironic modality of Romanticism. For the essay is never quite commensurate with form: '[the essayist's] forms are never completely filled, or else they cannot encompass everything he wants them to encompass'.¹⁷ The essay gives form to a longing for form which, by its nature, can never be consummated. Hence the '*Dialogue on Sterne*' concludes with the intellectual defeat of the romantic principle and the erotic defeat of the classical. The formal imperative, which tends, by extension, towards an 'ethic of tragedy',¹⁸ is shown as incompatible with the vagaries of life and love. In the first version of *Soul and Form*, tragedy is diagnosed, despite itself, as the condition of longing, and the last word is given to the 'satyr play': 'Do you know why this essay is more profound than all my other writings? Because of its form, which is a critique of all my writing and of my entire way of life. . . You will understand this better when you read my introduction, which will tell how the essayist's longing leads him to his real goal – the human. . . I am now so conscious of this that I am going to change the sequence of the book and place this essay at the *very end*, for it satirizes the whole volume'.¹⁹

The second, German version of *Soul and Form* concludes instead with a statement beyond irony, '*The Metaphysics of Tragedy*'. While the Hungarian edition preserved the table of contents which Lukács first proposed for it, the order of the second is characterized by its internal asymmetry; only the two free-standing 'essays on the essay' remain in their original position. Furthermore, the titles of the essays are altered to stress the thematic representativeness of the figures they discuss. Where the Hungarian offered just a name – '*Rudolf Kassner; Novalis*' – this name is, in the German edition, subordinated to a motif or gloss: '*Poetry, Platonism and Form: Rudolf Kassner*'; '*On the Romantic Philosophy of Life: Novalis*'; and the same is registered in the title of the collection, where *kisértlet* is translated not by *Versuch* but by *Essay (Die Seele und die Formen: Essays)*. Lukács, in these revisions, alerts us to the symbolic function of the

essay, making explicit the type of schematisation which silently informed the Hungarian originals. This does not impinge upon our reading of the essays themselves, but it does indicate, gesturally, a redrafting of the essay's own programme. When formulated as an 'experiment' (*kísérlet*), the essay takes its object as empirically 'given' and explores the nature of that 'givenness'; because it speaks of 'something that has already been given form', the essay is 'bound' to its objects and 'must always speak "the truth" about them, must find expression for their essential nature'.²⁰ Investiture with the largely honorific office of 'essay' does not dispense with these responsibilities (especially towards the 'truth'), but it does involve an adjustment of priorities and an extension of powers: 'the modern essay does not always have to speak of books or poets. . . It stands too high, it sees and connects too many things to be the simple exposition or explanation of a work; the title of every essay is preceded in invisible letters, by the words "Thoughts occasioned by. . .".'²¹

Lukács offers this more sublime vantage-point in the revised conclusion to his introductory excursus 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay'.²² It announces, I believe, a transvaluation of the essay which, if not already realized, is nonetheless in process. There are two sides to this process: on the one hand, it is acknowledged that the essay must take leave of its immediate object if it is to realize its own critical capacity; and on the other, the essay is made conscious of itself as a form in crisis even as it aspires, perforce, to the realm of generality. The essay becomes 'problematic', for in surrendering the intuitive naivety by which it first apprehends and experiences the object-world, it anticipates the absorption of its own (experiential) particularity within the universals of 'system': 'For in the system of values yet to be found, the longing we spoke of would be satisfied and therefore abolished'. (*SF*,17)

The essay's changing role is noted, symptomatically, in the first version of Lukács' Introduction, but there the prognosis is very different: 'are Emerson's light *gratia* and Kassner's many, nightmare-ridden human types only "literature"? I believe that our experiences are constantly becoming more and more conceptual'.²³ As the empirical world adjusts to the essay's own conceptual bias, Lukács foresees a time in which the essay will become the 'supplement and equivalent of poetic form'. The essay is on the road to self-expression: 'And one must not worry, not even for a moment, about how far one has travelled along this road; one must simply keep going, going, going. . .'.²⁴ The future lies before it, promising both fulfilment in itself and 'equivalence' with the object of its longing, literature.

This prospect is, however, revised towards philosophy, and in its second version represents the essay as the 'pure type of precursor' to the 'great value-definer of aesthetics'. (*SF*,16) Only philosophy can resolve the subjective and self-willed nature of the essay. Judgement will then be final, codified; but until that time, 'the essential, value-determining thing about [the essay] is not the verdict (as is the case with the system) but the process of judging'. (*SF*,18) The essay thus exists *for* the future, but *in* the present; it gives form to a longing whose fulfilment promises the essay's own cancelation within the third term of aesthetics. Lukács concludes the second version of his essay, not with an open-ended imperative, but with a statement of categorical reflexivity: 'The

critique of this book is contained, in all possible sharpness and entirety, in the very approach from which it sprang.' (SF,18) The second edition of *Soul and Form* acquires a new framework – that of philosophic endeavour.

The essay is ironic: 'the irony I mean consists in the critic always speaking about the ultimate problems of life, but in a tone which implies that he is only discussing pictures and books, only the inessential and pretty ornaments of real life'. (SF, 9) When it ceases to speak of such things, the essay becomes 'problematic, even further removed from life-values than if it had continued to report faithfully on books'. (SF, 15) The essay is both greater and lesser than its true object, 'life', and this is the category by which we must judge the essay. Life, however, is a category which eludes intellection, which can only be proved on our pulses, by intuition. How, then, are we to read the essay, which is committed to the practices of revision and re-reading in the name of life? 'It is simply not true that there exists an objective, external criterion of life and truth, e.g. that the truth of Grimm's, Dilthey's or Schlegel's Goethe can be tested against the "real" Goethe. It is not true, because many Goethes, different from one another and each profoundly different from *our* Goethe may convince us of their life.' (SF,15)

The essay transforms its object as it migrates from the particular, historically evidenced life ('*az élet*'; '*das Leben*'), to a philosophically valid concept of the same ('*az élet*'; '*das Leben*').²⁵ Thus the essay's 'lyrical' evocation of its original effaces the specific or attributable traces of a work in order to create a new, composite text – that of the 'life's work' (*életmunka: Lebenswerk*)²⁶ – in which life and work, as well as fictional and critical discourses, merge. (The essay treats the autobiographical document – letter or diary – as the textual equivalent of the literary work, which it then 're-reads' with an autobiographical inflexion.) Typical of this strategy is the 'unsourced' quotation, the absorption of quotation into one's own text: 'as Wilde says somewhere. . .'. To assert the primacy of the source, to assimilate the text of the essay to that of its own imputed 'authorities', is to misread the ironic function of the authority it claims, which is negated as it is acknowledged. At the same time, these devices make it difficult to establish a critical perspective on the essay's shifting discourse. Paraphrase is frustrated; its pretensions to expositional coherence and consistency founded on the actual arbitrariness of the essay's method, on the discontinuities which underlie its textual appropriations and accretions.

In attempting a critique of *Soul and Form*, we are confronted with problems which Lukács has already anticipated: 'The essays intended for inclusion in this book lie before me and I ask myself whether one is entitled to publish such works – whether such works can give rise to a new unity, a book. For the point at issue for us now is not what these essays can offer as "studies in literary history", but whether there is something in them that makes them a new literary form of its own, and whether the principle that makes them such is the same in each one.' (SF,1) If one assumes the collection is a 'unity', then the reading one offers will be, to its own mind at least, homogeneous with the text upon which it is a commentary. But if exegesis perceives its object as, in the first place, discontinuous – in the process of revision – a critical (and necessary) gap opens up between text and commentary. It is the anxiety of this awareness that preoccupies me

here, an immanent sense of the 'otherness' of one's own critical position; its insubstantiality when compared with the inscrutable 'in-itselfness' of its object. This involves a problem of critical ethics: how is one to represent an object that one cannot grasp whole? To what extent can criticism secede from its object while still conceding the integrity of that object within its interpretative re-presentation? These questions are raised, in an extreme form, by the practice of the essay, by its transgression of the discursive boundaries between literature and criticism (and their different truth-claims), by its attempt to create its own text (a new object) out of those authored by others.

I would suggest that it is only by attending to revision as a process constitutive of the essay that we can build an interpretative bridge towards *Soul and Form* as a whole; for the 'idea' which the essay entertains of literary history structures the reading, or rewriting, of its object. I have already tried to demonstrate, at one remove from this critical project, how the work of textual history impinges upon that of exposition. It is not sufficient, however, merely to restore *Soul and Form* to literary history in its positive, philological aspect, for that is to misunderstand the essay's attempt to unsource itself from history in pursuit of the generality, 'life'.

A reading of the essays in *Soul and Form* must establish the discursive *topoi*, contours and boundaries of the collection as a whole. The book must be reconstellated as a set of topographically related texts whose difference is a function of the same discursive economy (tragic and ironic). Similarly, those texts which bear upon or find their way into the essays should themselves be redeployed within this constellation, not as sources, influences or 'sub-texts', but as equivalents which serve to gauge the specificity of Lukács' own writing. In what follows, I shall attempt to read parts of Lukács' prefatory essay '*On the Nature and Form of the Essay*' against Walter Pater's *The Renaissance* (1873), in order to establish those features specific – and contiguous – to the 'revisionism' of *Soul and Form*. Literary history is, in the end, obliged to use the essay's methods against itself.

Lukács does not attempt to formulate either the actual or projected 'unity' of *Soul and Form*. Having begun by addressing his authorial conscience on the matter, he promptly disclaims the personal instance for the general, and raises the question to a higher critical power, to the *possibility* of unity, whose criterion is historically immutable 'form'. We thus turn to the question of the essay 'as such', or rather to three questions addressed to its possible generic identity:

To what extent have the really great writings which belong to this category been given literary form, and to what extent is this form of theirs an independent one? To what extent do the standpoint of such a work and the form given to this standpoint lift it out of the sphere of science and place it at the side of the arts, yet without blurring the frontiers of either? To what extent do they endow the work with the force necessary for a conceptual re-ordering of life, and yet distinguish it from the icy, final perfection of philosophy? (SF,1)

'To what extent': the speculative mode cautions us against the unqualified rephrasing of each question as a statement. Their hypothetical cast announces the procedure of Lukács' excursus on the essay which, before it can commence its inquiry, must first ask the correct questions of itself. These questions are supplementary rather than consecutive

to one another; they share the same margins, and serve first to delineate the near and far boundaries of literature and philosophy, science and the arts, between which the essay travels in pursuit of its essence: 'all the discussions have barely touched upon the essence of the real question: what is an essay?' (SF,1) Lukács' inquiry is conducted against the grain of the essay's assumption of the 'self-evident' truth that 'criticism is an art and not a science'. What is more, the 'objective' or generic ideal posited by his questions acts as a 'yardstick' by which to measure how far 'such writings. . . fall short of attaining it'; it seems to be a condition of the essay *not* to fulfil its own generic maxima.

Starting from a disjunction between the essay as it is, and as it ought to be, Lukács' account occupies a parenthetical realm between the achievements of the past and the promise of the future: 'The critique, the essay — call it provisionally what you will — as a work of art, a genre?' These categories are not all of a piece, and cannot simply be mapped onto one another as if they were typologically congruent; the existent but undefined 'essay' glides between them in search of an identity. This points up the difficulty of reading the 'essay on the essay' as if it were prescriptively consistent; Lukács' own exposition is conducted on this side of philosophy, from within the same crisis of identity, and its status — as critique, or essay — must itself remain in doubt. The subject and object of criticism are, in this first 'essay', querulously non-identical. Rather than providing an answer, once and for all, to the question 'what is an essay?' — thereby supplying a metacritical 'solution' to the collection as a whole, a means of reading each essay as part of a larger 'unity' — the text registers the impossibility of any such endeavour: the essay is a form in process; its being is subject to its becoming. The essay takes leave of literary history, which it *does not* wish to be, for aesthetics, which it *cannot* be, if it is to remain itself.

Let us return to Lukács' three questions. The essay is defined, both negatively and positively, against 'art', its customary, if not proper subject, and 'philosophy', whose 'icy, final perfection' threatens to arrest what is most vital in it: from the one it borrows its literary, and from the other its critical character. Lukács proceeds to name the type of writing that the essay is: a 'form of art' (*műfaj; Kunstform*) which is separated, 'with the rigour of a law, from all other art forms'. (SF,2) He warns against stressing the similarities between the essay and 'works of literary imagination', noting that these only serve to throw their differences into greater relief; but he then adds that any resemblance is limited to 'genuine essays', as distinct from those which offer the reader only 'information, facts and "relationships"'. The knowledge communicated by works of this nature is limited both in its epistemological range (which, to extrapolate, takes cognizance only of those phenomena which submit to verification — or falsification — as 'fact'), and, by virtue of its own utility, in its historical durability: 'there are critical writings which, like a hypothesis in natural science, like a design for a machine part, lose all their value at the precise moment when a new and better one becomes available'. A distinction emerges between the knowledge proper to the 'natural' sciences and that conveyed by what we might call the 'human' or 'cultural' sciences (that is, the *Geisteswissenschaften*); the former is liable, in the way of things, to become obsolete, whereas the latter remains valid despite any possible (and possibly inherent) anachronism.

Lessing's *Dramaturgy*, Winckelmann's Greece and Burckhardt's Renaissance 'seem strange, almost incomprehensible to us... But if... someone were to write a new *Dramaturgy*... how could it damage Lessing's? And what did Burckhardt and Pater, Rhode and Nietzsche do to change the effect upon us of Winckelmann's dreams of Greece?' (*SF*,2)

I would now like to present one example of the latter type of writing, Pater's *The Renaissance*,²⁷ and to investigate the alternative models for the essay developed by Lukács and Pater in reaction to natural scientific 'method'. Pater reformulates the problem of unity, both as a project and as a fact, within a theory of cultural history. The Renaissance is, in these terms, one of those 'eras of more favourable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer than is their wont, and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture'. (*R*, xv) This culture seeps over and channels under the boundaries of the strictly demarcated historical period – 'the fifteenth century in Italy' – and can be traced, as an 'outbreak of the human spirit', (*CR*, xiii) back to the medieval French *fabliaux* and forward to Winckelmann and the German Enlightenment. 'The unity of this spirit gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance', (xvi) and also, by extension, to Pater's studies in the 'period'. *The Renaissance* develops an explicit historiographical polemic. Its narrative is based not on the usual positivist, quasi-judicial criteria which regard history as a chain of influences, of causes and effects, for which evidence, if not 'proof', must be furnished, but proceeds rather by the analogy and syncretic combination of diverse and apparently unrelated materials to reconstruct a history of 'spirit' (*Geistesgeschichte*), which it attributes to a creative 'community' dispersed in time and place.

We can see Pater's method in practice in the second half of his essay on '*The School of Giorgione*' whose art is held to 'sum up... the spirit of the Venetian school', (*R*,145) even though it is acknowledged that art history, 'the accomplished science of the subject', accepts as genuine only one of the 'six or eight' pictures previously attributed to him. Scholarship must be judged by the bathos of its results; it has not 'made the past more real for us, but assured us only that we possess less of it than we seemed to possess'. (*R*,149) The past itself – our tangible and vital sense of it – is diminished; but this 'revision down' of Giorgione's historical presence serves, in turn, as the basis for Pater's reassessment of his reputation. Instead of rejecting the results of 'criticism', Pater accepts them and then proceeds to negate the spirit in which they were concluded: 'the criticism which... has established the claims of this one picture, has left it among the most precious things in the world of art'. (*R*,150) From this he creates the historical fiction of a 'School of Giorgione' to account for what is now supplementary to the name, and thus paradoxically to enlarge and make more ghostly the original paradigm: 'For the aesthetic philosopher, therefore, over and above the real Giorgione and his authentic extant works, there remains the *Giorgionesque* also – an influence, a spirit or type in art, active in men so different as those to whom many of his supposed works are really assignable.' (*R*,154) The latter term is not merely an addition to the descriptive vocabulary of art history ('in the manner of Giorgione'), but is the hypostatization of a quality which takes leave of its initial historical coordinates to inhabit, wraith-like, whoever will receive it. The essayist

thus seeks the '*vraie vérité*' (or 'higher truth') which lies beyond 'the narrower range of the strictly ascertained facts', (R,160) and the scholarship which aspires, in its discussion of art, to the condition of 'science', is finally rebuked.

Pater's 'programme' for the essay can be thought of as an attempt to compensate for the encroachment of science upon the arts, for its appropriation of the discourse of 'criticism', and, most importantly, for the 'loss of reality' — of what is accepted, as the first condition of this discourse, as real or true — that this induces. It bespeaks two competing, and possibly incompatible, claims upon reality, those of the 'natural' and the 'human' sciences. Lukács presents his own mythopoetic version of this conflict: 'In primitive, as yet undifferentiated epochs, science and art (and religion and ethics and politics) are integrated; they form a single whole; but as soon as science has become separate and independent, everything that has led up to it loses its value.' (SF, 3) When science devolves from art, it assumes the proprietorship of knowledge; art, deprived of the truth-function which made it, in Arnold's words, a 'criticism of life',²⁸ can realize itself only in exclusively formal terms, for otherwise it will always be relative to that which it is not: 'Science affects us by its contents, art by its forms; science offers us facts and the relationships between facts, but art offers us souls and destinies.' (SF, 3) The division, once established, cannot be bridged; art will become 'superfluous' if it founds itself on mutable 'content'.

The essay, in its turn, must seek to make itself determinate in relation to this dichotomy which is also its dilemma. Lukács quotes Kerr: 'Of course, if criticism were a science . . . But the imponderables are too strong. Criticism is, at the very best, an art'; and then outbids him: 'And if it were a science — it is not impossible that it will become one — how would that change our problem?' (SF, 2–3) Lukács seems to consider that the essay, if it is to fulfil its generic potential, must itself offer a 'criticism of life', and that, in a period where the formal imperative is weak, and art is unable to give shape to 'the ultimate relationships between man and destiny and world', (SF, 5) the essay takes over the displaced function of that criticism, or rather moves onto the terrain vacated by art in order first to formulate the *problem* of criticism, the relationship between art and life. It does so, in the main, by addressing life through art, through what has already been given form; the essayist's relationship to art is an analogue of the artist's to life: 'The critic is one who glimpses destiny in forms: whose most profound experience is the soul-content which forms indirectly and unconsciously conceal within themselves.' (SF, 8) In terms of its own Platonic language of ultimates, this is a difficult marginality to sustain: from non-identity with its immediate object, the work of art, the essay attempts to fashion its own identity (that is, 'destiny') by working through or reliving the coming-into-form of its 'other'. Form becomes for the essay 'a world-view, a standpoint, an attitude vis-à-vis the life from which it sprang: a possibility of reshaping it, of creating it anew'. The essay's longing for form is, in the first instance, a longing for the form of the other (the work), a desire for identity which, however, cannot be satisfied, as this desire is itself a measure of the critical difference between them. Lukács describes a double moment in the perception of form, that of 'form for itself' and 'form for the essay', (my terms) which serves to convert an aesthetic principle into a process in which the essay can itself

participate: 'The critic's moment of destiny, therefore, is that moment at which things become forms – the moment when all feelings and experiences on the near or the far side of form receive form, are melted down and condensed into form. It is the mystical moment of union between the outer and the inner, between soul and form.' (SF,8)

Unable to create a destiny or writerly vocation from the material of life, the essayist must turn instead to that of art: 'in the works of the essayists form *becomes* destiny; it is the destiny-creating principle. . . Form *is* reality in the writings of critics; it is the voice with which they address their question to life' (SF,7–8) Insofar as art serves as an adequate experiential surrogate for the essayist, 'becoming' is realised as substantive 'being'; this supplies Lukács with a rationale for the essay's 'criticism of life' which, in the absence of a 'calling' to the primacy of art, discovers a voice of its own by interrogating its mediate through its immediate 'other', in sole relation to which the critical self can be constructed. Just as, in Lukács' *Notes on the Theory of Literary History*, form is 'the truly social constituent of literature . . . the one true bond between author and public, the only literary category which is at once social and aesthetic',²⁹ so for the essayist it is the guarantor of a voice which, in its response to the work of art – re-experiencing it as form – is able to articulate both the specificity and the commonality of that aesthetically embodied experience vis-à-vis life.

The quality and purpose of this experience is, at least in its formulation, distinct from that recommended by Pater. He too instantiates the problem of hermeneutic fidelity that faces a criticism which is denied immediate access to the 'thing in itself' and has become aware of itself as interpretation. Pater, however, asserts the subjectivity of the essayist over the 'otherness' of his object: for in order to 'see the object as in itself it really is' – the quotation is from Matthew Arnold – one has first 'to know one's impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly'. (R, x)³⁰ Pater's formula attempts, in its positive moment, to leap across the Kantian abyss whereby 'the things which we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being',³¹ and to insist that a sufficiently receptive sensibility can, by attending to its own faculties, 'know' the object that acts upon it. But in its negative moment, it merely seems to condemn knowledge to the prison-house of the senses, while ignoring Kant's promise to establish 'what the understanding and reason know apart from all experience'.³² These two moments are combined in the melancholy relish of interiority:

To regard all thing and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has become more and more the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without – our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names?

(*The Renaissance*, 246, 'Conclusion')

The 'impressionist' ethos advanced by Pater can be understood as both a reaction against the natural-scientific taxonomy of the world and a concession of the epistemological ground to it. As science threatens to exhaust experience within the process of naming it, experience takes refuge in its own epiphenomenal nature; an almost neurasthenic

'fixing' of perception, not upon the 'object', but upon the sensation which it produces, is endorsed by a science which, having succumbed to life's 'perpetual motion', is confined to a trance-like description of the surface of things (legitimising, at the same time, the pursuit of experience — sensation — for its own sake).

The possibility of any common or socially grounded perception collapses with the dissociation of the senses from a directing consciousness. Pater's 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance* notates, in a cycle of fatigue and animation, the reactions of an isolated sensibility to the phenomenal world. Fatigue one might attribute to the sameness-in-difference of the work it performs, to the sense of that work having been done before (or already, and better, by 'science'); animation, however, is the result not only of stimulus from without, but of an internally motivated defence against the effects of that stimulus and the perceived invasion of the object-world: 'At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action.' (R, 247–48) The essayist's 'loss of reality' is here, more properly, its refusal; he retreats from the 'objective' pretensions of science into the realm of a 'subject' whose tenuous presence can only be registered and maintained if the objects of experience are 'dissipated. . . loosed into a group of impressions — colour, odour, texture — in the mind of the observed'. (R, 247–48) The movement of consciousness described by Pater runs contrary to that which Lukács sees as constitutive of the essayist's experience: the 'moment of destiny' (self-definition) at which 'feelings and experiences. . . are melted down and condensed into form', the creative moment — not, in the first place, the essayist's — at which the object comes into existence. For Lukács, 'form sets limits round a substance which otherwise would dissolve like air in the All'; (SF, 7) Pater, on the other hand, offers us not condensation but rarefaction, a process in which experience is (in natural-scientific terms) inherently 'unstable', and where 'what is real in our life fines itself down' to a 'tremulous wisp constantly re-forming on the stream'. (R, 248–49)

Pater's 'impressionism' can, in Kantian terms, be regarded as an attempt to negate the sublime — that necessary yet supererogatory falling short of the object 'in itself' — as the very type of aesthetic reception and judgement. At the same time, however, I would like to suggest that both he and Lukács present their own 'liminal' versions of the sublime, of which Lukács' is deployed in a polemic *against* impressionism as an artistic ethos. Their different use of scientific (or, in Lukács' case, alchemical) metaphor confirms a 'sublimation' which, it has been noted, is characteristic of the literature of the *fin de siècle*.³³ Where the sublime is denied by the vaunted omniscience of 'naturalism', it becomes a convertible, and knowable, quantity, the refinement of an already existing (or extracted) object, rather than something which exceeds knowledge and impresses by its singularity. Thus Pater: 'if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent. . . the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind'. (R, 248) Lukács in his turn criticises this way of seeing as he makes explicit use of a metaphor only implicit in Pater's 'narrow chamber', that of the photographic camera or, more properly, the *camera obscura*. He praises Rudolf

Kassner as a critic 'positive in the choice of those he writes about', rather than as a 'photosensitive plate for chance impressions' which merely reproduces the world in negative.³⁴ Lukács insists on the intentionality of (critical) consciousness; Pater seeks a last refuge for subjectivity in its otherness to the world. In both cases, the essay is the medium by which subjectivity recollects and defines itself against what lies without.

Pater and Lukács each formulate a programme for the essay which is respectively less than and more than sublime; the sublime is, for all that, the measure of both. In his *Critique of Judgement*³⁵ Kant defines the sublime as 'what is beyond all comparison' (§ 25), a quality which exceeds both reason and sense-perception, and which demands 'judgement' or 'reflection' upon the representation of the object. (§ 23) Because the sublime is beyond compare, the mind 'feels itself set *in motion* in [its] representation' (§ 27), a stimulus which is experienced as 'a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful' and the 'earnest' engagement of the imagination (§ 23). Kant identifies two stages of imaginative involvement with the sublime object, namely its apprehension and comprehension: the former, because it is sensible and quantifiable, can be 'carried on *ad infinitum*'; but as apprehension expands, so comprehension ('the single intuition holding the many in one') reaches its limits (§ 26). The mind thus hearkens to reason which, requiring 'comprehension in *one* intuition', demands the representation of totality as 'a progressively increasing numerical series, and does not exempt even the infinite' from this demand: the mind is impelled towards the *idea* of infinity as 'given in its totality'. (ibid.) We are returned from the sublime scene to the sublimity of the mind itself, for in the contemplation of sublime objects 'without any regard to their form, the mind abandons itself to the imagination and to a reason placed, though quite apart from any definite end, in conjunction therewith, and merely broadening its view, and it feels itself elevated in its own estimate of itself on finding all the might of the imagination still unequal to its ideas'. (ibid.)

The imagination discovers, at one and the same time, its inadequacy and its vocation, alerting us to the superiority of reason over the most powerful sensibility. The mind is elevated not, however, to cognition of its object commensurate with its finite apprehension (Kant distinguishes, in his first paragraph, between cognitive and aesthetic judgement: the latter '*cannot be other than subjective*'), but to a sphere of 'moral ideas' which the sublime 'merely strikes the untutored man as terrifying'. (§ 29.) The 'culture' necessary for judgement upon the sublime is a predisposition of our being human; it is our 'native capacity for the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e. for moral feeling', and not some shared epistemological realm, which ensures the possibility of agreement between our own and other people's judgement (the 'Transcendental Aesthetic'). The imagination renounces the freedom of 'apprehension' first accorded it by the stimulus of the sublime, and engages instead in the pursuit of suprasensible, ethical ideas: 'Hence it follows that the intellectual and intrinsically final (moral) good, estimated aesthetically, instead of being represented as beautiful, must rather be represented as sublime'. (ibid.)

Let us first consider Pater's impressionism in terms of its hostility to the philosophical equation of ethics and aesthetics, and its refusal of the criterion of 'judgement'. For Pater, the mind quits – or rather, shuns – the object-world, not for the realm of ideas,

but in order solely to attend to the notation and cultivation of sense-impressions. He remains decisively on this side of 'transcendental philosophy', and is indeed hostile to any such 'metaphysical questions' as 'the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or what its exact relation to truth or experience' (R, x). Where Pater does light on philosophy, it is to recommend the antisystematic 'philosophy of the fragment' espoused by the German Romantics: *Philosophieren, says Novalis, ist dephlegmatisieren vivifizieren*. His gloss on this is as follows: 'The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit, is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation.' (R, 249) Philosophy cannot sustain itself as a systematic endeavour if its subject ('man') can no longer be generalized except as 'the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner to its own dream of a world'. (R, 248) We must turn instead to all that can be recuperated of individuality, the moment-by-moment 'experience' which is hypostatized as the object-elect of criticism. Philosophy is yoked into the service of criticism as if it were an instrument of the natural sciences: 'Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." (R, 251) By this manoeuvre, the ideational sphere is reduced to that of apprehension which, because it is subject to measurement, is both potentially knowable and infinitely extensible.

Pater's 'Conclusion' marks the extreme point of the essay's ambivalence towards the hegemony of science: on the one hand, it recoils from the dead letter of 'scientific' scholarship, the type of critical scrutiny which confines its object to a set of positive coordinates and determinants (including that of authorship); and on the other, it has recourse to a spurious scientific 'method' (non-experimental, interested in neither hypothesis nor induction), which makes the essayist – and not the work – the true object of analysis, and, in so doing, denies the 'idea' proper to science. The essayist is finally most concerned to avert – by asserting the moment over the continuum – the reified, once-and-for-all knowledge offered by science, a knowledge which threatens to exhaust its object (and thus also its subject), a knowledge which confirms – and perhaps bestows – our own knowledge of death. By attending, as Pater urges, to 'the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake', (R, 252) we can postpone at least our awareness of death and prolong, in a quickened sense of life, the interval which remains to us. 'For art comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.' (R, 252) Pater's tone is, in conclusion, a quietest one, offering consolation after what one can only suppose to be the traumatic discovery of the human term.

Lukács in turn speaks of the death represented by a knowledge which is complete in itself: 'the icy, final perfection of philosophy'; yet he demands a similar 'conceptual re-ordering of life' from the essay, which reveals its proleptic affinities with philosophy even as it maintains its connection with sensuous life. The essay's difference, as an 'art form', both from 'philosophy' and from other 'forms of art', is consistent with the margin between affinity and identity. In Lukács's revised conclusion to his introductory essay, he names this philosophy an 'aesthetics', and relates it to the essay-form in terms directly reminiscent of Kant: 'The criteria of the essayist's judgement are indeed created within

him, but it is not he who awakens them to life and action: the one who whispers them into his ear is the great value-definer of aesthetics, the one who is always about to arrive, the one who is never quite there, the only one who has been called to judge.' (SF,16) This aesthetic is figured as both immanent and yet to come to pass; it is a presence virtual within the judgement of the essayist, and yet it stands, as an idea, real but unrealized, beyond it. The prospect of philosophy is both the animating principle of the essay and its probable negation: 'The essay can calmly and proudly set its fragmentariness against the petty completeness of scientific exactitude or impressionistic freshness; but its purest fulfilment, its most vigorous accomplishment becomes powerless once the great aesthetic comes.' (SF,17)

It would seem that, for Lukács, the aesthetic is not quite represented in the judgement; while the essay verges upon or anticipates a system of thought, it cannot, through its own process, bring that system any nearer. This disjunction makes it necessary to shift the ground of aesthetic judgement from an innate, quasi-psychological predisposition to a moral imperative which will bind from without what is severed from within. Lukács in effect reopens the wounds in a philosophy which had sought, in an *aesthetic* of judgement, a third term which would supply ethics with the 'subjective generality'³⁶ that cognition could not guarantee. One cannot simply postpone this aesthetic – to a future however near, but never quite at hand – without at the same time altering the mode of the questions that it asks itself: 'works of art exist – how are they possible?' The problematic of the essay can thus be located within Lukács' attempt to make good the perceived insufficiency of Kant's aesthetic model by investing in the categorical nature of form as 'judgement'. I hope to demonstrate, in conclusion, that this investment ambivalently underwrites both the essay's paradoxical inquiry into its own essence, and Lukács' double critique of the essay as it is and as it ought to be.

By yoking together 'scientific exactitude' and 'impressionistic freshness', Lukács dismisses the criteria both opposed and advanced, in paradigmatic fashion, by Pater. Where for Pater the essay rises above its object by dissolving its form into the manifold impressions it evokes, Lukács concentrates on the point at which the object is resolved as form. Lukács' formal imperative can be read as an attempt to compensate for the essayist's weakness in the sublime, where, unable to give form to (unshaped) life, he has recourse to the already-formed work of art. The essay longs for the form incarnate in the work, and in this longing it endeavours to rise above itself, to translate its 'judgement' of the work (an evaluative recreation of the moment at which soul becomes form) into a form which bestows generality and permanence upon the reading it offers. Lukács' identification of ethics and form contradicts the Kantian aesthetic, whose object is properly the 'sublime in nature' which 'cannot be contained in any sensuous form'.³⁷ It is, for Kant, the unrepresentable quality of the sublime which obliges the mind to due regard for its own faculties as a sufficient basis for judgement; the essayist, however, is unable to address the unformed without being overwhelmed by it, and his desire to comprehend life is for this reason displaced onto art. The question that he asks of life, through art, desires the same answer as that put by a critique of judgement; both wish for

a 'system of values', but the former can only begin to approach ethics as such by first attending to the work of art as itself a judgement upon life.

It is here that the essay becomes implicated in its own critique. For the longing which defines the essayist is, in turn, 'a fact of the soul with a value and existence of its own: an original and deep-rooted attitude towards the whole of life, a final, irreducible category of possibilities of experience'. (SF,17) This longing for form – for a judgement which is categorical because it carries the authority of system – must itself be given a form 'which will redeem and release its most essential and indivisible substance into eternal value'. Longing is a condition of the essayist's judgement, and yet judgement is vitiated by longing; the form that is longed for is incompatible with the judgement that anticipates it. The essay embodies the same divorce between ethics and aesthetics which it is concerned to overcome, and which calls for its judgement upon other 'forms of art'; the categories of experience (of which 'longing' is one) are at odds with the formal aesthetic judgements imposed upon them. The aesthetic imperative (to give form to longing) is summoned in the absence of the ethical (which would fulfil and negate it). The aesthetic is, for the essay, a stage anterior to the ethical, and the essay is the medium of their passage: 'immanently and inexpressibly' it contains 'the system and its connection with lived life', (SF,18) a life which the essayist lives as longing and, at one remove, as aesthetic judgement. The immanence of system is itself a paradox of the essayist's judgement, which endeavours, in the first place, to grasp the Platonic 'idea' of the work: 'The idea is there before any of its expressions, it is a soul-value, a world-moving and life-forming world in itself'. (SF,16) The idea of the work is equivalent to the form which it desires, just as Lukács' reflections upon the 'nature and form' of the essay determined the 'idea' which reveals how far his own essays 'fall short of attaining it'. The discrepancy between idea and achievement is the measure of 'lived life' and, conversely, of the ethic which would realize it: 'the essayist who is really capable of looking for the truth will find at the end of his road the goal he was looking for: life'. (SF,12) He can only approach the latter through the work that has given form to it, and the 'idea' of the work, as the essayist intuits it, is its own judgement upon life; at the same time, however, the essayist (advocate of 'lived life') judges the work in its attempt to give shape to the particular life (soul) which informs it. The essayist's quest for an ethic takes him into a hermeneutic realm where he questions the relationship of individual texts to the lives of their authors, and reads the former in terms of a struggle to represent – to fulfil, as an idea – the latter.

In this respect, the essayist is perhaps most concerned to question the application of aesthetic categories to life itself, for the conflation of 'life' and 'art' is consistent with the real division of ethics and aesthetics, and is symptomatic of a culture bereft of any truly binding 'ethos'. Lukács identifies the attempt to develop an 'art of living' with both German Romanticism and contemporary impressionism; his critique of the former can be applied equally to the latter:

A seemingly deliberate withdrawal from life was the price of the Romantic art of living, but this was conscious only at the surface, only within the realm of psychology. The deep nature of this withdrawal and its complex relations were never understood by the Romantics themselves and therefore remained unredeemed and devoid of any life-redeeming force. The actual reality

of life vanished before their eyes and was replaced by another reality, the reality of poetry, of pure psyche. . . Only in this way could they achieve their universality, but because of this they could not recognize its limitations.³⁸

We need only look to Wilde for a restatement of this attitude: 'I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction . . . I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram'.³⁹ I would like finally to distinguish between the paradoxical nature of the attempt to live life as art, and the paradox upon which Lukács bases his critique of the latter. For the one, paradox plays upon and glides over what is held to be the mutual exclusiveness of moral and aesthetic values: 'All art is immoral. . . [The] critic should be able to recognize that the sphere of Art and the sphere of Ethics are absolutely distinct and separate'.⁴⁰ For the other, it merely announces the problem of their divorce, whose resolution must be sought, not in the negation of ethics by aesthetics, but in their mutual address. Instead of resolving irreconcilables, Lukács' use of paradox serves to express the contradictoriness of what, after Kant, we understand of 'experience': 'he who is faithful to his own experiences will find all his efforts little enough to keep down the paradoxical air besieging much of what he *knows* to be the truth'.⁴¹ Although Lukács shares many of the perceptions of the 'impressionist' standpoint, he differs in the judgement that he attaches to them; Kassner provides the necessary distinction: 'paradox is irrational, totally immoral and always only a product of the imagination. There are some who create with their imagination, and others who live it out. The former create the work, the latter the paradox'.⁴²

Lukács keeps faith with the principle of the work, although he is no less subject to the dilemma that he diagnoses. We might contrast Wilde: 'The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in aesthetic criticism attitude is everything. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth. A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true'.⁴³ Paradox sequesters art from a responsibility towards truth, while the same truth (knowledge 'beyond opinion') relieves art of its ethical concerns: 'By revealing to us the absolute mechanism of all action, and so freeing us from the self-imposed and trammelling burden of moral responsibility, the scientific burden of Heredity has become, as it were, the warrant for the contemplative life. It has shown us we are never less free than when we try to act'.⁴⁴ This is paradox inert — mere *doxa*, without the recalcitrant prefix — numbed by the invasive *episteme* of 'Heredity'. The extremity of Wilde's irony is a measure of its defensiveness towards the determinate and exhaustive knowledge of 'science' — a knowledge, in this case, of determination itself, in which death is absorbed into a process of which we are part, but over which we have no control. Released from the problematic of human agency, we are spirited into the realm of contemplation (*theoretikos*). Lukács, however, is impelled to the opposite extreme; he must recast the 'question of meaning and essence' — of the death that gives form to life — in terms of the 'paradox of drama and tragedy'.⁴⁵

This is the crux of the paradox: the material of drama consists of the interrelatedness of ethical systems, and the dramatic structure which arises from this relationship is aesthetic-

formal... More simply, so long as tragedy did not become ethically problematic, either inwardly or outwardly, the pure aesthetics of structure functioned quite naturally... But when ethics cease to be given, the ethical knotting within the drama – thus, its aesthetics – has to be created; whereupon ethics, as the cornerstone of the artistic composition, move necessarily into the vital centre of motivation.⁴⁶

Only tragedy can structure the paradoxes of life and 'incorporate... accident into its world forever'.⁴⁷ Tragedy is form become ethical – a form which reveals the connection between ethics and 'lived life': 'only a form which has been purified until it has become ethical can, without becoming blind and poverty-stricken as a result of it, forget the existence of everything problematic and banish it forever from its realm'.⁴⁸ Tragedy is the term of the essay's inquiry.

Notes

1. See, however, those articles dating from the early 1920s which are collected in Lukács, *Reviews and Articles from 'Die rote Fahne'*, trans. Peter Palmer (London: Merlin, 1983).
2. Diary entry for 16 Dec. 1911, in Lukács, *Napló-Tagebuch (1910–11)*; *Das Gericht (1913)*, ed. Ferenc L. Lendvai (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981), p. 56.
3. Lukács, *Heidelberger Philosophie der Kunst (1912–1914)*, ed. György Márkus and Frank Benseler (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1974), p. 9.
4. Lukács, *Soul and Form*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin, 1974), p. 16, 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay'.
5. T. W. Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society', in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel M. Weber (London: Spearman, 1967), p. 19.
6. Diary entry for 6 July 1910, in Lukács, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
7. I paraphrase Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: Merlin, 1978), p. 29.
8. György Lukács, *A lélek és a formák: Kísérletek* (Budapest: Franklin, 1910); and Georg von Lukács, *Die Seele und die Formen: Essays* (Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1911). A literal translation of both titles is 'The Soul and the Forms: Essays'; I shall refer, however, to Anna Bostock's English translation of the German edition.
9. In *Renaissance* 1, 11 (10 Oct. 1910), 235–249. The essay on Philippe, like that on Theodor Storm, was slightly cut in its German version.
10. For a full discussion of the translation of *Soul and Form*, see J. K. Nyíri, Lukács 'Die Seele und die Formen' c. esszékötetének fordítástörténetéhez; *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle* 18, 2–3 (1974), 401–404.
11. See, for instance, Paul Ernst's review 'Der Essay als Form' in *Die Schaubühne* 1911, p. 542: 'Als ich den Band durchlas, hatte ich den Eindruck, als... fange Lukács da an, wo die Schlegel aufgehört haben: freilich ist der Autor auch kein geborener Deutscher, sondern ein Ungar, der sein erstes Werk, ein Buch über das Moderne Drama, noch in ungarischer Sprache geschrieben hat'. Ernst, it should be remembered, is returning the compliment of 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy'.
12. Lukács, *Selected Correspondence 1902–1920*, trans. and ed. J. Marcus and Z. Tár (Budapest: Corvina, 1986), p. 81; *Levelezése*, ed. E. Fekete and E. Karádi (Budapest: Magvető, 1981), p. 125. I have frequently altered the available English translation of the letters.
13. *ibid.*, pp. 81 and 125.
14. Letter of 29 Oct. 1909, in *Levelezése*, p. 167. 'Alienation' translates *idegenség*, and 'separation' *elválás*.
15. 'Richness, Chaos and Form: A dialogue concerning Laurence Sterne', *Soul and Form*, p. 148.

16. Letter to Leó Popper of 28 May 1910, in *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 113–14, and *Levelezése*, pp. 211–12.
17. 'Poetry, Platonism and Form: Rudolf Kassner', *Soul and Form*, p. 21.
18. 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy: Paul Ernst', *ibid.*, p. 161.
19. Letter to Leó Popper of 27 Oct. 1901, in *Selected Correspondence*, p. 102, and *Levelezése*, p. 163. Lukács notes elsewhere in the same letter that 'my life is to a large extent a critique of the Romantics'.
20. 'On the Nature and Form of the Essay', *Soul and Form*, p. 10.
21. *ibid.*, p. 15.
22. Lukács' 'conclusion' is some three pages long in the English edition; it begins on page 15, grafted onto a paragraph of which the first half survives from the Hungarian text, with the sentence: 'But Socrates was the first to condemn such critics.' References to this essay will from now on be incorporated into the text.
23. 'Lévél a kísérlétről' in Lukács, *Ifjúkori művek*, ed., Árpád Timár (Budapest: Magvető, 1977), p. 321. The translation is from Michael Holzmann, *Lukács' Road to God* (Washington D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1985), p. 85.
24. *ibid.*, pp. 321 and 85–86. I have altered Holzmann's translation.
25. The English translation distinguishes between 'living' and 'life', p. 4.
26. 'Poetry, Platonism and Form', *op. cit.*, p. 19.
27. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1912). Page references will be incorporated into the text.
28. See Matthew Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry' (1880). Lukács quotes the phrase on page 5 of *Soul and Form*.
29. 'Megjegyzések az irodalomtörténet elméletéhez', in Timár, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 393. The translation is my own.
30. Arnold first used the phrase in 'On Translating Homer' (1862), and repeated it in the opening paragraph of 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' (1864). It is reversed in Wilde's 'The Critic as Artist': 'the primary aim of the critic is to see the object as in itself it really is not'.
31. Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 82, 'General Observations on the Transcendental Aesthetic'.
32. *ibid.*, p. 12, 'Preface to the First Edition'.
33. Marie-Claire Blanquart, 'Une mise en cause du sublime à la fin du XIX^e siècle: sublime, sublimé, sublimation', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 86, 1 (1986), pp 109–117; special issue on 'Le Sublime'.
34. 'Poetry, Platonism and Form', *op. cit.*, p. 19.
35. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 'Analytic of the Sublime'; all references are to paragraphs and are incorporated into the text. The following summary is based on P. Carrière, 'Le sublime dans l'esthétique de Kant', *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, *op. cit.*, 71–85.
36. Lukács quotes Kant's formula on page 1 of the 'Notes on the Theory of Literary History'.
37. Kant, *op. cit.*, para. 23.
38. 'On the Romantic Philosophy of Life: Novalis', *op. cit.*, p. 50.
39. Oscar Wilde, 'De Profundis', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Vyvyan Holland, new edition (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1966), pp. 912–13.
40. Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', *ibid.*, pp. 1039, 1048.
41. From De Quincey's *Autobiography*, quoted in Alex Preminger, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, 1965), p. 598.
42. Rudolf Kassner, 'Zum Tode Oskar Wildes: Einiges über das Paradoxe', in Kassner, *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 2 (Pfullingen: Neske, 1974), p. 383.
43. Wilde, 'The Truth of Masks', *op. cit.*, p. 1078.
44. 'The Critic as Artist', *ibid.*, p. 1040.

45. 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy: Paul Ernst', *Soul and Form*, p. 156.
46. Lukács, 'The Sociology of Modern Drama', Trans. Lee Baxandall, *Tulane Drama Review* 5, 4 (1965), pp. 169-70; see Lukács, *A modern dráma fejlődésének története* (Budapest: Franklin, 1911), Vol. 1, pp. 197-198.
47. 'The Metaphysics of Tragedy', op. cit., p. 155.
48. *ibid.*, p. 174.

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