

# Lukács, Heidegger and Reification

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**Abstract:** Sometimes very different positions overlap in unsuspected but significant ways. Lukács and Heidegger are important, but dissimilar twentieth century thinkers. Lukács is a Hegelian Marxist, and Heidegger is a post-Husserlian phenomenologist. They share a superficial similarity in their respective predilections for political dictatorship, Lukács for Stalin and Heidegger for Hitler. Yet there is a deeper link since, as Lucien Goldmann pointed out a half century ago, Heidegger's phenomenological ontology is apparently intended as a response to Lukács' Hegelian Marxist conception of reification (see Goldmann 1982). This paper will explore this link. I will be suggesting that both propose unacceptable views of human flourishing as lying beyond the reification, or again alienation, typical of modern industrial society.

**Keywords:** Lukács; Heidegger; Authenticity; Reification; Ontology.

## 1. Lukács on reification and Marxian alienation

Engels invented classical Marxism in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886, 1888) several years after Marx left the scene (1883). Lukács, who criticizes Engels throughout his long Marxist period, is justly celebrated for his invention of Hegelian Marxism. It is well known that Marx discusses the concept of alienation in the first of the *Paris Manuscripts*, which were only initially published in the West in 1932. In *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), Lukács brilliantly anticipated the Marxian conception of alienation under the heading of 'reification', a near synonym that mistakenly conflates objectification and alienation, by reading Marx's later work as continuing an as yet unknown earlier discussion.

The terms '*Ding*' and '*Sache*' are closely related. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and occasionally elsewhere Hegel uses the term '*die Sache selbst*'. Marx employs the near synonym '*Versachlichung*' in the account of Money in the first volume of *Capital* where he refers to the «Personification [*Versachlichung*] of things and the reification of persons» (Marx 1982, 209) and again later in an *Appendix* (Marx 1982, 1054). Following occasional Marxian practice, Lukács formulated his conception of reification (from Latin *re, Reifikation, Ding, verdinglichen*).

It goes beyond the limits of this discussion to clarify the relation between the Marxian term '*Versachlichung*', the Lukácsian term 'reification', and the Marxian terms 'alienation', and 'commodity fetishism'. Suffice it to say that there has been much controversy about the relation between reification, alienation, and commodity fetishism. In *Capital I*, Marx famously discusses *The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret*. In *Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat*, the central chapter of *History and Class Consciousness* (HCC), Lukács states that «the problem of commodities [must be considered] as the central problem of capitalist society in all its aspects» (HCC 83<sup>1</sup>). He continues on,

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1 Lukács, G. (1971), *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Livingstone, R., Cambridge: MIT Press. Cited in the text as HCC followed by the page number.

in echoing the Marxian conception of commodity fetishism, to say about commodity structure that «[i]ts basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity’, an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people» (HCC 83).

## 2. Heidegger on reification and *Dasein*

Heidegger, who read widely, was at least generally aware of the Marxian position, which he rejected as metaphysics. He seems further to be aware of Lukács’ term ‘reification’ as a functional equivalent of the Marxian term alienation (*Entfremdung, Entäusserung*) as well as Marx’s synonym or near synonym ‘*Versachlichung*’. HCC, which appeared four years before *Being and Time* (BT, 1927) was still attracting intense attention while Heidegger was writing his book. In HCC, Lukács refers to the impact of reification in creating an ideological distortion in proletarian consciousness and self-consciousness.

In BT Heidegger is, like Lukács, but in a different way, attentive to the role of the social surroundings on our understanding of the world and of ourselves. Heidegger, as he suggests in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, understands phenomenological ontology as Kantian, more precisely as carrying Kant’s critical philosophy beyond the point where Kant left it. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant criticizes so-called psychological ideas, or the approach to the soul as a mental substance. Heidegger follows Kant on this point in rejecting the Cartesian epistemic conception of the subject as the basis or ground of cognition. In the conception of *Dasein*, Heidegger proposes an alternative to the Cartesian subject whose being supposedly turns on the problem of the meaning of being.

Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology focuses on what he calls the problem of the meaning of being in general, as distinguished from beings. According to Heidegger, the role of *Dasein* lies in laying bare or uncovering the horizon or the limit of an interpretation of the meaning of Being in general.

Heidegger calls attention to a basic distinction between the ready to hand (*Zuhandenheit*) and the present to hand (*Vorhandenheit*). In criticizing Descartes, he suggests that, if we accept the Cartesian *cogito* as the subject, we miss the phenomenal content of *Dasein*, hence fall prey to the so-called “soul substance” or again «the reification of consciousness» (BT 72<sup>2</sup>). In opposing his anti-Cartesian view of *Dasein* to the Cartesian view of the subject as a thing, Heidegger writes:

The Thinghood itself [*Dinglichkeit selbst*] which such reification implies must have its ontological origin demonstrated if we are to be in a position to ask what we are to understand positively when we think of the unreified Being [*nicht verdinglichten Sein*] of the subject, the soul, the consciousness, the spirit, the person. All these terms refer to definite phenomenal domains which can be ‘given form’: but they are never used without a notable failure to see the need for inquiring about the Being of the entities thus designated. (BT 72).

He amplifies this approach later in the book when, in an account of time, he says that if so-called world-time belongs to the temporalizing of temporality, then it cannot be reified, for instance by what he calls «vicious objectification» (BT 472).

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2 Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time*, trans. by Macquarrie, J., and Robinson, E., New York and Evanston: Harper and Row. Cited in the text as BT followed by the page number.

Heidegger implies that we can avoid such problems in rethinking the conception of reification. On the last page of his book, Heidegger reiterates his claim (see BT 62, 487) that philosophy is, as he says, «universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of *Dasein* [...]» This claim clearly excludes other conceptions of phenomenology as well as all other views of philosophy as falling below the mark. Heidegger further links his view to Lukács' in writing:

It has long been known that ancient ontology works with 'Thing-concepts' and that there is a danger of reifying consciousness' [*Verdinglichung des Bewusstseins*]. But what does this 'reifying' [*Verdinglichung*] signify? Where does it arise? Why does Being get 'conceived' 'proximally' in terms of the present-at-hand and not in terms of the ready-to-hand, which indeed lies closer to us? What positive structure does the Being of 'consciousness' have, if reification [*Verdinglichung*] remains inappropriate to it? (BT 487).

This statement points to the distinction between the usual, non-Heideggerian and unusual Heideggerian ways of understanding the subject. According to Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being is not opened up but rather closed, hence lies hidden in virtue of what he, presumably following Lukács, whom he never names, calls 'reification'. On the contrary, according to the Heideggerian conception of *Dasein*, the subject lies beyond the reification of consciousness that, in Heidegger's opinion, precludes even raising the question that interests him.

### 3. Lukács on reification and authenticity

What is the relation between Lukács' and Heidegger's conception of reification? In the *Preface* to the new edition of HCC (1967), Lukács correctly points out that after Heidegger's intervention in the debate in BT, alienation moved to the center of the philosophical debate (see HCC xxii). Lukács, who never mentions Heidegger in the original edition of his book, criticizes him at length in two books (*Destruction of Reason, Existentialism or Marxism?*). To the best of my knowledge, other than the oblique references to "reification" in BT, Heidegger never discusses Lukács directly.

After HCC, Goldmann suggests that in BT Heidegger seeks i. A. to respond to Lukács and, by implication, Marx as well. This is only partly true since Lukács, who, as a Marxist, is concerned with social ontology, is seeking to solve the social problem that, from the Marxist perspective, impedes or prevents those who in modern industrial society do not own private property from developing as fully individual human beings. But in BT Heidegger is only incidentally concerned with the development of human beings, hence with social ontology, but primarily concerned with the problem of the meaning of Being, that is ontology, or phenomenological ontology.

Lukács' account of consciousness as distorted by the distorted nature of the social surroundings in capitalism relies on Marx and Hegel. In the famous *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx argues that what he calls legal relations and political forms originate in the material conditions of life. In short, in the Marxist jargon that later became widely familiar, the superstructure depends on the economic base. By inference, if, as in capitalism, the economic base is distorted, then our understanding of our surroundings and ourselves will also be distorted. Marx famously goes on to link consciousness to its surroundings in stating that «it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their

consciousness» (Marx and Engels 1987, 263). If consciousness is determined by the material conditions of life, then the problem lies in how to alter consciousness, more precisely how to escape from a situation in which the social surroundings, which determine our consciousness, leads us naturally but inescapably to misunderstand the situation and ourselves. Marx finds the answer in Hegel's view of the master-slave relationship as intrinsically unstable.

Hegel provides a dynamic account of the master-slave relationship in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The master-slave relationship is not a stable social structure but rather an unstable social relation between two unequal parties, that is masters, who are at least in principle more powerful than the slaves, and slaves, who are at least in principle less powerful than the masters. The difference in power between masters and slaves lies in their different ways of understanding their relationship from their respective perspectives. The Hegelian view of this unequal, labile relationship depends on three points: first, the inability of the slave to understand his or her relationship to the social surroundings, in short the different roles determined by the relation to private property or ownership of the means of production; second, the ability of the slave to reach self-consciousness; and, third, the revolutionary role of self-consciousness in transforming the situation. According to Hegel's master-slave analysis, through the evolution of the relationship it will at least in theory turn out that the slave is the master of the master and the master is the slave of the slave. Marx applies this claim in substituting the capitalists for the masters and the proletariat for the slaves in his early account of the revolutionary proletariat as essential to the self-liberation of themselves and all other human beings.

According to Plato, each person should do what that person does best, and knowledge is limited to the philosopher, whose role lies in directing the revolutionary proletariat, or heart of the revolution. In Marx's quasi-platonic view, the proletariat is the heart and the philosophers are the head of the revolution. False consciousness, which is a function of the surrounding context, leads one astray, but can be overcome if through the evolution of the master-slave relationship the revolutionary proletariat reaches self-consciousness.

Lukács claims that Hegel misunderstands the real historical subject under the heading of the absolute. This is, according to Lukács, essentially a fictitious concept, which is no more than a name for a function lying at the heart of modern industrial society. According to Lukács, Marx discovered the real historical subject as revolutionary proletariat, or again the identical subject-object of history. It follows that the solution to the self-liberation of the revolutionary proletariat lies in identifying and energizing the working class.

As a Hegelian Marxist, Lukács is not interested in ordinary or even extra-ordinary traditional philosophical questions, such as the Heideggerian focus on the question of the meaning of being. He is rather interested in the consequences of modern industrial society, above all capitalism, on the central problem of modern industrial society, or realizing Marx's theory in practice. In the *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx famously suggests that his theory differs from other forms of philosophy, hence from mainline philosophy, which supposedly leaves everything in place in changing nothing, in that it not only interprets but also changes society in realizing itself. Yet philosophy in general, and his specific novel form of philosophy is not an end in itself. It is rather a means to another end, which lies in bringing about a change from modern industrial society to what, at the risk of creating a confusion, we will call post-modern, or post-capitalist society, that is a future social stage in which the institution of private property will have come to an end.

From his Hegelian Marxist perspective, Lukács suggests that Marx brings together theory and practice, hence at least potentially changes society in solving the real problems of classical German philosophy. Engels thinks that Marx followed Feuerbach away from Hegel, away from classical German philosophy and philosophy, and towards materialism and science. This approach implies that Marx solved the problems of philosophy on an extra-philosophical plane, that is, outside or beyond philosophy. Lukács, who leaves open the philosophical status of Marx's position, who for instance in HCC never says that it is either idealism, materialism or some third view, suggests Marx solves the problems of German idealism, which German idealism is unable to solve, within philosophy.

Lukács' claim for Marx depends on a further claim about the Kantian conception of the thing in itself, or noumenon, which Kant introduces to refer to mind-independent reality. Kant's immediate German idealist successors tend to dismiss this conception in different ways, for instance as Jacobi thinks as unintelligible, as Fichte believes as inconsistent with the critical philosophy, and so on. Lukács, on the contrary, takes this conception as referring not to reality, but rather to social reality, which, in his opinion, is the central but before Marx unsolved problem running throughout German idealism, also called classical German philosophy. According to Lukács, the Kantian thing in itself, the central problem of classical German philosophy, cannot be known through so-called bourgeois thought, and can only be known, as noted above, through Marx's discovery of the proletariat as the real historical subject.

Reification, or in Marxian language alienation, is the negation, or again opposite of authenticity. Lukács applies Hegel's analysis of the master-slave relationship to the understanding of modern industrial society. As for Hegel, so for Lukács self-consciousness is the condition of the change in the social relationship from reification, which applies to all persons living in modern industrial society, to authenticity. Marx, who proposes in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, as Lukács says, «to transform philosophy into praxis» (HCC 202), actually does so through the discovery of the revolutionary proletariat as the identical subject-object, or real historical subject. As a result of becoming self-conscious, the proletariat realizes that it is free to transform modern industrial society through its own actions. In short, Marx for the first time brings together theory and practice to solve social problems that cannot be solved merely theoretically. Lukács denies that thought and existence either correspond to, or again "reflect" each other in denying the so-called reflection theory of knowledge. He thinks that «[thought and existence] are aspects of one and the same real historical and dialectical process ...[since] [w]hat is 'reflected' in the consciousness of the proletariat is the new positive reality arising out of the dialectical contradictions of capitalism» (HCC 204). In short, in and through self-consciousness the proletariat becomes able to change society.

#### **4. Heidegger on authenticity and social ontology**

For Lukács, though the problem at hand, which concerns knowledge of modern industrial society, is not philosophical, but extra-philosophical, it can be solved through the proper philosophical means, in particular the proper version of Hegelian Marxism. For Heidegger, on the contrary, the problem at hand, which is not extra-philosophical but rather philosophical, can be solved through philosophical means, more precisely phenomenological ontology. In another formulation, Heidegger thinks that phenome-

nological ontology can at least in principle overcome the central question of philosophy but also human life and human history that was correctly posed in early Greek philosophy but that was later covered up through the philosophical tradition, or the problem of the meaning of Being.

As a Hegelian Marxist, Lukács, as noted, rejects Engels classical anti-Hegelian approach to Marxism. Lukács distinguishes between self-consciousness, which is a necessary condition for social change, and revolutionary action, which is its result. Following Marx, as well as Hegel, Fichte, Lask and others, Lukács aims to turn the clock forward so to speak in order through philosophical means, that is in developing Marx's position while turning against Marxism, to escape from the limitations of the historical context. Heidegger's aim rather lies in turning the clock backward toward a different, pre-modern, authentic form of life that is hidden or covered up through the modern fascination with technology that mistakenly leads us to turn away from Being that is the real historical subject. Lukács, who is a philosophical revolutionary, seeks to realize modern human beings as individuals in bursting the developmental bonds imposed by the limits set by modern industrial society. Heidegger is also a revolutionary, but in a starkly different way. Heidegger is engaged in transforming what for the Marxist Lukács is a theory of false consciousness based on an application of the Hegelian analysis of the relation between master and slave into a theory of the philosophical misunderstanding of ontology.

Though apparently very different, the two theories of false consciousness are finally similar. In both cases, false consciousness, which is the result of reification, is linked to the possibility of true consciousness as the condition of authenticity. Distantly following Marx and even more distantly Hegel, Lukács focuses on the role and conditions of self-consciousness in human self-development, since he thinks that false consciousness derives from modern industrial society, or the contemporary phase of the development of human society. In terms of the distinction between false consciousness and true consciousness, Heidegger focuses on the conditions of overcoming the former through the latter. He assumes that reification is not a product of modern industrial society, nor dependent on the economic sector of capitalism. It is rather due to failing to understand that the problem of the meaning of Being, supposedly the same problem that already inspired Plato and Aristotle and stretches throughout the entire later debate, and that is centrally related to *Dasein*, or the anti-Cartesian correct conception of the subject. Heidegger, who believes that since ancient Greece philosophy has deviated from the proper path, thinks that today ontology is in crisis since it has failed to understand the clarification of the meaning of Being that its central task (BT 31).

Different views of subjectivity run throughout the modern period, which is characterized by the progressive emergence of the subject that after Montaigne and Descartes becomes a dominant theme as the inescapable road to objective cognition. The Cartesian view of the subject as thinking substance is denied in different ways by Marx and Heidegger. Marx, who never discusses Descartes in any detail, understands human being as a natural being that meets its basic needs outside itself through two types of interaction: between human beings and other human beings, and human beings and nature. Heidegger, who explicitly criticizes the Cartesian *cogito*, does not understand *Dasein* in terms of cognition, but rather through its supposed concern with the authentic form of the absolutely primordial problem, which takes multiple precedence over other problems, of the meaning of Being. In other words, he takes the problem that concerns him as the central problem to which everything else, including not only the theory he expounds in BT, but further an authentic life, is necessarily subordinated.

## 5. Lukács, Heidegger on reification and the limits of authenticity

For both thinkers, “authenticity” is the positive standard through which to understand ‘reification’, but everything else is different. We see this, for instance, with respect to time. Lukács and Heidegger have diametrically opposing views of the relation between the past and the future. Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology is not oriented towards the future but rather towards the past. More precisely, Heidegger thinks the future lies in the authentic return to and repetition of the past. Lukács follows Marx, who thinks that in capitalism objectification within the productive process leads to alienation. Marx thinks that as a result of the end of private property, objectification and alienation will be disentangled. He points to objectification in a future, post-capitalist historical phase in which individuals will be able to objectify themselves in what they do in becoming fully individual. According to Lukács, the authentic future is the future of the proletariat through the break with capitalism in a transition to communism and the beginning of human history.

The difficulty of Lukács’ theory lies in the relation of theory to practice, in his case the inability, other than to point to the *prise de conscience* of the revolutionary proletariat, or again the rise of proletarian self-consciousness, to bring about the transition from capitalism to communism. In other words, the difficulty lies in the promissory note that Lukács as a philosopher, despite his interest in practice, does not seem to know how to redeem in the real world.

What we have in Heidegger’s case is a vision of the authentic form of life that includes a series of ways to act that Heidegger pretends to “deduce” on the basis of his phenomenological ontology. Now one might think that the ontology is at fault in leading Heidegger astray. Rather Heidegger belonged to and thought within his own historical moment in which he not only reflected but also sought to justify a number of practices and beliefs of his time. The fault is neither in the stars, nor in ontology, which is neutral, but rather in Heidegger, the philosopher, who formulated a theory that justifies in philosophical terms ordinary actions whose selective but supposedly authentic repetition of the past in the future it takes as appropriate. In nearly untranslatable German, Heidegger writes:

Die Wiederholung lässt sich, einem entschlossenen Sichertwerfen entspringend, nicht vom ‘Vergangenen’ überreden, um es also das vormalig Wirkliche nur wiederkehren zu lassen. Die Wiederholung erwidert vielmehr die Möglichkeit der dagewesenen Existenz. Die Erwiderung der Möglichkeit ist aber *als augenblickliche* der Widerruf dessen, was in Heute sich als ‘Vergangenheit’ auswirkt. (Heidegger 1927, 438).

In view of the difficulty of the German I will neither appeal to the extant translations, since Fritsche, a German native speaker, suggests that at least for the English-speaking community the influential Macquarrie-Robinson translation is simply wrong (Fritsche 1999, 10) nor seek to translate it myself. Yet it will be useful to paraphrase this passage in which Heidegger points to the idea that we should not just repeat the past but rather that we rather should repeat what is authentic about it in leaving out and not repeating what is inauthentic. With this in mind, he turns to such concepts as being towards death, the hero, resolve, and so on. He further gives an example elsewhere in a short, popular article he wrote to explain why after his period as Hitler’s rector in the U. of Freiburg i. B. he again refused the offer to relocate to Berlin in order to stay in the *Why do I stay in the provinces?* (in Sheehan 1981, 27-30). In itself, even though Berlin was academically more prestigious than Freiburg, that would not be remarkable. What is remarkable is the

description he provides that makes it clear that his desire to stay in the provinces was based on his desire to remain with those who had as it were always lived there, those who, since their roots were sunk deeply in the soil, were not rootless. In this context, Heidegger is working with a distinction between those who are German in some general way and those who are German in a more restricted sense. I have in mind those whom I will call, and to whom Heidegger silently refers as, the real Germans. The real Germans are not those like me who meet the Fichtean criterion of being able to speak German, since for whatever reason they happen to know the language. Such individuals are not in the more specific Heideggerean sense German, since they do not have roots plunged deeply into the soil, that is, if I may be permitted this reference, or *Boden*, as in the infamous phrase *Blut und Boden*. In other words, I have in mind Heidegger's fateful distinction between those whose roots lie deeply sunken in the German soil and their rootless counterparts, as Heidegger suggests. In short in ostensibly appealing to and following the suggestion of a local peasant to remain in a rural setting Heidegger was suggesting albeit indirectly that he, too, was a real German, not a rootless non-German, or even a merely inauthentic German, but rather someone whose life unfolded in the authentic repetition in the future of the past, in other words in the eternal return of the same.

## 6. Phenomenological ontology, social ontology and the historical moment

Lukács and Heidegger both lived at roughly the same time. Their positions each suffer from the fateful consequences of an obvious identification between their philosophical views and the historical moment. All of us live in and think out of the historical moment we contingently happen to inhabit. Since its emergence in early Greece philosophy has been understood as making a claim for truth that rhetoric abandons in as the phrase goes making the weaker argument appear the stronger.

In the conception of partyiness (*partiinosť*) the young Lenin introduced the view that philosophy must submit to the ideological control of the party, and ultimately by the Communist Party's Central Committee. Lenin later continued to understand "philosophical partyiness" as entailing a commitment, if not to the party, at least to the proletarian point of view. In subordinating philosophy to politics, Lukács subordinates his anti-Marxist Hegel interpretation of Marx to Marxist politics. Lukács signals his acceptance of the subordination of philosophy to politics in publicly extolling Lenin after he was criticized for his unorthodox Marxism following the publication of HCC. In accepting the Marxist view of partyiness, Lukács at least publicly abandoned any form of the typical view of philosophy as neutral or independent for a very different conception of philosophy as "instrumentalized," or even controlled, by the communist party. Philosophy in this way turns away from the ancient claim for truth in resurrecting the view of rhetoric that Plato, for instance, already rejects in attacking the Sophists. Once he became a Marxist in 1918, Lukács never overcame the fateful tension in his thought due to his conflicting desires to follow his philosophical insights wherever they might lead but also to be politically faithful to the current version of Marxist political orthodoxy.

Heidegger's problem is equally significant but very different. Heidegger at least publicly focuses on the problem of Being in presenting himself as a strange kind of late pre-Socratic uninformed about and uninterested in his historical moment. Yet it has been known for many years that he not only was knowledgeable about Marx and Lukács, he was also very aware of the events of his day. The list, which is very long, includes lau-



ding aerial bombing invented during the Spanish civil war, insisting on the distinction between Jews and Germans in a context of increasingly rabid anti-Semitism, identifying publicly as well as privately with National Socialism, publicly supporting National Socialism as the Nazi rector of the University of Freiburg, organizing training camps for students, denouncing colleagues to the NSDAP, his enthusiasm for Ernst Jünger, and so on. Recent publication of the so-called *Black Notebooks* does not weaken but rather strengthens our awareness of Heidegger's link to his historical moment, especially as concerns anti-Semitism, which runs like a red thread through his private musings.

Now it might be objected that the problem lies in the consequences of his phenomenological ontology. This objection suggests that, if a theory has unacceptable consequences, it should be rejected, which is countered in the debate by those who point to the traditional philosophical view of the philosopher as in time but not of time so to speak. According to this view, philosophy is not dependent on its surroundings but rather independent of time and place, independent of the historical moment, unconstrained by contingent factors, and so on. Fichte suggests a very different, more plausible view. According to Fichte, the kind of view a philosopher supports is not independent of, but rather depends on, the kind of person one is. This insight suggests that Heidegger the philosopher and Heidegger the supporter of Nazism and anti-Semitism are inseparable. Indeed, this is hardly surprising, since Heidegger was raised in an extremely conservative, strongly anti-Semitic environment in southwestern Germany, which his thinking not surprisingly reflects.

Heidegger's position, which is inseparable from his historical moment, in part breaks new ground, but in part also serves to explore and justify ideas belonging to the period in which he was active. It follows that Heidegger's ontology need not be rejected since it leads to unacceptable consequences, but rather since it justifies with all the conceptual resources at the thinker's command unacceptable ideas and practices that flourished in Heidegger's historical moment and with which he obviously identified.

## **7. Lukács, Heidegger and Western metaphysics**

I have argued that, despite the millennial-long conviction of Western thinkers, there is no obvious way to defend the view that philosophy is finally independent of the historical moment. What are the political implications of this view, hence the views of Lukács and Heidegger, for Western metaphysics?

For Lukács the problem, which is not intrinsically philosophical, is due to the influence of modern industrial society on all facets of modern life, but for Heidegger it is rather due to philosophy, more specifically to the consequences that, as Goldmann points out, Heidegger, who never names Lukács, criticizes the latter's analysis of reification, which, he claims, must be ontologically justified (Goldmann 1982, 13). In Heidegger's case, this means claiming to know about being in general, though, since his voluminous discussion over many years never progresses beyond the introductory stage and finally remains prolegomenal, he cannot give an account of how he reaches such knowledge. On the contrary, whereas Lukács' very different thesis is that there is no justification outside knowledge of society and history (see Goldmann 1982, 13).

The difference in the political implications for metaphysics are clear and important. The difficulty in Lukács' case lies in the fact that in virtue of his political commitment to Marxism, he is ready to accept political orthodoxy as a philosophical guide instead

of reasons accepted or rejected since we find or do not find them to be convincing. The situation is different as concerns Heidegger, who is, despite his extreme claims, in some ways a mainline philosopher. Following Parmenides, who thinks that knowing and being are identical, Plato thinks that cognition depends on the fact that a few exceptional individuals can directly grasp reality. Heidegger, who is a modern representative of the view that we must proceed through an ontological account that he never provides and presumably cannot formulate. This politically dangerous view points to the idea that we should follow the lead of the one who, as Heidegger says in a moment of vision sees what is. This is one likely reason that impelled him to accept the rectorate of the U. of Freiburg during the Nazi period.

It is too late to resurrect any form of this neo-Platonic approach that, in any case, is extremely dangerous. The obvious danger lies in the anti-democratic idea that we should accept as our guide ideas that a candidate for the role as philosophical gourou, in this case Heidegger, puts forward to justify anti-democratic practices. On the contrary, we should rather be supporting fair and free discussion among those who do not claim to see reality and must rely on the most convincing arguments they can formulate.

## 8. Conclusion: Lukács, Heidegger, and Reification

This paper has examined Lukács and Heidegger's different reactions to the phenomenon of reification (or alienation) in modern industrial society. It has noted that Heidegger and Lukács both identify philosophy as a means to overcome the reification characteristic of modern industrial society. It has further pointed out that Lukács goes astray in his conviction that the best way to overcome reification lies in subordinating philosophical reason to the dictates of organized Marxism, hence a political party. It has finally pointed out that Heidegger, on the contrary, thinks reification can be overcome by perfecting phenomenological ontology, or his version of metaphysics. Though neither approach is acceptable, the Marxist Lukács is closer to the mark than the phenomenologist Heidegger.

It is too late to hold that the best and perhaps even the only way to overcome reification, or the consequences of modern industrial society lies in trusting those philosophical visionaries, or contemporary Platonists, who in scrutinizing the invisible horizon claim to see reality. Heidegger is a good example of someone, who since he is not content with the rejection of privileged claims to know, seeks to reintroduce a sense of mystery through inventing the fictitious history of Being to re-enchant philosophy so to speak. This approach, which is unacceptable in any form, must be rejected. Though we must also reject the primacy of politics over philosophy, it makes eminent good sense to enlist philosophical insights in striving through debate to arrive at ideas we are willing to support and according to the best reasons we can muster. I conclude that philosophy has its role to play in helping to overcome reification, but the kind of philosophy we accept makes all the difference.

## Table of Abbreviations

HCC = Lukács, G. (1971), *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Livingstone, R., Cambridge: MIT Press.

BT = Heidegger, M. (1962), *Being and Time*, trans. by Macquarrie, J. and Robinson, E., New York and Evanston: Harper and Row.

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Heidegger covers the ancient Greek philosophers from Thales to Aristotle, using the latter's *Metaphysics* as a guide. Heidegger looks at the philosophical history of ontology, with an emphasis on Kant in the first half, and then examines time as temporality and its relation to being. The material covered was intended for, the never published, division 3 of part 1, and part 2 of *Being and Time*. In the first part of the course, Heidegger describes four theses about being in Western Philosophy. As we shall see, Lukács's concept of reification was decisive for the Frankfurt school of critical theory, above all in Adorno and Horkheimer's seminal text, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (written during World War II but not published until 1947). In the second part of this chapter, I present a brief introduction to the thought of Martin Heidegger, one of the great thinkers of the twentieth century, whose existential phenomenology posed a radical challenge to Hegelianism. Heidegger's various critiques of Hegel – for his metaphysical theory of time, and for his Cartesian metaphysics. The paper seeks to show how Heidegger recasts the problem of reification in *Being and Time*, so as to address the methodological procedure of formal indication, outlined in his early writings, in order to carry out a deconstruction of ancient ontology. By revisiting Marx's and Lukács' critique of objectification in social relations, especially the former's critique of alienation, in light of Honneth's critical theory of recognition, it is shown how a Heideggerian-inspired phenomenology of sociality could be reconstructed out of the semantic correlation between reification and "being".

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