

*The Reification of Consciousness:
Husserl's Phenomenology in
Lukács's Identical Subject-Object*

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Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* has suffered the peculiar indignity of being criticized by its admirers for the very theory they take from it. Like Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy*, also published in 1923, Lukács's book explored the proletariat's stubborn refusal to rise in support of revolutionary regimes in Germany and Hungary; eschewing allegedly scientific analyses of the supposedly necessary collapse of capitalism, Korsch and Lukács focused on what happened *in* consciousness, not behind it, to understand society. Korsch's dialectical account of the relationship between philosophy and society and Lukács's attempt to ground the very structures of subjectivity of individuals in their society are now seen as the foundations of "Western" Marxism. Yet while many have adopted Lukács's account of the reification of consciousness, few have accepted his argument that this very problem produces a revolutionary subjectivity in those most affected by it. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a case in point: though inspired by Lukács in criticizing the total rationalization of society, epitomized by the "culture industry," they reject his optimistic

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account of the proletariat as identical subject-object of history, able to transform mechanical necessity into a world of freedom. Indeed, if Lukács's claims on the social determination of consciousness are taken seriously, it seems hard to explain where freedom could begin: as some of his interpreters have argued, the subjective agent is imported into social totality from the mythical beyond to break through an entirely determined society. The proletariat is posited as the creator of social relations, able to act freely with regard to its own creation if only it realizes its own products imprison it.

I propose an alternative interpretation, making Lukács's account more valid on its own terms. Instead of reading Lukács solely through the lens of *classical* German philosophy, we should also read him through his contemporaries, particularly Edmund Husserl and Emil Lask. He interprets consciousness *phenomenologically*, as a distinct ontological region with its own categories, irreducible to anything more fundamental, and not epistemologically, as the structures of knowledge of a subject. Under this reading, the emergence of the identical subject-object is explicable immanently, as a contradiction within logical structures of consciousness, without needing to locate a preexisting subject.

To argue this, I shall first outline the typical reading of Lukács, to highlight what is distinct about the phenomenological interpretation: this reading assumes that he relies on a preexisting subject able to overthrow the object it has created. The phenomenological reading itself has four stages. Second, I shall identify the hallmarks of the phenomenological approach to consciousness through a brief account of the philosophers from whom Lukács learned phenomenological methods: Husserl and Lask. Third, I shall justify reading Lukács's theory of subjectivity phenomenologically by identifying key phenomenological motifs in *History and Class Consciousness*. Fourth, I shall reinterpret reification through phenomenology: it refers to specific configurations of consciousness and of subjectivity and objectivity. Finally, I shall turn to the practical implications for Lukács's revolutionary theory. By showing that Lukács relies less on an autonomous subject than commonly assumed, I argue that his theory of the revolutionary Party is less Leninist and more Luxemburgian than is usually assumed.

This phenomenological reading does not completely explain Lukács's theory; it would be foolish to deny the importance of Hegel and others for his argument. However, because most interpretations concentrate almost exclusively on his debt to the classical German tradition, I have systematically ignored them here: I have had to reduce the glare of the solar Hegel to see the

dimmer light of the lunar phenomenologists. A fuller analysis of Lukács than is possible here would give a comprehensive account of the interaction between phenomenology and idealism in his theory. However, by showing how Husserlian methods alter our reading of Lukács, I hope to illustrate the richness of his theory. Interpreting Lukács as relying on a *deus ex machina* to liberate the working class results in a dead end of mythical subjectivity; emphasizing phenomenological aspects points toward a more open-ended position.

Eyeless in Gaza: The Unconscious Subject

To clarify what is distinct about reading Lukács phenomenologically, I begin by looking at the usual interpretation of his argument. In essence, the critics argue that the subject Lukács relies on to effect social change is never adequately explained: unable to find any space for freedom within social reality, he attributes the creation of that reality to a semimythical subject that his critics liken to a sort of vulgar Fichteanism. Moreover, because this subject is so ill-defined, its role can be claimed by any individual or group—the Party claiming to act in the name of the proletariat—opening the door to dictatorial rule in the name of freedom. For his critics, Lukács’s entire argument is thus characterized by overwhelming reliance on an autonomous subject as the motive force behind social reality. As I show, a phenomenological interpretation of Lukács’s case sidesteps this problem, but before turning to phenomenology, it is worth sketching the salient points of this more common account to highlight the reliance on subjectivity that Lukács’s detractors see in his theory.

The single greatest obstacle to revolution was, for Lukács, the proletariat’s failure to develop an adequate consciousness of its situation in capitalism. This failure was rooted in the way capitalist society shaped the very subjectivity of its members, governing even the way they looked at the world. In the earliest-written essays of *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács limits himself to claiming that proletarians may hold specific beliefs that contradict their genuine interest. In the essay “Class Consciousness,” he identifies “false” consciousness, which motivates proletarians to act according to bourgeois motives. In contrast, Lukács imputes a more authentic consciousness to the proletariat, based on

the thoughts and feelings that people in a particular situation *would* have if they were able to grasp completely their situation and the interests it gives rise to relative to immediate action and the structure of society as whole—the

thoughts etc. that are appropriate for their objective position. . . . The rational, appropriate reactions, then, that are *imputed* on this basis to a specific, typical position in the process of production, is class consciousness.¹

Lukács notes similarities with Weber's ideal types: both theories try to explain why particular social groups act as they do.² The concepts of false or imputed consciousness thus do not touch on deeper philosophical questions of subjectivity or agency: it is assumed that individuals *can* act but may do so on incorrect motives.

By the time he wrote "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," this straightforward analysis was replaced by a more sophisticated account of how the formal-categorical subjectivity of individuals was conditioned by their social context. Lukács begins with a survey of social forms of reification that obviously owes much to Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*: social relations between humans are given fixed and abstract forms.³ However, Lukács goes beyond Simmel's psychological criticisms of reification, which describe only the horror of individuals confronted by an inhumanly mechanistic social world. Lukács links such social reification with a philosophical outlook epitomized by the Kantian-Hegelian tradition. Classical German philosophy, he argues, resolves the problem of knowledge of external reality by showing that the world as known is the product of the subject's reason: all consciousness consists of experience systematized according to rational categories. However, such categories derive their validity from rational necessity, not on their relation to a specific subject. Consequently, the world "appears as a necessary consequence of known, knowable, rational systems of laws, as their necessity, which in fact cannot ultimately and entirely be comprehended."⁴ The subject's "freedom is able neither to break through the meaningless neces-

1. Georg Lukács, *Werke*, 14 vols. to date (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962–), 2:223: "werden jene Gedanken, Empfindungen usw. erkannt, die die Menschen in einer bestimmten Lebenslage haben *würden*, wenn sie diese Lage, die sich aus ihr heraus ergebenden Interessen sowohl in Bezug auf das unmittelbare Handeln wie auf den—diesen Interessen gemäßen—Aufbau der ganzen Gesellschaft *vollkommen zu erfassen fähig wären*; die Gedanken usw. also, die ihrer objektiven Lage angemessen sind. . . . Die rationell angemessene Reaktion nun, die auf diese Weise einer bestimmten typischen Lage im Produktionsprozeß *zugerechnet* wird, ist die Klassenbewußtsein."

2. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Günther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al., 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1:21.

3. Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 1990).

4. Lukács, *Werke*, 2:307–8: "Jetzt hingegen erscheint sie als notwendige Folge erkannter, erkennbarer, rationeller Gessetzessysteme, als seine Notwendigkeit, die zwar . . . in ihrem letzten Grund und in ihrer umfassenden Totalität nicht begriffen werden kann."

sity of the system of knowledge and the soullessness of the fatalistic laws of nature nor to endow them with a meaning.”⁵ Describing the world as its product should liberate the subject, but in fact it exiled the individual from free action in the realm it had supposedly created. Reality as a whole—and society in particular—seem to run according to rules that simply cannot be changed. Social practices condition individuals to view existence through a set of unchangeable rational rules that can be known but never controlled.

For many commentators, Lukács’s solution is effectively a materialist version of Fichte.⁶ He tries to locate a preexisting subject that created the world and the rules that govern it: as Andrew Arato and Paul Breines put it, this “derives from the quest of classical German philosophy to express *all substance* and in particular nature itself as the deed of a *subject*.”⁷ In capitalism, a society based on commodity relations, this subject is the proletariat, the creator of value in commodities. As Tom Rockmore explains, “The importance of Fichte’s view for Lukács becomes clear in his argument that the unity of subject and object that Fichte allegedly locates in mental activity is, in fact, brought about through the activity of the proletariat.”⁸ Where classical German philosophy relied on allegedly metaphysical solutions to the problem of freedom, showing that law-governed reality was the product of hypostatized reason, Marxism could show a material source for such laws, at least with regard to society. Lukács seems to have found the subject behind social reality—it had unknowingly created the conditions of its own impotence, but could liberate itself by recognizing that fact.

It is this that Lukács’s critics have attacked. The subject he relies on is condemned as mistaken or mythical. Moishe Postone, for example, argues that Lukács’s failure stems from an erroneous belief in labor (rather than value) as the force driving capitalist society; consequently, he relies too much on the proletariat as embodiment of labor.⁹ Terry Eagleton declares that “Lukács

5. *Ibid.*, 2:313: “Die Freiheit vermag die sinnliche Notwendigkeit des Erkenntnissystems, die Seelenlosigkeit der fatalistischen Naturgesetze weder zu durchbrechen noch ihnen einen Sinn zu verleihen.”

6. See, e.g., Tom Rockmore, *Irrationalism: Lukács and the Marxist View of Reason* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); and Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 106–7.

7. Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 130. See also G. H. R. Parkinson, *Georg Lukács* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), 44.

8. Rockmore, *Irrationalism*, 116.

9. Moishe Postone, “Lukács and the Dialectical Critique of Capitalism,” in *New Dialectics and Political Economy*, ed. Robert Albritton and John Simoulidis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 98.

retains the form of the metaphysical. . . . He replaces the world spirit with the proletariat.”¹⁰ Structuralist critics condemn the residual Romanticism in his argument: he is criticized for his “‘religious’ conception of the proletariat,” which “represents the first major irruption of the romantic anti-scientific tradition of bourgeois thought into Marxist theory.”¹¹ Rockmore attacks logical flaws in Lukács’s case.¹² His argument rests on a *petitio principii*: “If proletarian consciousness is the condition of free action, in effect he maintains that the condition of becoming free is that one is already free.”¹³ These various criticisms are united in identifying an apparent reliance in Lukács’s theory on an autonomous, self-determining subject as the creator of society, for which he is unable to provide convincing proof. The only reason to believe in such a subject is that Lukács needs one.

Furthermore, his critics charge, Lukács’s failure to find the subject in the proletariat as a whole opens his theory to abuse by those who would take on the mantle of agency. Arato and Breines suggest that this move opens the way to a Stalinist deification of the central organizing forces of revolution.¹⁴ For Postone, by overestimating the proletariat’s role, Lukács fixes commodified wage labor as the required subject of future society, precluding radical social change. This “affirms implicitly the new state-centric configuration that emerged after the First World War.”¹⁵ In summary, Lukács’s apparent belief in the proletariat as the subject behind society, needing only to be made aware of the fact, opens the door for a small group to claim limitless authority, based on its superior knowledge, to act in the name of the proletariat.

From Epistemology to Phenomenology

Lukács’s critics assume that he uses what we might call an epistemological ontology: there are objects in the world, there are subjects that know those objects, and there is the consciousness of objects possessed by subjects. Consciousness is ontologically secondary: it emerges in the interaction between the subject’s faculty of understanding and the sense data coming from the

10. Quoted in Eva L. Corredor, *Lukács after Communism: Interviews with Contemporary Intellectuals* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 145.

11. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1997), 221n; Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Marxism of the Early Lukács,” in Gareth Stedman Jones et al., *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader* (London: New Left Books, 1977), 33, 37.

12. Rockmore, *Irrationalism*, 129–51.

13. *Ibid.*, 150. On a similar line of criticism, not of Lukács specifically but of revolutionary Marxism more generally, see Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), chap. 3.

14. Arato and Breines, *Young Lukács*, 151.

15. Postone, “Lukács and the Dialectical Critique of Capitalism,” 98.

object. The same structure of argument is repeated to explain freedom: the subject creates the world of consciousness in which it moves and can thus act on its creation as it wishes. Lukács's critics concentrate on his inadequate description of such a subject and its connection with social reality.

More sympathetic commentators assume a different ontology with a correspondingly different understanding of subjectivity. Thus Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that Lukács relativizes subject and object: "Knowledge itself is not the intellectual possession of a signification, of a mental object; and the proletarians are able to carry the meaning of history, even though this meaning is not in the form of an 'I think.'"¹⁶ Lucien Goldmann draws explicit parallels with Martin Heidegger, interpreting *Being and Time* as a response to Lukács and equating Heidegger's Being with Lukács's totality.¹⁷ Highlighting similarities with Heidegger and Derrida, Jay Bernstein insists that "readings of the 'Reification' essay which construe it as proposing the proletariat as a historically-grounded Fichtean absolute subject . . . contravene the letter and spirit of Lukács's project."¹⁸

Regrettably, since such accounts usually present Lukács in a broader narrative, they do not provide the close analysis needed to make their standpoint watertight. One exception is Andrew Feenberg, who equates Lukács's idea of consciousness to the anthropological concept of culture: consciousness is not the contents of a subject's mind but the collected practices of a community.¹⁹ Unfortunately, he does not provide enough textual evidence to support this analogy, which cannot explain Lukács's focus on the relation of consciousness and individual subject. Nevertheless, he, Bernstein, Merleau-Ponty, and Goldmann are essentially on the right track: by reinterpreting Lukács through phenomenology, I hope to lend support to their arguments.

The fundamental point of difference I propose is a new reading of *Bewußtsein* (consciousness): Lukács investigates it *phenomenologically*. He analyzes the internal, logical structures peculiar to consciousness as such, viewing them neither as reflections of the world nor as projections of a subject but as categories of a distinct, fundamental region, irreducible to any other mode of existence. This minimizes the creative role of the subject to provide a

16. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bien (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 50.

17. Lucien Goldmann, *Lukács and Heidegger: Towards a New Philosophy*, trans. William Q. Boelhower (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).

18. Jay Bernstein, "Lukács's Wake: Praxis, Presence, and Metaphysics," in *Lukács Today: Essays in Marxist Philosophy*, ed. Tom Rockmore (Dordrecht: Dordrecht, 1988), 179.

19. Andrew Feenberg, *Lukács, Marx, and the Sources of Critical Theory* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1981), 71.

route out of the impasse that Lukács seemed to have reached: I shall defend Lukács against criticisms of his failure to identify a subject by arguing that it is ontologically secondary, rather than the foundation of his entire thought.

To clarify what a phenomenological reading of Lukács entails, I identify its key features by sketching the salient elements in the theories of Husserl and Lask. While I cannot give a comprehensive account of their thought, I can identify the points distinguishing them from epistemology. Lukács shares these differences, rendering irrelevant criticisms of the role he supposedly gives to the subject.

Husserl and Phenomenology

What distinguished Husserl and Lask from neo-Kantian contemporaries was their reversal of Kant's Copernican turn. Aristotle posited *ontological* categories (substance, quality, quantity, etc.): an object could be said to exist with certain qualities, as a certain substance, and so on. Eighteenth-century skepticism undermined these categories, arguing that they had no existence of their own. With the first *Critique*, however, Kant replaced ontology with *epistemology*, thus reaffirming their validity. Kant described his own (modified) table of categories as categories of *judgment*: they might not apply to objects as they existed in themselves (noumena), but they were essential for objects as they appeared for us (phenomena). As Lukács observed, this means "the rejection of every 'metaphysics' (in the sense of a science of being)."²⁰ There could be no knowledge of existence without categories—but, equally, the categorical structure of reality rested on the transcendental subject.

Husserl and Lask rejected this model, instead investigating consciousness to uncover structures immanent to it without grounding them either on objects external to consciousness or on the creative power of a subject.²¹ Husserl called his method phenomenology. To understand consciousness properly, he argued that we must first decide to ignore systematically the existence of a world outside it: we undertake the phenomenological *epoché*. We "bracket" the entire external world and, without denying its existence, "make absolutely no use" of it.²² The *epoché* thus allows the phenomenologist to study con-

20. Lukács, *Werke*, 2:297: "zu der Ablehnung einer jeden 'Metaphysik' (in dem Sinne einer Wissenschaft vom Sein)."

21. On Husserl's particular relation to epistemology and ontology, see David Woodruff Smith, *Husserl* (London: Routledge, 2007), 135–87.

22. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 61. Husserl's own thought underwent considerable development; many of his

consciousness qua consciousness: “Consciousness has, in itself, a being of its own which, in its own absolute essence, is not touched by the phenomenological exclusion. It therefore remains as the *‘phenomenological residuum,’* as a region of being which is of essential necessity quite unique and which can indeed become the field of a science of a novel kind: phenomenology.”²³ In describing an object phenomenologically, we describe it in qualitatively different terms from those that describe it materially: Husserl’s categories are not Aristotelian, because they do not apply to objects “outside” consciousness, but also not Kantian, because they are categories not of thought but of the objects. Husserl’s subsequent investigations, then, are founded on this isolation of structures and categories that apply to phenomenological objects.

The effect is to disclose the specificity of objects: phenomenological objects are inherently *meaningful*. Husserl is interested in more than the mere spatiotemporal representation of the world that guides Kant’s epistemology. For Husserl, every act of consciousness is *intentional*: it points, in a particular way, to an object. This object may be judged, loved, desired, and can be considered from different angles—Napoléon is both “the victor at Austerlitz” and “the loser at Waterloo.” Husserl uses *noema* to describe an object as a structured complex that includes its specific meaning as *this* individual thing at a particular juncture. As he puts it, “Owing to its noetic moments, every intensive mental process is precisely noetic; it is of its essence to include in itself something such as a ‘sense’ and possibly a manifold sense on the basis of this sense-bestowal and, in unity with that, to effect further productions which become ‘senseful’ precisely by ‘this sense-bestowal.’”²⁴ To oversimplify, then, Husserl’s phenomenological method entails looking at the structures of pure consciousness by which objects appear as intentional and specific. These phenomenological structures cannot be reduced to supervenience on meaningless material objects. They are not idealist, because they describe how phenomenological objects relate among themselves, without being grounded on any subject.

Husserl’s concentration on consciousness’s syntactic and semantic structures has important implications for both object and subject. First, he explicitly rules out recourse to Kantian noumena. “It is,” he states, “fundamentally erroneous to believe that perception (and, after its own fashion, any other

most important thoughts were never published during his lifetime but nevertheless circulated in manuscript form among his students. For my purposes, I concentrate on the presentation given in the first volume of *Ideas*: because it is this work that Lukács refers to in the “Reification” essay, we can be certain that he was acquainted with it.

23. *Ibid.*, 65.

24. *Ibid.*, 213–14.

kind of intuition of a physical thing) does not reach the physical thing itself. The latter is not given to us in itself or in its being-in-itself. . . . It is not the case that, in its stead, a picture or a sign is given.”²⁵ Consciousness is no mere representation: objects *exist* in consciousness, rather than simply being known by it. Our consciousness of objects is ontologically fundamental: noetic structures are the structures of objects in their objectivity. What the object *is* phenomenologically cannot be reduced to and must be considered separately from what it is materially.

Husserl takes care to defend himself from accusations of idealism, denying that the subject “creates” this world of consciousness. His arguments “take nothing away from the fully valid being of the world as the all of realities”: conscious reality relies on its own immanent structures, not on the projection of a subjective mind. Even the ego exists only as something disclosed through specific structures of consciousness. “Each Ego,” Husserl explains, “is living in its mental processes. . . . It lives in them: that is not to say that it has them and ‘has’ its ‘eye on’ what they include.”²⁶ Self-consciousness comes from the meaningfulness of the objects—not the reverse. When listening to music, for instance, I am not simply concerned with the specific tone I hear at this instant. My image of that tone also contains a memory of the previous tone—what Husserl calls *retention*—and, usually, an anticipated horizon of possibilities for the subsequent tone—or *protention*.²⁷ This provides us with “a stream of mental processes as a unity”—in other words, a unity of consciousness.²⁸ For an intentional object to appear, then, it is necessary that it be part of consciousness—but it is *from* this temporal, intentional structure of consciousness that self-consciousness emerges. For Husserl, “as soon as I look at the flowing of life in its actual present and, while doing so, apprehend myself as the pure subject of this life . . . I say unqualifiedly and necessarily that I am, this life is, I am living: cogito.”²⁹

Lask’s Ontology of Truth

Emil Lask was the crown prince of neo-Kantianism before the war; his death at the front aged thirty-nine in 1915 meant that his systematic goals were never fulfilled. Although usually categorized as neo-Kantian, Lask was in important respects closer to Husserl, as noted by Steven Galt Crowell, who places Lask alongside Husserl as an important influence on Heidegger, and Karl Schuh-

25. *Ibid.*, 92; Smith, *Husserl*, 211–12.

26. Husserl, *Ideas*, 174.

27. *Ibid.*, 175.

28. *Ibid.*, 197.

29. *Ibid.*, 100.

mann and Barry Smith, who trace the correspondence between Lask and Husserl.³⁰ Three similarities with Husserl are important here: first, Lask is interested primarily in self-grounding subject-independent logical structures of objectivity; second, Lask has consequently no place for noumena; third, Lask makes the subject a product of the structures of its experience, not the reverse.

Lask's chief interest is to reconcile logic and being, through "overcoming of this independence of Being vis-à-vis the sphere of logic, in the destruction of the age-old sundering of object and truth-content, in the recognition of the transcendental logicity or 'thinkable' quality of Being."³¹ Crowell explains that "Lask seeks to recover the ontological significance of the Aristotelian conception of categories while retaining the decisive Kantian insight into their purely 'logical' character."³² Ontological categories are a coherent system through which objects come to be, neither arbitrary nor derived from induction. Lask develops "an *aletheiology*—an ontological (nonmetaphysical, non-representational) theory of meaning grounded in the concept of truth."³³ Although Lask's categories are transcendently validated (differentiating him from Husserl's consciousness-immanence), his doctrine of validity is independent of any subject to think it and is therefore nonidealist. These categories apply to experience because "it is not so much a matter of a relationship between knowing subject and object, not about the subject-object duality, but rather of a relationship between transcendently logical knowledge content and object."³⁴ Like Husserl, Lask approached philosophy as the investigation of the transcendental, asubjective structures through which objects come to be. By insisting on the necessary validity of these categorical structures, Lask and Husserl avoid vulgar materialism; by refusing to ground these categories in the subject, they avoid mere idealism.

Two other similarities with Husserl follow logically. Lask's categories are ontological, for they determine the very existence of the object: there is no

30. Steven Galt Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths toward Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001); Karl Schuhmann and Barry Smith, "Two Idealisms: Lask and Husserl," *Kant-Studien* 83 (1993): 448–66.

31. Emil Lask, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Eugen Herrigel, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1923–24), 2:28–29: "die Aufhebung dieser Unabhängigkeit des Seins gegenüber der logischen Sphäre, in der Zerstörung der uralten Auseinanderreißung von Gegenstand und Wahrheitsgehalt, in der Erkenntnis der transzendentalen Logizität oder 'Verstandes'-Artigkeit des Seins."

32. Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning*, 39.

33. *Ibid.*, 37.

34. Lask, *Schriften*, 2:29: "es handelt sich somit hierbei gar nicht um ein Verhältnis zwischen erkennendem Subjekt und Gegenstand, nicht um die Subjekt-Objekt-Zweiheit, sondern um ein Verhältnis zwischen transzendentallogischem Erkenntnisgehalt und Gegenstand."

noumenon. “But here too the sundering of the object and the ‘truth about it’ into two realms should not be allowed; rather, the truth itself passes into the object, and is identical with it.”³⁵ Only *as* it appears with logical form *is* the object an object: there is nothing more “authentic” behind it. Crowell clarifies: “Categorical validity *is* the objectivity of objects, the being of beings, the thinghood of things—not merely as such objects are known through the subject’s representing (judging) activity, but ‘in themselves.’”³⁶ Lask is more Aristotelian than Husserl in this, but both develop categorical doctrines that construct objects that are irreducible to entities “outside” consciousness.

Finally, Lask’s subject lives only through its experience: it has no independent transcendental existence. Perception does not mean a subject “has” an object in its consciousness; the subject is only the site where object finds meaning, the “scene of the transcendental object.”³⁷ Lask adds a twist: if the subject is derived from independently structured experience, then that structure also governs the relation of subject to object. One instance of this is the “theoretical-contemplative” approach; as Schuhmann and Smith note, this “suspends” the interaction between subject and world.³⁸ In Lask’s words, “The knower ‘lives’ only in truth, and in knowing he has his life. In contrast, he does not live in that which he merely speculates about.”³⁹ His posthumously published notes clarify: by becoming contemplative, by failing to live in its experience, “the living subjectivity turns itself into a contemplative subjectivity and creates thereby a region of shadows, an impersonal region of facts.”⁴⁰ Ontologically, the transformation of lived experience into epistemological contemplation (which Lask calls a “historische Einteilung”) alienates subject from world. The nature of the subject is determined by the transcendentially structured subject-object relation—not the reverse.

Sketch of a Phenomenological Method

From these accounts of Husserl and Lask we can create a model phenomenological method by which to judge *History and Class Consciousness*. To state

35. *Ibid.*, 2:109: “Aber auch hier darf nicht die Auseinanderreißung in die beiden Reiche des Gegenstandes und der ‘Wahrheit darüber’ zugelassen werden, sondern die Wahrheit rückt wiederum in den Gegenstand selbst hinein, ist mit ihm identisch.”

36. Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning*, 44.

37. Lask, *Schriften*, 2:415: “Schauplatz des transzendentalen Gegenstandes”; Crowell, *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning*, 67.

38. Schuhmann and Smith, “Two Idealisms.”

39. Lask, *Schriften*, 2:191–92: “der Erkennende ‘lebt’ eben nur in der Wahrheit, und am Erkennen hat er sein Leben. Dagegen lebt er nicht in dem, worüber er nur spekuliert.”

40. *Ibid.*, 3:179: “die lebendige Subjektivität macht sich zur kontemplativen Subjektivität und schafft dadurch die Schattenregion, unpersönlichen Sachregion.”

that Lukács analyzes consciousness phenomenologically means the following. First, he aspires to describe it on its own terms: categories apply to consciousness itself, not simply to objects within consciousness. Second, he rules out both idealist and crudely materialist ontologies. The categories are not derived from the subject: insofar as there is a subject, it supervenes on the structure of consciousness. Thus phenomenology is nonidealist in not relying on a subject to posit either contents or structure of consciousness. Similarly, it is meaningless to talk of noumena: the objectivity of objects consists in their givenness within the categories of consciousness itself. To reduce consciousness to an epiphenomenon of objects is to misunderstand the nature of objects: their very being is constituted according to categories of consciousness. Third, as a result, consciousness is governed according to its own logic. It must be internally coherent—valid, in Lask’s terms—and any incoherence or contradictions will cause problems that cannot be reduced to factors outside consciousness (such as subjective psychological anxiety or objective economic crises). With this in mind, we must examine Lukács’s text to see if his description of the development of proletarian self-consciousness can be interpreted in these terms.

Lukács and Phenomenology

There is a strong *prima facie* case for investigating Lukács’s debt to phenomenology, although few have done so. His road to Marx is usually depicted as the wanderings of a lost Romantic. Biographical details—the alienated son of an *haute bourgeois* Budapest banker, conflicts with his mother, picturesquely catastrophic love affairs—provide the lens through which Lukács is read: Congdon, for example, divides his account of the young Lukács into three, each devoted to the particular *ewige Weiblich* in Lukács’s sights at the time.⁴¹ Correspondingly, the pre-Marxist works paid most attention are Lukács’s lighter literary works: the anguished introspection of *Soul and Form*, the alienated homelessness echoing through *Theory of the Novel*, and the projected Dostoyevsky book support the picture of a poetic soul horrified by capitalism; Lukács’s conversion to Marx comes to seem inevitable, but so too does his reliance on a quasi-artistic subject that gives the world a form truly expressing its freedom.

There is much truth in this picture, but it is only half the story: it ignores Lukács the neo-Kantian philosopher, working with Heinrich Rickert, Wilhelm Windelband, Husserl, and Lask. The impression these thinkers made has been neglected, despite obvious evidence of Lukács’s engagement with them. A letter from Ernst Bloch in 1916 accompanied volumes of Husserl, Lask, and

41. Lee Congdon, *The Young Lukács* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

Hermann Lotze, whose validity logic influenced Lask: Lukács engaged seriously with this thought. He made no attempt to hide his debt: Lask and Rickert receive several mentions in the “Reification” essay, while Lukács singled out Husserl’s enormous methodological impact on him. One Heidelberg aesthetic treatise was explicitly phenomenological, containing numerous direct references to Husserl.⁴² Lukács was personally close to Lask: after the two became acquainted through Weber, Lask fostered the young scholar’s career, advocating with Rickert on Lukács’s behalf. Lukács refers to Lask in letters as a close friend and later recalled with affection the discussions he enjoyed with Lask on his Heidelberg aesthetics. Furthermore, he produced an appreciative memorial to Lask in *Kant-Studien* in 1917.

Even those few commentators who engage with Lukács’s early interest in the South-West Germans rarely try to follow this influence in *History and Class Consciousness*. Congdon notes the Husserlian language of Lukács’s Heidelberg aesthetic drafts, but he does not explore whether this continued to be of importance in Lukács’s social theory.⁴³ Only Rockmore’s outstanding account of neo-Kantian epistemology in Lukács’s social theory fills the gap, but he does not examine the crucial ontological differences between consciousness and *self*-consciousness.⁴⁴ To understand Lukács properly, we must, alas, imitate Pierre Menard, author of the *Quixote*: only full appreciation of his sources will give a reading of *History and Class Consciousness* that rises above caricature. Given evidence of his early engagement with Husserl and Lask, it is neglectful to assume that we can ignore them in reading his later work.

History and Class Consciousness does not *consistently* describe consciousness in phenomenological ways, but the most important essays do. The book, as Lukács specifies in the foreword, does not present a complete scientific system: it is a collection written over several years responding to specific issues. Consequently, we should not expect rigorous consistency of outlook. In particular, Lukács changes how he analyzes consciousness. The book’s earlier essays still treat consciousness as knowledge of an object held by a subject: for example, the March 1920 “Class Consciousness” essay poses the problem of how members of the proletariat acquire correct theoretical knowledge of society such that they act in appropriately revolutionary ways. However, the three

42. On the phenomenological aspects of the second Heidelberg treatise, see Elisabeth Weisser, *Georg Lukács’ Heidelberger Kunstphilosophie* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1992).

43. Congdon, *Young Lukács*, 92–95, 111–17.

44. Rockmore, *Irrationalism*.

latest essays—“Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization” (both written specifically for the book), and “What Is Orthodox Marxism?” (thoroughly revised and doubled in length for republication)—analyze consciousness phenomenologically: they describe its structures instead of its specific contents, they use a vocabulary of existence (not appearance) to describe objects within consciousness, and they make the subject depend on the way consciousness is structured. If we treat these three contemporaneous essays as a whole, the phenomenological premises underpinning Lukács’s method become clear.

Even in these essays, though, Lukács presents no systematic social phenomenology. While we cannot reconstruct one here, it is possible to show Lukács’s *general* use of phenomenological idioms, to justify a phenomenological reinterpretation of the identical subject-object. I therefore point to two recurrent phenomenological motifs in Lukács’s text: first, he treats consciousness as a mode of existence of an object, not as knowledge of it; second, he investigates specifically the *structures* of consciousness governing objectivity. As I show, the language he uses to describe consciousness is more consonant with phenomenology than epistemology.

Consciousness and Being

Lukács treats the conscious being of objects as (a level of) reality: how things are in consciousness is what they really are, not how they appear. He attacks standard “criticism” (i.e., Kantianism) because its methodological starting point is “the separation of method and reality, of thought and being.”⁴⁵ Instead, Lukács insists, dialectical categories are forms of being, not of thought, echoing Lask in stating that every object is “given” as an “inseparable complex of form and content.”⁴⁶ Forms are not imposed by a subject on sense data to create objects; it is inherent to the very existence of objects. Thus mediation is “not something (subjectively) thrust in to the objects from without . . . *but is rather the disclosure of their authentic, objective, concrete structure itself*”⁴⁷ Correlatively, there is no noumenon behind the appearance. Lukács identifies the problem of the thing-in-itself as the definitive problem of classical German philosophy.⁴⁸ As Lukács notes, even Fichte, despite formally abolishing the

45. Lukács, *Werke*, 2:174: “die Trennung von Methode und Wirklichkeit, von Denken und Sein.”

46. *Ibid.*, 2:304: “untrennbarer Komplex von Form und Inhalt.”

47. *Ibid.*, 2:346: “nichts von außen (subjektiv) in die Gegenstände Hineingetragenes, ist kein Werturteil oder Sollen, das ihrem Sein gegenüberstände, sondern ist das Offenbarwerden ihrer *eigentlichen, objektiven, gegenständlichen Struktur selbst*.”

48. *Ibid.*, 2:291.

noumenon, had relied on the facticity of existence, the simple being of objects, as the one thing that could not be deduced rationally.⁴⁹ Consequently, “actuality always reappears as unsurmountably irrational.”⁵⁰ Lukács attributes such endless collision with the irrational given to a refusal “to comprehend reality as a totality and as being.”⁵¹ By distinguishing and then relating *Wirklichkeit* (the reality of consciousness) and *Sein*, Lukács rejects the thought-being duality. Classical German philosophy thinks of reality as mere appearance; it is, in fact, irreducible existence as such.

Lukács goes beyond Husserl and Lask in that he analyzes society, but he uses their methods to do so. For Lukács, society must be analyzed as it *appears*: the categories in which society appears are the categories of its existence. Thus Lukács interprets Marx’s “‘Did ancient Moloch not rule? Was the Delphic Apollo not a real power in the lives of the Greeks?’” as meaning more than that the ancient gods were real powers because people acted on belief; rather, they must be understood as existing in a certain way by virtue of their appearance in consciousness.⁵² Indeed, Lukács expresses regret that Marx went no farther than this but states that “the *method* of his mature works always operates with such practically graduated concepts of being.”⁵³ Hence we cannot simply assess these religious beliefs in the way Weber might, as idealized motives for action; rather, they must be assessed as existent (by virtue of being in consciousness) parts of social reality.

The 1922 version of “What Is Orthodox Marxism?” clarifies the point. Lukács states that “Marx’s demand that we understand ‘the sensuous world,’ the object, reality, as human sensible activity signifies humanity’s becoming conscious of itself as a social being.”⁵⁴ However, this is *truly* possible only under capitalism. Earlier social relations appeared too natural, too disorganized for humans to think of themselves as social. Only under capitalism are all social relations finally and explicitly economic, making clear the individual’s social existence, and “man becomes—in the true sense of the word—a social being.

49. *Ibid.*, 2:300.

50. *Ibid.*: “die Gegebenheit immer wieder als unüberwinden irrationell auftaucht.”

51. *Ibid.*, 2:299: “die Wirklichkeit als Ganzes und als Sein zu begreifen.”

52. *Ibid.*, 2:306: “‘Hat nicht der alte Moloch geherrscht? War nicht der delphische Apollo eine wirkliche Macht im Leben der Griechen?’”

53. *Ibid.*: “die *Methode* der reifen Werke auch stets mit diesen praktisch-abgestuften Seinsbegriffen arbeitet.”

54. *Ibid.*, 2:192: “die Forderung von Marx, die ‘Sinnlichkeit,’ den Gegenstand, die Wirklichkeit als menschliche sinnliche Tätigkeit zu fassen, bedeutet ein Bewußtwerden des Menschen über sich als Gesellschaftswesen.”

Society becomes *the* reality for men.⁵⁵ The explicit formal equality of capitalism makes society as a totality into *reality as such*: as social relations become more conscious, they become more real. Lukács describes changes of consciousness as changes of *state*: the *Sein* of *Bewußtsein* is emphasized when changed to *Bewußtwerden*: the language of being and becoming, not knowing, is the one most applicable to consciousness. Because consciousness is an ontological mode or region, not mere knowledge of the nakedly existing—because, as Lukács points out, “still other levels of reality are possible”—changes in how consciousness is organized can have an important effect on reality.⁵⁶ Ultimately, society can be said to exist as reality only when it is conscious: its appearance and its existence are not separable.

The Autonomous Structures of Consciousness

Given Lukács’s rejection of noumena, his insistence that the categories of the known object are its authentic categories, and his denial that reality represents mere knowledge of the world, he is particularly attentive to the autonomous coherence of that reality. This is the second phenomenological motif in Lukács: he speaks of consciousness—and particularly *problems* of consciousness such as reification—in terms of *structure*, not of content. Lukács explores how appearances are structured, not what or how the subject knows. What differentiates capitalism most from earlier societies is that it imposes a universal structure on all appearances. In Lukács’s words, “It was capitalism, with its unified economic structure embracing the whole of society, that first produced a—formally—unified structure of consciousness for its totality.”⁵⁷

This is reinforced by the way Lukács treats subject and object as themselves structurally defined within and by consciousness, rather than consciousness being defined by them. The best example of this is his description of Fichte’s attempt to replace knowledge with activity: Lukács describes the way Fichte’s subject must relate to the world ethically as a “structure of consciousness.”⁵⁸ Lukács identifies a different structure of the subject’s relation to the object as the key difference between Fichte and Kant. Lukács’s choice of terms suggests that different subject-object relations mean different configurations of

55. *Ibid.*, 2:193: “der Mensch wird—im wahren Sinne des Wortes—Gesellschaftswesen. Die Gesellschaft wird *die* Wirklichkeit für den Menschen.”

56. *Ibid.*, 2:306: “noch andere Stufen der Wirklichkeit [sind] möglich.”

57. *Ibid.*, 2:275: “erst der Kapitalismus hat mit der einheitlichen Wirtschaftsstruktur für die ganze Gesellschaft eine—formell—einheitliche Bewußtseinsstruktur für ihre Gesamtheit hervorgebracht.”

58. *Ibid.*, 2:302: “Struktur des Bewußtseins.”

consciousness as a whole. Consciousness is not just knowledge, governed by rational categories but distinct from the subject; the description of consciousness *includes* how the subject is structurally oriented within consciousness toward objects. Rather than just investigate the epistemological categories through which the subject cognizes the world, Lukács explores how the realm of conscious existence as a whole is organized, in a manner closer to Husserl and Lask than to Kant or Fichte.

To summarize: the way Lukács describes consciousness indicates his debts to Husserl and Lask. He treats categories of consciousness as real categories of objects themselves, not epistemological categories; he rejects noumena, or some more fundamental reality that consciousness is merely a description of; he is interested in the structures of consciousness rather than the content—the *how* rather than the *what*. Of course, what makes it impossible to reduce Lukács to either Husserl or Lask is that the object he is most interested in is the sociohistorical totality, rather than objects as such. I have, however, isolated some of the ways Lukács’s account of the consciousness of society is framed in phenomenological terms. While the object is one that would be beyond the purview of Husserl or Lask, the way its conscious existence is described owes a great deal to their methods. Having shown this, I apply those methods to a reading of Lukács’s theory of revolutionary subjectivity.

The Reified Structure of Consciousness

“To follow the model of the natural sciences almost inevitably means to reify consciousness”—Husserl, not Lukács, thus connected the rise of an instrumental, scientific attitude with reification.⁵⁹ Similarly, it was Lask who stated that a purely theoretical stance toward the world led to a “castrated, blasé knowledge” of a world of shadows.⁶⁰ Such definitions come much closer to what Lukács means by the term than any of its much-abused vulgarizations, which often reduce it to a Marxian version of Kant’s injunction to treat others not as objects or means but as subjects and ends in themselves.⁶¹

Of course, there are other possible sources for Lukács’s idea of reification—Hegel and Marx, most obviously. Though Hegel does not use *Verdinglichung* and Marx deploys the word only twice, most scholars assume that Lukács’s term parallels some concept of theirs under a different name. Thus reifica-

59. Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy as a Strict Science,” in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper, 1965), 103.

60. Lask, *Schriften*, 3:240; Schuhmann and Smith, “Two Idealisms.”

61. For a recent example of this approach, see Axel Honneth, *Verdinglichung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

tion is understood as Hegelian self-objectivization by society, which then becomes alienated, in the Marxist sense that the subject's product, the commodity, confronts it as an object, a thing. This assumption stems from a methodological error: it is assumed that *Verdinglichung* must mean something from Hegel or Marx, so the task is to find its parallel; if instead we take Lukács on his own terms, we find a concept very different from mere alienation or objectification.

One source who does use *Verdinglichung* frequently is Georg Simmel: he argues that money gives a thingly character to human social relations, casting them as fixed and objectively valid. Despite interesting reflections on value as an ontological sphere distinct from being, Simmel's primary concerns are psychological: he warns against the way reified social relations appear threateningly impervious to a subjectivity excluded from them. There is, for Simmel, a subjective entity distinct from the reified social relations confronting it.

While Simmel clearly influenced Lukács's analysis of social relations in the first section of the "Reification" essay, his analysis goes much farther. The central problem for him is "reified structure of consciousness": how reification becomes an organizing principle of consciousness itself.⁶² To say consciousness *itself* is reified in its structures goes beyond sociological or psychological accounts. To understand how Lukács sees hope in the extremity of reification, we must understand it without reference to a psyche or a subject beyond consciousness; in other words, we must understand it phenomenologically. There are three moments to this argument. First, I examine what Lukács means by the "reified structure of consciousness": this signifies a particular way of structuring the relationship between subject and object within consciousness. Second, I examine how this affects the subject. Rather than psychological problems, Lukács concentrates on the ways that reified consciousness is *temporally structured*. Finally, the emergence of proletarian self-consciousness comes from a logical contradiction in how subject and object are phenomenologically configured. It is not psychological problems of reification that cause dialectical contradiction: it is not the case that an objectified world comes into conflict with an external, "organic-spiritual" subject that is revolted by reification to the extent that it seeks to overthrow it. Rather, the contradiction within reification arises as a structure of a phenomenologically construed consciousness.

The Reification of Consciousness

Lukács's statement that "the struggle against the effects of reified consciousness" is pivotal in overcoming capitalism makes clear that he is more concerned

62. Lukács, *Werke*, 2:275: "verdinglichte Bewußtseinsstruktur."

with what reification means for consciousness than for social institutions.⁶³ While he identifies the commodity as the epitome of reification, the most important consequence of its dominance is that “the reified structure sinks ever deeper, more fatefully, and constitutively into the consciousness of man.”⁶⁴ Reification is thus a specific configuration of consciousness as well as a sociological phenomenon. It entails a particular relation between subject and object: the reified consciousness assumes that “the rational-formal mode of knowledge is the only possible . . . way to grasp reality.”⁶⁵ A different attitude to reality results: “The contemplative stance toward a mechanical, rule-governed process, which functions independently of consciousness and beyond the influence of human activity, which appears as a completely enclosed system, alters the basic categories of the immediate stance of men to the world: it reduces space and time to a common denominator and levels time down to the level of space.”⁶⁶ Grounding the development in the experience of working at a machine, Lukács identifies the emergence of a new *attitude* toward the world, in which the subject views itself as contemplating (and therefore separate from) the contents of its consciousness.

Lukács’s insistence on the twofold effects of reification on consciousness further highlights the phenomenological side of his argument. He is invariably concerned to show not only objective but also subjective effects. Emphasizing that commodification “forces its structure on the entire consciousness of humans,” he announces that his task is to reveal *both* the “form of objectivity, on the one hand, and the correlative stance of the subject, on the other” as problems growing out of the fetish character of commodities.⁶⁷ Repeatedly, therefore, Lukács describes how both objects and subjects are altered by the way the structure of reification takes over consciousness: it is this organizing principle that determines what subjects and objects are *within* consciousness,

63. *Ibid.*, 2:511: “der Kampf gegen die Einwirkungen des verdinglichten Bewußtseins.”

64. *Ibid.*, 2:260, 268: “die Verdinglichungsstruktur [senkt sich] immer tiefer, schicksalhafter und konstitutiver in das Bewußtsein der Menschen hinein.”

65. *Ibid.*, 2:299: “die rationell-formalistische Erkenntnisweise die einzig mögliche . . . Art der Erfassung der Wirklichkeit.”

66. *Ibid.*, 2:264: “Das kontemplative Verhalten einem mechanisch-gesetzmäßigen Prozeß gegenüber, der sich unabhängig vom Bewußtsein, unbeeinflußbar von einer menschlichen Tätigkeit abspielt, sich also als fertiges geschlossenes System offenbart, verwandelt auch die Grundkategorien des unmittelbaren Verhaltens der Menschen zur Welt: es bringt Raum und Zeit auf einen Nenner, nivelliert die Zeit auf das Niveau des Raumes.”

67. *Ibid.*, 2:275: “drückt dem ganzen Bewußtsein des Menschen ihre Struktur auf”; 2:258: “Gegenständlichkeitsform einerseits und aus dem ihr zugeordneten Subjektverhalten anderseits ergeben.”

rather than assuming that subjects exist outside consciousness. With regard to objects, Lukács describes the problem of the contemplative mind, reduced to observing a world of objects that operate “as a necessary consequence of a known, knowable rational system of laws, as its necessity”: although we can *know* this system, we can only observe it passively and gain no control over it.⁶⁸ Lukács’s complaint here is the same as Lask’s: orienting our consciousness toward the world epistemologically means that world appears absolutely mechanical and deterministic. More important for my purpose are the subjective consequences of the dominance of consciousness by the structures of reification: the subject of knowledge is separated ever more from the particular individual and is turned into “a pure—purely formal—subject,” whose “qualities and capabilities appear as ‘things’ that the person ‘possesses’ and ‘disposes of’ like the various objects of the external world.”⁶⁹ Consciousness cannot be understood epistemologically as knowledge, because the epistemological stance *itself* leads inexorably toward the formalization of the subject. This attitude by which the subject puts itself outside the world in order to know it is the quintessence of reification.

The Phenomenological Construction of the Subject

For Lukács, the very falsity of the epistemological standpoint that apparently separates the subject from its consciousness is shown by the way the individual subject is shaped by the structures of reified consciousness. This occurs because labor as a commodity is sold by the *hour*: the fundamental temporal structures of the entire phenomenological realm are governed by objective, quantitative relationships; compare Husserl’s flow of experience, with retention and protention providing an organic continuity out of which the subject is generated, with the atomized, reified consciousness of the proletarian, whose time is chopped up into identical, interchangeable, unconnected parcels. This is the epitome of the transformation of time into space and altering of the fundamental attitude of the subject to the world:

Time thereby loses its qualitative, changing, flowing character: it ossifies into a delimited, quantitatively measurable continuum, filled with quantitatively

68. *Ibid.*, 2:307–8: “als notwendige Folge erkannter, erkennbarer, rationeller Gesetzsysteme, als seine Notwendigkeit.”

69. *Ibid.*, 2:306: “ein reines—rein formelles—Subjekt”; 2:275: “Eigenschaften und Fähigkeiten . . . erscheinen als ‘Dinge,’ die der Mensch ebenso ‘besitzt’ und ‘veräußert’ wie die verschiedenen Gegenstände der äußern Welt.”

measurable “things”: it becomes a space. With such an abstract, measurable time that has become a physical space as its environment [*Umwelt*], which is at the same time both a prerequisite and a consequence of the economically mechanically divided and specialized production of the object of work, the subject itself must correspondingly be rationally divided up.⁷⁰

Lukács’s use of *Umwelt* throughout the “Reification” essay to refer to the immediate conscious surroundings in which the subject exists is similar to Husserl’s use of the same word in *Ideen* and *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*, as a precursor to aspects of his more-developed concept of *Lebenswelt*. More significantly, Lukács attributes the shattering of the subject to the structures applied to its consciousness: again, the organization of consciousness determines the subject, not the reverse. Consciousness, in the sense of the realm of all phenomena, has become a set of objects: it has been fully reified. This is a consequence of treating labor as a commodity, because such labor is measured according to time; a fundamental category of the way humans exist in the world is now structured by an atomizing principle more appropriate to space. Lukács’s criticism is thus not specifically that the commodity is a “fetish” masking some more fundamentally real “use” value created by labor beneath the distortions of exchange value; instead, it is the application of the quantifying structure that commodities represent to the very structure of consciousness—the condition of the appearance of both objects and subjects.

Lukács insists that proletarian self-consciousness could become effective only when “all the categories in which human existence is constructed appear as the determinants of this existence itself (and not only as the way it can be construed).”⁷¹ *Because* the reified, rationalistic commodity form is applied to consciousness through time, precisely this condition has been fulfilled: the social category of the commodity form, the category in which society appears, is *also* the category that structures the disclosure of the subject *as subject*. To clarify: whereas Hegel (in the *Phenomenology*) and Marx (particularly in the 1844 manuscripts) had been interested in how the subject *appeared as an object*—that is, how it came to have knowledge of itself in objective form

70. *Ibid.*, 2:264: “Die Zeit verliert damit ihren qualitativen, veränderlichen, flußartigen Charakter: sie erstarrt zu einem genau umgrenzten, quantitative meßbaren, von quantitative meßbaren ‘Dingen’ . . . erfüllten Kontinuum: zu einem Raum. In dieser abstrakten, genau meßbaren, zum physikalischen Raum gewordenen Zeit als Umwelt, die zugleich Voraussetzung und Folge der wissenschaftlich-mechanisch zerlegten und spezialisierten Hervorbringung des Arbeitsobjektes ist, müssen die Subjekte ebenfalls dementsprechend rationell zerlegt werden.”

71. *Ibid.*, 2:342: “sämtliche Kategorien, in denen sich das menschliche Dasein aufbaut, als Bestimmungen dieses Daseins selbst (und nicht bloß seiner Begreifbarkeit) erscheinen.”

and how such knowledge changed itself—Lukács follows Husserl in being concerned with the very ontological relationship between subject and object *as such*. As Lukács explains, “For the worker, work time is not only the objective form of the goods he sells . . . but rather is at the same time the determinative form of existence for his being as a subject, as a person.”⁷² Thus, because the proletariat is defined as the one who sells his or her labor time, any change in the quantity of that labor time fundamentally affects who he or she *is*. Quantitative changes have qualitative implications for the worker because they affect the consciousness through which he or she is disclosed. The capitalist is not defined, objectively in society, as a seller of labor time: for the capitalist, changes in labor time are only changes in quantity of the object purchased. In contrast, the proletariat’s social existence is through time, so changes in the quantity of time fundamentally alter the *quality* of what the proletariat *is*. Precisely because the proletariat exists through consciousness (phenomenologically—not “outside” it, epistemologically), changes of structure and organization within that consciousness affect it deeply.

The Contradiction of Subject and Object

The reified structure of consciousness has divided the subject in two. On the one hand, it creates a formal, contentless, ineffective subject that feels itself powerless to act on the reality that appears. On the other hand, how that reality is temporally structured affects the concrete individual consciousness precisely because the apparent independence of the epistemological structure is only a result of an immanent structure of consciousness: there is, in reality, no transcendental beyond for the subject to retreat to, so by reducing consciousness to mere objectivity, the subject too becomes objective. However, precisely because the subject depends so much on the structures of its consciousness, Lukács can argue that a logical contradiction in those structures creates self-consciousness in the proletariat. In contrast to the usual interpretation of Lukács, in which a subject there all along is revolted by the reification of its creation, a phenomenological reading reveals that the subject is created as self-conscious by the structures of consciousness itself. There was no subject as such *before* it was generated within consciousness; moreover, it is because this subject *as it appears* is in contradiction with the structures of its own consciousness that it becomes self-conscious.

72. Ibid., 2:351: “für den Arbeiter die Arbeitszeit [ist] nicht nur die Objektsform seiner verkauften Ware . . . sondern zugleich die bestimmende Existenzform seines Daseins als Subjekt, als Mensch.”

This problem becomes contradictory because of “the rigid opposition of subject and object” that follows from the capitalist structure of consciousness.⁷³ Reification and the contemplative stance have generated a subject that appears distinct from its world of objects. In society, this leads the worker to appear both as abstract labor time and as the isolated individual vendor of labor. The same person is structured in consciousness as both object and subject. Thus, “through the separation that arises here between objectivity and subjectivity by man objectifying himself as a commodity, this situation becomes at the same time capable of becoming conscious.”⁷⁴ Lukács’s comments on the situation of the journalist offer a useful comparison: the journalist is able to convince himself that his work truly fulfills his subjective qualities (however false such an illusion may be), whereas for the proletariat, labor is no more than abstract time and therefore is divided from the worker in being performed.⁷⁵ So the proletarian is conscious of an absolutely sundered double existence—as both object (the daily reality of his existence) and subject (the abstract vendor of labor power, ostensibly the “cause” of the objectification of labor power)—in a way that other classes are not. The proletariat’s recognition of this “accomplishes an objective, structural change in the object of its knowledge.”⁷⁶ Because his work is social, and because he is identical with his work in the doubling up of subject and object, the worker has become aware of “the contradiction of the isolated individual with the abstract generality, in which the relationship of his work to society is mediated for him.”⁷⁷ The worker therefore can no longer conceive of himself as the individual of capitalism but must recognize his own social being as proletarian: we thus see the proletariat’s “own genesis as a class.”⁷⁸ Lukács does not state that the proletariat suddenly notices that it is a class (or changes from *an-sich* to *für-sich*); rather, its existence as class comes about solely through the logical contradiction of subject and object in the structures of consciousness. Those structures are the categories of the proletariat’s existence.

We have reached an unequivocally Hegelian mediation of concrete particular (worker) and abstract generality (work), but Lukács gets here by con-

73. Ibid.: “das starre Gegenüberstehen von Subjekt und Objekt.”

74. Ibid., 2:352: “durch die Spaltung jedoch, die gerade hier zwischen Objektivität und Subjektivität in dem sich als Ware objektivierenden Menschen entsteht, wird diese Lage zugleich des Bewußtwerdens fähig gemacht.”

75. Ibid., 2:275.

76. Ibid., 2:353: “vollbringt eine gegenständliche, strukturelle Veränderung am Objekt ihrer Erkenntnis.”

77. Ibid., 2:355: “dem Gegensatz des vereinzelt Einzelnen zu der abstrakten Allgemeinheit, worin ihm die Beziehung seiner Arbeit zur Gesellschaft vermittelt wurde.”

78. Ibid.: “eigene Entstehung als Klasse.”

struing consciousness in Husserlian terms. Individual proletarian consciousnesses are structured to contain a subject, the abstract vendor of labor, and an object, commodified labor itself. Because the object is structured through time, it alters the way the subject is revealed: the subject and object appear simultaneously. The contradiction is between these categories within consciousness, not between consciousness and something outside it. Lukács's immanent dialectic requires no transcendental subject: it needs only what consciousness itself generates. Through the social structuring of consciousness into subject and object, the proletariat's social existence is disclosed for the first time.

Party as Proletariat's Act of Self-Conscious Becoming

Lukács's apparent reliance on German idealist ideas, particularly a vulgarized Fichte, has been blamed for an excessive weight on the role of the revolutionary Party to act as subjects of revolution. His inability to show how the proletariat could act on the society that determined its consciousness pushed him toward a centralized Leninist Party to act in the proletariat's place. For some critics, this represents a commendable realism; for others, it opens the door to one-party dictatorship.⁷⁹ If the phenomenological reading of Lukács is compelling, this argument becomes less possible: if Lukács did not see social relations as created by a transcendental subject acting freely with regard to them, then he would be unlikely to slip into looking for such a subject in the Party. The two final essays in *History and Class Consciousness* were written in the same period as "Reification": this final section argues that he describes the role of the Party in them in the same phenomenological terms as his analysis of reification. First, I shall briefly outline the role Lukács assigns the Party in the era of revolution: far from describing it as a Blanquist-Leninist agent of change, Lukács depicts it in terms much closer to the way Rosa Luxemburg saw the mass strike. Second, I shall show how this more democratic view of the Party is based in phenomenology: both in the language Lukács uses to describe it and in the particular idea of agency that he deploys, his Party is distinctively phenomenological.

The Vanguard Party

Because he argues in favor of a strong Party organization in the final two essays of *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács is often presented as moving away from his earlier Luxemburgian belief in a broadly based proletarian

79. Stedman Jones ("Early Lukács") is an example of the former; Arato and Breines (*Young Lukács*) argue the latter.

revolution and toward a Leninist reliance on a small vanguard tasked with the overthrow of capitalism in the name of the workers. However, given Lukács's repeated and emphatic praise of Luxemburg—an odd tactic by 1922, when orthodox Bolshevism was triumphant—there is an obvious case for the defense. In fact, if we examine the specific role Lukács attributes to the Party, it is clear that he treats it in a way analogous to the mass strike in Luxemburg's theory: through Party activity, the workers become conscious. Two important points support this claim. First, Lukács embraces the idea of a broadly based party at odds with Lenin's small, disciplined cadre, which he explicitly rejects. Second, Lukács does not view the Party in instrumentalist terms, as the means for seizing power; instead, it is the locus for growth of consciousness through involvement in Party work.

Lukács defines the Party as the broad-based movement through which workers educate themselves, not a limited band of educated revolutionaries who must educate the workers. Although the Party consists of the most conscious workers, it should draw more of the proletariat into the struggle, as shown by Lukács's statement that “nothing changes in this case, to take just two extreme cases, if a relatively small, inwardly organized Party develops into a large mass Party through interaction with the broad layers of the proletariat, or if a communist mass Party develops out of a spontaneous mass party after numerous internal crises.”⁸⁰ Significantly, what both extremes have in common is the goal of a mass party, not a revolutionary core.

Furthermore, Lukács repeatedly puts proletariat, not Party, in the subject position: the class, not its organ, will carry out revolution. “Even in theory, the communist Party does not act on behalf of the proletariat”: it must not be treated as an agent making up for the deficit of proletarian subjectivity.⁸¹ The same applies within the Party: Lukács warns against too authoritative a central committee, lest it reduce the masses to “a merely *observing*, contemplative” attitude that leads to “the voluntaristic overestimation of the active significance of the individual (the leader) and the fatalistic underestimation of the significance of the class (the masses).”⁸² He insists that all active Party

80. Lukács, *Werke*, 2:507: “An diesem Tatbestand ändert nichts, um nur zwei extreme Fälle zu nehmen, ob eine relativ kleine, innerlich gefestigte Partei sich in Wechselwirkung mit den breiten Schichten des Proletariats zur großen Massenpartei entfaltet oder ob aus der spontan entstandenen Massenpartei—nach manchen inneren Krisen—eine kommunistische Massenpartei wird.”

81. *Ibid.*, 2:505: “Auch theoretisch handelt die kommunistische Partei nicht stellvertretend für das Proletariat.”

82. *Ibid.*, 2:496: “die voluntaristische Überschätzung der aktiven Bedeutung des Individuums (des Führers) und die fatalistische Unterschätzung der Bedeutung der Klasse (der Masse).”

members “not only are in a position to but are forced to express their criticisms”; the leaders alone should not determine policy.⁸³ Lukács thus rejects any idea of a Party of experts.

The task Lukács sets the Party distinguishes him further from Lenin. Since “the struggle of the communist party is about the class consciousness of the proletariat,” the Party should not undertake revolutionary political activity *on behalf of* the class—or *only* “to strengthen and accelerate the developmental process of class consciousness.”⁸⁴ This simultaneously rules out pragmatic concepts of the Party as the best tool to overthrow the bourgeois state and shows the Luxemburgist spirit of Lukács’s theory: in Lukács’s words, “the struggle of the communist party is about the class consciousness of the proletariat” and not the actual transformation of society itself.⁸⁵ Lukács therefore criticizes those who “act for the proletariat” instead of encouraging “the real process of the development of their class consciousness through their actions.”⁸⁶ Consequently, “the emergence of the communist Party can only be the consciously performed work of the class-conscious workers.”⁸⁷ Party work serves the same role as work in the mass strike for Luxemburg: it develops revolutionary consciousness through practice.

Even where Lukács apparently departs from Luxemburg in granting the Party preeminence, he conscientiously recognizes her contribution. Her error was excessive optimism: “She only overestimated the organic character of this process and underestimated the significance of conscious, consciously organizational elements in it.”⁸⁸ Luxemburg’s overall picture of an organic process is correct; the Party merely fixes formally the highest degree of class consciousness attained and keeps proletarian consciousness pure, safe from corruption by nonproletarian strata or professional revolutionaries. Even in praising the Bolsheviks, he looks to the commitment required of their members, not the pragmatism of a small, disciplined Party. This, of course, does

83. *Ibid.*, 2:514: “sind sie nicht nur in der Lage, sondern geradezu gezwungen, mit ihrer Kritik sofort einzusetzen.”

84. *Ibid.*, 2:503: “um den Entwicklungsprozeß des Klassenbewußtseins zu befördern und zu beschleunigen.”

85. *Ibid.*: “der Kampf der kommunistischen Partei geht um das Klassenbewußtsein des Proletariats.”

86. *Ibid.*, 2:507: “sie noch häufig . . . für das Proletariat handeln, statt durch ihr Handeln den realen Prozeß der Entwicklung seines Klassenbewußtseins befördern zu müssen meinen.”

87. *Ibid.*, 2:517: “das Entstehen der kommunistischen Partei nur das bewußt getane Werk der klassenbewußten Arbeiter sein kann.”

88. *Ibid.*, 2:494: “Sie hat bloß den organischen Charakter dieses Prozesses überschätzt und die Bedeutung des bewußten, bewußt-organisatorischen Elementes in ihm unterschätzt.”

not logically restrict the size of the Party or advocate strengthening its central committee. Lukács may not have grasped the realities of Bolshevism, but his description of the Party points not toward centralized leadership but toward mass action.

The Phenomenology of Class Consciousness

It remains to show that this theory of the Party is derived from phenomenology. What is phenomenological is that the type of consciousness and practice promoted by a (Luxemburgist) mass party does not require a transcendental subject and does not entail activity by a subject on an object opposed to it. First, Lukács describes the emergence of class consciousness as a concrete development in the proletariat, not an acquisition of knowledge. Second (because it is not “knowledge”), class consciousness can only be collectively embodied and not held in the mind of a single epistemological subject. Third, Lukács describes proletarian self-consciousness as an ontological, qualitative change in the existence of its class. Finally, Lukács’s idea of subjective revolutionary practice is performative, not creative: the working class is free insofar as it manifests its appearance in categories for itself, not by virtue of altering an opposed object, society.

First, class consciousness is not directly equated with true knowledge about the objective situation. Because the proletariat changes as it becomes more conscious, what class consciousness *is* must also change. Lukács therefore criticizes parties that claim a superior position from which to teach the proletariat, referring to this position as “the purely *post festum* structure of bourgeois, reified, merely ‘contemplative’ consciousness.”⁸⁹ By “*post festum*” Lukács means a tendency to interpret society or the class according to preexisting concepts, to which data are fitted—as the idealist subject confronts reality with categories of its reason. This connects the epistemological standpoint, reification, and revolutionary practice aimed at “teaching” the proletariat. Instead, Lukács presents praxis as the development of the forms of proletarian consciousness out of its very experience: only thus is it possible to overcome “every opposition of the general and the particular, of the rule and the individual case ‘subsumed’ under it.”⁹⁰ Lukács’s scare quotes around *subsumierten* reemphasize the inherent error of approaching class consciousness in terms of

89. Ibid.: “der reinen *post festum* Struktur des bürgerlichen, verdinglichten bloß ‘anschauen- den’ Bewußtseins.”

90. Ibid., 2:510: “jeden Gegensatz des Allgemeinen und des Besonderen, des Gesetzes und des ihm ‘subsumierten’ Einzelfalles.”

the epistemological faculty of judgment. Using predetermined concepts and categories to interpret society is fundamentally flawed. By rejecting the equation of knowing with class consciousness, Lukács undermines attempts by leading cadres to take control of the revolutionary class.

Lukács instead proposes an alternative way to understand class consciousness, best summed up by Merleau-Ponty's statement that the meaning of class consciousness "is not in the form of an 'I think.'"⁹¹ Rather than the mental possession of a subject, class consciousness is embodied in the Party as the "organizational form of this class consciousness," the way the proletariat has form.⁹² Lukács's phrasing indicates that consciousness has forms objectively; it does not take place mentally, nor is imposed on the world by the subject, but is instead expressed directly in the objects themselves. Hence "psychological consciousness retains its *post festum* character for every individual": Lukács distinguishes between the high level of consciousness manifest in the Party's organizational forms and the low-level epistemological consciousness of individuals.⁹³ Because class consciousness has form independently of any knowing subject, Lukács moves away from idealist paradigms. Moreover, any claims by a visionary leader to possess unique insight into the correct form of class consciousness are senseless on these terms: if forms of consciousness are manifest in collective organization and not in the "mind," then only the total group can lay any claim to consciousness of itself. It cannot be known (epistemologically) from outside; it can only disclose itself.

Third, as a necessary corollary of the preceding, this consciousness itself is treated ontologically: to the extent that the working class is organized, it is self-conscious; to the extent that it is self-conscious, it exists properly. Lukács indicates this in criticizing utopian sects that are similar to the Bolsheviks making stringent demands on their members but that fail to develop their ethical forms out of their membership. He traces the error to an inability to see the necessary relation between thought and being.⁹⁴ The Communist Party, in contrast, is the proletariat in organized form; it is the thought of the proletariat's being, or the way that mere being becomes meaningful. Thus "the organizational independence of the communist party is necessary, in order that the proletariat can see its own class consciousness, as a historical form . . . so that,

91. Merleau-Ponty, *Dialectic*, 50.

92. Lukács, *Werke*, 2:505: "organisatorisch[e] Gestalt dieses Klassenbewußtseins."

93. *Ibid.*, 2:495: "das psychologische Bewußtsein für jeden Einzelnen seinen *post festum* Charakter bewahrt."

94. *Ibid.*, 2:499.

for the whole class, its own existence as a class can be raised to the level of consciousness.”⁹⁵ This represents “a higher stage of consciousness.”⁹⁶ Consciousness is here treated as a category: one can assess the level of consciousness of an entity. It is not a concept: one cannot say what consciousness itself *is*, as if it were itself an entity. By giving itself form in the Party, the proletariat is raised to a higher ontological level. Rather than *Klassenbewußtsein*, the Party is the proletariat’s act of *Klassenbewußtwerden*.⁹⁷

Finally, Lukács defines freedom in a way that links Luxemburg and an asubjective phenomenology. It consists, he argues, in the collective determination of social relations. He cites Marx’s claim that the unification of the bourgeoisie led to the creation of the proletariat as a class: the social existence of the workers was imposed on them, objectively, by capital. Lukács aims instead at a new realm of freedom, in which “the proletariat’s becoming independent, its ‘organization of itself into a class,’ is reaching an ever higher level” in this epoch “in which the decision lies ever more in the hands of the proletariat.”⁹⁸ Freedom here means the selection of forms in which the class discloses itself; the agent directly determines the forms of its objective appearance, rather than act on society as an externalized object opposed to the subject. This cannot consist of merely as “making the unconscious conscious, or the latent, actual.”⁹⁹ (Lukács argues that Hegel’s “national spirits,” which project cultural, religious, philosophical, and political forms according to their inherent nature, are examples of such an error.)¹⁰⁰ Instead, the forms must be continually changed lest they become reified. The Communist Party is the first manifestation of such freedom: “Insofar as Party becomes a world of activity for every one of its members, it can overcome the contemplativity of bourgeois man.”¹⁰¹ This means that all members of the Party must be engaged in generating its organi-

95. Ibid., 2:504: “die organisatorische Selbständigkeit der kommunistischen Partei ist notwendig, damit das Proletariat sein eigenes Klassenbewußtsein, als geschichtliche Gestalt, unmittelbar erblicken könne; . . . damit für die ganze Klasse das eigene Dasein als Klasse ins Bewußtsein gehen werde.”

96. Ibid., 2:505: “eine höhere Bewußtseinsstufe.”

97. Cf. *ibid.*, 2:363: “Akt der Bewußtwerdens.”

98. Ibid., 2:490: “so wiederholt sich dieses Selbstständigwerden, dieses ‘sich zur Klasse organisieren’ des Proletariats auf immer höherer Stufe, bis der Zeitpunkt, die Periode der endgültigen Krise des Kapitalismus gekommen ist: die Epoche, in der die Entscheidung immer mehr in der Hand des Proletariats liegt.”

99. Ibid., 2:480: “das Unbewußte bewußt, das Latente aktuell.”

100. Ibid., 2:358.

101. Ibid., 2:515: “indem die kommunistische Partei zu einer Welt der Tätigkeit für jedes ihrer Mitglieder wird, kann sie die Zuschauerrolle des bürgerlichen Menschen . . . wirklich überwinden.”

zational forms, because only then will their behavior be genuinely subjective, rather than in fitting themselves to predetermined norms. This explains Lukács's claim that total immersion in Party work constitutes more authentic freedom than the individualist liberties of the bourgeois state. Such a formalist approach would represent "abstraction from the total personality of man . . . his subsumption beneath an abstract point of view . . . [and] the reification of human consciousness."¹⁰² Formal categories of right and freedom are set up on concepts, rather than on real people: this epitomizes reification, structuring relations according to mental categories. Thus freedom is performative: by carrying out social relations of its own choice, by participating in the collective determination of social being through performance of particular relationships, the individual is truly free.

The question of agency goes beyond the Husserl and Lask we can be sure Lukács knew. However, locating freedom in the generation of the Party's organizational forms means locating it in the formal categories of the phenomenological disclosure of the proletariat. Individual workers perform the categories that mold them, collectively, into the working class: the self-consciousness of the proletariat is not knowledge but its free act. Revolutionary praxis is more than a pragmatic approach to theory: it is active performance of self-determined categories. Ultimately, this constitutes the identical subject-object of history: the subjectivity of the proletariat (and ultimately of its successors) consists in its making-itself-objective. As a self-disclosing object, it is subject.

Conclusion

Lukács's 1920s Soviet critics have been ignored, their attacks dismissed as ignorant ideological diatribes. But at least one of them, Abram Deborin, recognized the significant intellectual debts Lukács owed to Husserl and Lask, as well as to Rickert and Windelband, however crude Deborin's own position was. The standard reading of *History and Class Consciousness* has paid insufficient attention to these influences. Lukács's critics interpret his identical subject-object as primarily subjective and creative: he is forced to fall back on a mythical agent to overthrow the society it created. In contrast, by highlighting Lukács's emphasis on the structures of consciousness, I have outlined a phenomenological reading, in which the conscious forms of society and the proletariat are their authentic, objective forms. No noumenal society-in-itself,

102. Ibid., 2:497: "der Abstraktion von der Gesamtpersönlichkeit des Menschen . . . seiner Subsumierung unter einem abstrakten Gesichtspunkt . . . [die] Verdinglichung des menschlichen Bewußtseins."

labor-in-itself, or proletariat-in-itself awaits unveiling; their existence is determined by the structures of their appearance. Lukács's concern is *primarily* the self-consciousness of the proletariat (through its self-conscious appearing), not the overthrow of bourgeois society. *History and Class Consciousness* is not a manual for revolution because it does not try to be: it is concerned with necessary, not sufficient, causes of change.

Uncovering Husserlian themes in *History and Class Consciousness* also lends support to the interpretations of Goldmann, Merleau-Ponty, Feenberg, and Bernstein. While an argument like Goldmann's that Heidegger was responding directly to Lukács may not be sustainable, these commentators are right to notice structural similarities between Lukács and Heidegger: these are better explained by the common sources of their thought (Husserl and Lask as Q, as it were) than by direct influence from Lukács on Heidegger. Similarly, Feenberg's parallels between Lukácsian praxis and the anthropological concept of Culture are now stronger. Lukács understands class consciousness as the direct manifestation or performance of forms or relations bringing the proletariat together: it exists in the structures of the object, not the mind; this lets us trace a continuity between individual consciousness and socially manifest group consciousness. Material, acquiring form that is not understood as the mental projection of a subject, becomes an object. Feenberg's interpretation is thus the account of Lukács's overall social theory most consistent with this phenomenological approach.

This recovery of the phenomenological aspects of *History and Class Consciousness* has necessarily omitted sustained consideration of the importance of other thinkers—above all, Hegel. Of course, it would be impossible to compare giants like Husserl and Hegel in a short piece, especially since Lukács is the primary concern. However, I can explain very briefly why Lukács thinks Hegel is ultimately inadequate, despite the latter's obvious influence on him, and why he is forced to turn to Husserl to make up the deficit.

For Lukács, Hegel is the acme of bourgeois philosophy. A philosophical system is bourgeois not because its creator belongs to a particular class but because it begins with the individual attempting to comprehend the world before it: this individual is the philosophical correlate of *homo oeconomicus*, the isolated, rational agent navigating society. The hegemony of epistemology therefore corresponds with the rise of capitalist social forms. A genuinely self-critical epistemology will inevitably come up against the problem of the noumenon, as it recognizes the impossibility of describing the ontological connections between subject, object, and knowledge. Hegel's solution is to demonstrate

the underlying unity of subject and object by showing reason in the world. For Lukács, however, Hegel's solution is idealistic, because this unity is demonstrated from the subject's perspective: the *Phänomenologie* describes the subject's growing awareness of reason as it grasps reality; the *Rechtsphilosophie* begins by defining individual right and will and expands from this to unveil their concrete manifestation in the state. Reason is defined logically; its features are then discovered existing in the world. While Lukács approves of Hegel's attempt to reunify subject and object, the latter's bourgeois-epistemological standpoint means that his solutions remain abstract.

Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism epitomizes proletarian thought, in Lukács's terms. The conscious form of the commodity is its real existence. Lukács approaches social reality as a set of such forms: consciousness is the ontological sphere in which society *exists*. Proletarian thought does not analyze society as a phenomenon for the subject; it analyzes social forms and explains subjectivity out of them. Marx, however, simply did not provide such philosophical analysis, certainly not in the texts available to Lukács in the early 1920s: the analysis of commodity fetishism may *exemplify* this approach, but it falls short of a thorough philosophical methodology of the analysis of consciousness. (Hence Lukács's regret that Marx did not explicitly analyze different levels of being.) Lukács needed the conceptual apparatus of Husserl and Lask. They go beyond bourgeois philosophy: the subject is secondary to the immanent structures of consciousness. Nevertheless, they are not yet proletarian philosophers: both rely on transcendent, ahistorical patterns to define consciousness, rather than treat such structures as part of broader social processes. Their solutions to the problems of bourgeois philosophy are abstract. Lukács situates his phenomenology in a broader social-ontological narrative. Where Husserl's and Lask's categories are ontological, Lukács's account might be called ontologogenetic: he is interested in how the (phenomenological) categories of the existence of objects come to be and what this tells us about existence.

In the 1967 preface to the reissue of *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács criticized the work for trying to "out-Hegel Hegel" in positing a "logico-metaphysical construction." This self-criticism is more appropriate to a phenomenological than an idealist reading of his argument: the latter implies an irrational Romantic subject, while the former gives ontological significance to logical categories; it makes them metaphysical. It is fair to say that *History and Class Consciousness* does not succeed in accounting for the overthrow of bourgeois society: there is too little detail on what the proletariat ought to *do*

once it has formed a party. The emergence of self-consciousness comes about because of a logical contradiction: Lukács assumes too easily that the contradiction of structure will lead to consciousness of that contradiction. However, by bringing together phenomenological and dialectical approaches, Lukács gives us much deeper appreciation of how societies exist and how they structure the consciousness of their members. In so doing, he lays the foundations for a new ontology of social being.