CANADIAN THESES

THÈSES CANADIENNES

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

THIS DISSERTATION HAS BEEN MICROFILMED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

Canada

THE NECESSITY OF ART:
AN INQUIRY IN MARXIST AESTHETICS

By

Tatjana Radonjić

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of the University of Ottawa in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Arts (Philosophy)

Ottawa, Ontario, 1983

SUMMARY

In this thesis I show, from a Marxist perspective, that art is necessary in virtue of what it is and of the role it plays in society. Specifically, the necessity of art is demonstrated on the basis of aesthetic theories of Ernst Fischer, Georg Lukacs and Avner Zis.

Chapter One: The genesis of art: in its origins art is a social activity, it is a form of labour which satisfies certain social needs. The historical development of art, thus, can be explained in terms of socio-economic development, that is, in terms of estrangement of labour and social alienation.

Chapter Two: The structure of art corresponds to the structure of society. Content is revolutionary, form is conservative. Because art is a form of social consciousness the structure of art is viewed in terms of the relationship between social being and social consciousness.

Chapter Three: Art is social, hence essentially human. The humanity embodied in art makes art inalienable from man and it helps him overcome the limitations of his own humanity (his limited 'I').

Chapter Four: The disalienating effect of art proves necessary to man's mastery of his world. Through aesthetic enjoyment man recognizes his own humanity, thus through art he overcomes his historic alienation from his own activity - labour, and from his fellow men - society, and also raises his limited 'I' to the level of the species.

Chapter Five: A summary of the concepts upon which the Marxist view of the necessity of art is based: labour, the relation between social being and social consciousness, alienation. Dialectics as a view of experience creates the preconditions needed for seeing art as necessary to man.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My greatest gratitude is to my father for his never ceasing help and support, in my life and my work.

I am also very thankful to my director of research, Professor Vance Mendenhall, who offered invaluable assistance and encouragement.

Also, I owe special thanks to Joan Cullen and Nicola Vulpé who as artists have confirmed the validity of many ideas in this thesis.

Finally, many thanks to my brother Vojislav who undertook the cumbersome task of proof-reading the manuscript.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I know . .
You aren't fond of idle phrases,
Carpentering oakwood into chairs and beds.
And we—
Aren't we woodworkers, too, never lazy,
Carving the oak of human heads?
. . . . . .
It's back-splitting work to sweat in a smithy,
Heaving red-hot steel with the jaws of tongs,
Yet who can accuse us of being idle,
Us, polishing brains with the files of tongues
Which is
The superior—
Poet
Or technician
Who brings men material gain?
Neither,
For hearts are the same thing as engines,
In motor and brain.

Vladimir Mayakovsky
("The Poet Worker", 1918)

INTRODUCTION

That art is necessary and important for man is not a novel idea. It has been an assumption behind most works of art and behind most discussions of art throughout the history of art and aesthetics. Nor is the phenomenon that art appears superfluous to most members of a culture a new development. Today, however, the paradox of the necessity of art in principle, and its seeming irrelevance to most societies is glaringly obvious. Yet, in view of social alienation, the cold war and the problems of cultural and ideological coexistence, the humanistic attitudes inherent in art are of crucial importance. Within this context, a discussion of the necessity of art, or rather, of the necessity of its humanizing powers, is urgently required.

The problem of the necessity of art will here be addressed from a Marxist point of view. There are clearly three central terms: necessity, art and Marxism. By "necessity" we mean primarily necessity in terms of what art is, and in terms of what it does — its function. Such an analysis of the concept of necessity is grounded in the belief that art is a unique and irreplaceable activity and, moreover, that without this activity, because his existence as a social being is impoverished, man becomes less human. Since the Marxist point of view clarifies and supports this analysis, here the word "necessity" also implies necessity relative to certain Marxist principles.

Concerning the concept of art, it is taken in its widest possible sense: as a phenomenon designating a creative activity whose final result is always seen as directly tied to the expressive powers of an individual and of a community. Individual

works of art will be mentioned as illustrations of such expressive activity and not as works significant in themselves.

Finally, concerning Marxism, the significance of a Marxist point of view for our problem, which takes the form of a paradox involving on the one hand the developments in the world and on the other the humanizing yet neglected powers of art, is that Marxism operates in both domains; it has not only brought about changes in the social and political sciences but has also realized socio-political developments in the world. Also, as a theory espousing humanism it is particularly well suited to deal with art.

Moreover, the Marxist point of view, of Marxism, does not here mean Marx's and Engels' ideas about art, for neither of the two thinkers developed a systematic theory of art. Marxism refers to the works of later thinkers who applied Marx's theories of history and social development to the phenomenon of art. Our analysis will come from three such thinkers: Ernst Fischer (1899-1972), Georg Lukacs (1885-1971), and Avner Zis. Our choice is based on the desire to show three somewhat different applications of Marxist thought to art. These philosophers came from societies in which Marxism played different roles and in which it developed in different ways. Yet, despite this difference, their theories contain a belief in the necessity of art.

Ernst Fischer was an Austrian Marxist who was politically active for most of his life (1920's-1959). He began as a social democrat, but in 1934 he joined the Communist Party of Austria. During the Second World War he worked for Radio Moscow. In 1945

he was for a short time Minister of Education in Austria. After 1959, however, he confined himself to the literary field. He resigned from the Communist Party after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Georg Lukacs was a well known Hungarian Marxist. In his pre-Marxist period (1906-1918) he was influenced by Simmel, Dilthey, Husserl, and Max Weber. His major concerns at the time were philosophy and aesthetics. After he joined the Communist Party in 1918, Lukacs gave all his attention to politics and to the subjects of revolutionary tactics and strategy. His polical career ended in 1928 when the Hungarian Party Congress rejected the so-called "Blum Thesis" (Blum was Lukacs' Party name). From that time onwards he worked as a literary historian and aesthetician. From 1933 to 1944 (the same period as Fischer) he lived in Moscow; the rest of his life, until 1971, was spent in Budapest where he was Professor of Aesthetics and Philosophy, with the exception of one year that he was exiled to Romania for having sided with the Nagy government in the revolt of 1956.

Avner Zis is an eminent Soviet aesthetician. He is a professor of aesthetics at the University of Moscow, a lecturer to various sectors of the art public and an editor of the literature on art for Progress Publishers. He is one of the numerous philosophers of art working today in the Soviet Union where Marxist aesthetics has been given much attention since the 1930's. In this thesis, in other words, he represents the type of Marxist aesthetics that comes from the Soviet Union.

The aim of this paper is to show why, in the Marxist perspective, art is necessary to man. An examination of the

positions of Fischer, Lukacs, and Zis makes evident the profound unity of Marxists on the question of the necessity of art. It also reveals that a unified position is required for a recovery of art's powers through Marxism.

My method has been to first present their analyses of a specific topic, emphasizing their common points. In these presentations Fischer is given more space than the others because the necessity of art is more emphatic and more explicit in his work than in that of Lukacs and Zis. Hence he provides a framework within which we can better understand the other two thinkers. After the topic is presented, I summarize what has been agreed upon, and show the underlying principles of Marxism in which such agreement is grounded. Finally, in the conclusion to each topic, I explain and show, with the help of Marx himself, the necessity of art that is implied in the relevant principles.

The necessity of art exists in two forms: the necessity tied to what art is, and the necessity of the role that it plays in society. Out of four topics, the 'first' necessity is tied to the first three: art's genesis, its structure, and its nature. The 'second' necessity is in the fourth topic: the function of art. My treatment of each topic follows the above explained pattern: exposition, summary, conclusion.

If the first four chapters are treated as an exposition of the necessity of art in Marxism, then the whole paper has the same pattern as each of its sections, for the fifth chapter is a summary and explanation of the principles in which the necessity of art is grounded. This chapter also shows that the necessity of art is not only in the principles of Marxism (from within) but

also that it is in Marxism as a view of experience (from without).

In virtue of the explanatory power of Marxism, the necessity of art is, after the fifth chapter, undeniable. It is assured by the principles of Marxism. However, in view of Marxism as a program to correct social reality, and also in view of the paradox that initially gave rise to our question, the conclusion should shed some light on the situation of art in the world today and on the attitudes that must be adopted if art is to exercise its powers, hence make 'the humanity implicit in mankind become explicit'. For 'explicit' humanity is our hope for the future.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GENESIS OF ART

In Marxism art is studied in a context of socio-historical processes. It is therefore treated as an historical and a social phenomenon. Thus, the genesis of art is examined: (1) in view of the historical activity of homo sapiens as a whole, and (2) in view of specifically social activities. Although the two approaches greatly overlap and are ultimately inseparable, some writers emphasize one aspect more than the other. In our text it is Fischer who stresses the historical development of artistic activity, while Lukacs and Zis focus on the genesis that each work of art undergoes within a social context, rather than on the actual history of the phenomenon.

i. Ernst Fischer

In The Necessity of Art Fischer seeks the beginnings of artistic activity in the historical development of man's mastery over the natural and social world. This development begins with the emergence of tools, or rather with the emergence of consciousness. An important element in the development of tools is what Fischer calls 'making alike'. In the activity of 'making alike' originates, on the one hand, the means of expression such as sign or gesture, and on the other hand, magic. It is the magical aspect of the 'making alike' that represents the precondition for the appearance of art. Art, however, appeared only when the tribal collective in which magic thrived had broken down through the division of labour, thus creating a need to restore the harmony between the individual and the outside world.

The emergence of tools is simultaneous and inseparable from the emergence of man. The tool can be defined as an instrument of labour which is outside the organism and which man adopts to the requirements of the moment. The beginning of conscious being, Fischer believes, occurs when the instrument becomes the starting point of activity, when it becomes a means to serve an end, and thus acquires a function or purpose. It is at this point that spontaneous experimentation or 'thinking with hands' begins to be transformed into purposeful reflection. "All thought", says Fischer, "is nothing other than a shortened form of experimentation transferred from the hands to the brain, the innumerable preceding experiements having ceased to be memory and having become 'experience'."[1] Manual discovery, that is, that stones and other found objects can be broken or given this or that shape, is a condition of consciousness. It took a long time, however, for a clearly recognized purpose to emerge. When this happened nature became an object for man; he then confronted it as a creator.

An important element in the development of man's mastery over nature was the activity of 'making alike'. Man mastered nature primarily by making the second tool resemble the first, thus creating another equally useful tool. Resemblance is important in two ways. One, it gives rise to the means of expression; for a sign, gesture or work probably appeared as the result of the relating all things according to their similar properties, and all processes (especially the social process of work) by virtue of their rhythmical regularity. The means of expression were as much a tool as was a piece of stone; they too established man's power over nature. Two, for prehistoric man

resemblance became a source of power, or magic. This magic aspect of the making alike is in that man deduced from the importance of similarity and imitation that since all similar things were identical, his power over nature, by virtue of 'making alike' could be limitless.

The magical effect of the making alike and the activities arising out of it, are in Fischer's view the preconditions of art. The simplest examples of such 'magical' activities are the rhythmical movements accompanying work, the tribal dances before a hunt or the making of cave paintings. Integral to these activities is that they are all collective activities. For that reason they serve man not only in mastering nature but also in developing social relationships. Hence the rhythmical movement accompanying work coordinates effort, thus connecting the individual to the social group. The tribal dances before a hunt increase the hunter's sense of power, while the cave paintings of animals give the tribe a sense of superiority over their prey. It is because he wants to stress that the magic ceremonies of the tribal collective - in which art originated - are primarily <u>social</u> activities that Fischer says:

> art in the dawn of humanity had little to do with 'beauty' and nothing at all to do with any aesthetic desire; it was a magic tool or weapon of the human collective in its struggle for survival.[2]

The magic ceremonies of the unified human collective were not yet art. The tribal unity had to be destroyed by the division of labour and by property ownership for art to emerge. That is, once the harmony between the individual and the outside world

(natural and social) was disrupted, magic - a collective activity par excellence - evolved into art, religion, myth and science.

Art of the early class society, explains Fischer, had two voices: the Apollonian which glorified the new social conditions i.e. the power of aristocratic families and the social order established by them as a reflection of the supposedly universal order; and the Dyonisian voice which represented the lost unity of the collective, protesting against class rule and prophesying the return of the old unity. Because art emerged as a result of individualization and with the appearance of classes, the role of the artist at the beginning was primarily Dionysian. He was to restore the lost unity of man who through the division of labour had become alienated not only from the community but also from himself. Thus the main idea that the artist conveyed was the fear of hubris, or the idea that the birth of individuality led to tragic guilt (e.g. Oedipus Rex).

The fear of individualism vanished with the appearance of money and trade. The structure of the ancient society loosened further; as a consequence individualism appeared. The process of individualization affected all people in the community but for the artist the experience was more concentrated or intense (love poetry in Egypt, Sappho and Euripides in Greece). Fischer, however, stresses that although art is a consequence of individualism and class society it is, nevertheless, like magic, essentially social.

For Fischer, therefore, the condition of the genesis of art is the condition of the appearance of man: manual experience that resulted in the emergence of conscious being. The appearance

of man was at the same time the appearance of a social being, for all activities, at the beginning, were collective tribal activities. These activities and the belief in their magical effects appear to be the well from which all specific types of labour arose. Art is only one of them and is directly tied to the 'magical aspect' of social life.

In order to increase his productivity, hence his mastery over nature, man had to divide labour. The unity of tribal activities was broken, the harmony of the tribe lost: a class society emerged. The effect of these changes on man, a social being, was devastating: he was torn away from the collective, isolated in his 'individualism', and ultimately alienated from himself and his fellow man. It is at this moment that, according to Fischer, art emerged from the 'well of all activity' and took up the social function of expressing through language, gesture or other means, the dominant social experience, or the experience of deeper and further divisions in the social structure of society. Thus, when the artist appeared to be separating himself from the community by expressing very personal thoughts and feelings, his work indicated that the dominant social experience as that of individualization, caused by the ever increasing division of labour.

The major points in Fischer's chapter on the origin of art, then, are that historically art emerges from the magical aspect of labour - hence that it itself is a form of labour. Since labour is always social, Fischer's second point is that the condition of art and raison d'être of its existence is the human collective, hence that art is always social.

ii Georg Lukacs and Avner Zis

Lukacs' and Zis' thoughts on the genesis of art widen and enrich the vision given to us by Fischer. Lukacs stresses that art arises as an answer to a need, and that it is a reflection of social reality. The meaning of 'reflection' is, in turn, explained by Zis, who treats art primarily as a form of social consciousness.

Lukacs' starting point is that there is one objective reality and that all types of reflection[3], such as art and science, always picture this same reality. Man's most important reaction to objective reality is, according to Lukacs, his everyday behaviour. Everyday existence is heterogenous: man's most diverse human potentials are at work in that world. Common to all of these potentials is that their manifestations are answers to a need. The diversity of potentials, hence, points to the diversity of needs. Therefore, Lukacs says, art originates in everyday behaviour as an answer to a certain need. And since art, as we saw in Fischer, is a social product, this need must be a need arising out of the social life, hence a social need. But let us hear Lukacs:

> If we imagine everyday life as a huge stream, science and art branch from it in higher forms of reception and reproduction of reality, become differentiated and take shape according to their specific aims, achieve their pure form in this characteristic stemming from the needs of life in society, to return at last - as a result of its effect, its influence on the life of the people - into the stream of everyday life.[4]

Lukacs, it appears, does not clearly specify the need which art answers. But if we recall the birth of art as described by Fischer, it becomes possible to assert that the need for art is

possibly the need for man to be unified with his fellow men, or more specifically, a need to raise oneself consciously to the level of the human species - the level at which men are united in their humanity. This need is a social need in the sense that man can perceive what is essentially human only from within a social context and ultimately for the sake of harmonizing that specific social context.

Moreover, in Lukacs' aesthetics art, in satisfying the needs of society, returns to the society the reflection of the social relationships out of which it initially arose. For that reason Marxist aestheticians in their anlysis of art bring out its social nature by revealing the place it occupies in the life of society or by revealing the importance of the needs that it satisfies. At the same time the works of art (e.g. Homer's Iliad) can bring one to many conclusions about the society which bore it - by being a reflection of that society.

For Marxists, from the point of view of the relationship between being and thought, the assertion that art is a reflection of everyday life means that it is a form of social consciousness. Avner Zis puts the most stress on this aspect of the genesis of art. "There is no doubt", he says, "that art, as indeed all culture, emerged and evolved on the basis of labour. What is more, art not only emerged as a result of labour but in itself represents a specific form of labour."[5] It is wrong, however, to claim that art is exclusively a form of labour. Art is first and foremost a form of social consciousness, a form of intellectual and emotional production, a specific aesthetically expressed mode of thinking.

Social consciousness is the term Marxists use for describing various products of thought, and in it is implicit their belief that thinking is a social activity or an activity implying the existence of a group. Consciousness, in other words, is always social.

For Zis, art is primarily a form of social consciousness, hence he starts with the explanation of how he understands this term. Social consciousness, he says, embraces various forms of society's intellectual and spiritual life: political ideas, concepts of justice, morals, science, art, philosophy and religion.[6] What is common to all these forms is that the development of each is shaped by laws intrinsic to each of them and also by certain universal laws that apply to all products of thought. The latter are the tenets of historical materialism. Moreover, the results of the theoretical analysis of any one form of social consciousness shows, Zis claims, that the two interrelated tendencies in any such form are (1) the cognitive process shaped by the accumulated knowledge concerning nature and society, and (2) the ideological process shaped within the antagonistic social formations by the interests of various classes active in the given historical context. In the light of this analysis, Zis believes, art should be seen as an example of the dialectical unity of artistic cognition and ideology.[7] To say that these two tendencies are interrelated is to say that they are inseparable, so that, in terms of art, to deny the epistemological function of art is to try to deprive it of its ideological element.

To our notion that the Marxist accounts of the genesis of art reveal art as essentially a form of social consciousness,

Zis adds the idea that art has some cognitive value and that it is an expression of ideology. Without going into much detail, for this topic will be more thoroughly discussed later it can be noted that the cognitive and the ideological aspects of art are not in the same sort of relationship in Fischer as they are in Zis. In fact this is a point on which the two philosophers would probably disagree.

At this point their disagreement can be explained in the following terms: Zis thinks of art within a socialist context, which is to say that he uses the term ideology as meaning the true expression of the interests of the working class, not as meaning false consciousness. He thus espouses a Marxist-Leninist aesthetics, which does not merely explain art, but provides it with aesthetic and, more importantly, ideological criteria. The ideological criteria refers to the so-called partisanship in art. Fischer is living and writing within the context of a capitalist society. For him Marxism is above all a science, not an ideology, which he understands in the sense of false consciousness. Thus the future of art and mankind for Fischer belong to the sphere of the whole man, where there is no ideology, hence no alienation.

iii. Summary

If we limit ourselves to the question of the genesis of art there is a general agreement between Fischer, Lukacs and Zis on three points: that the ultimate source of art is labour, that art is a social product, and that it is a form of social consciousness. Labour is here taken in its broadest sense, what Marx calls in

Capital 'a process between man and nature' by virtue of which man masters nature and also changes his own nature. 'Social product' implies that art arises out of and is a reflection of certain social relationships (Oedipus Rex could not have been produced by a 20th century artist, though it can be appreciated by a 20th century audience). Finally, by social consciousness is meant the spiritual life of the whole society which reflects social being, i.e. man's material production. It is also worth noting that, whether art is analyzed in its historical development or as a phenomenon, which is to say a sum of relationships with the world, or dialectically, its genesis can be discussed in terms of labour, social relationships and social consciousness. We have seen both approaches, for Fischer is more inclined to discuss art historically, while Lukacs and Zis see it more in its dialectical implications. Whereas Fischer puts more emphasis on labour and social relationships as decisive for art, Lukacs and Zis are more concerned with art as first and foremost a social product and a form of social consciousness. Ultimately, the claim that comes forth most strongly is that art is a social reality: that it originates in society and that it reflects social relationships founded on material product, i.e. labour.

What we must now ask is what such a claim means in terms of what art is and hence in terms of the necessity that might lie therein.

In relation to the question of what art is, the claim that art originates in society, and that it reflects social relationships founded on material production means that art is labour, that it is a social product and a form of social consciousness. If

in an examination of art any of these characteristics were omitted, it would be to the detriment of understanding all aspects of the phenomenon of art; for content-form analysis assumes that art is a social product, just as the role of art in society implies that art is a form of social consciousness. The genesis of art is made clear by all three characterizations (labour, social product, a form of social consciousness); however it is principally contained in the idea of art as labour. Thus, if the necessity of art is evident in its genesis, it must be implied in the idea of labour.

Labour is essentially an activity, and if we say that the source of art is labour we are saying that the source of art is activity (praxis), rather than a state of mind. So when Fischer says that in its beginnings art was a magic tool helping man to master nature and to develop social relationships he means that it was an activity of the human collective geared towards survival, or in a sense, that it is a life process itself. In the following excerpts from Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 and from Capital we see that Fischer's remarks echo Marx's characterization of labour:

(1) Labour, life activity, productive life itself, appears to man in the first place merely as means of satisfying a need - the need to maintain physical existence ...

Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of that that he is a species-being....[8]

(2) Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reactions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself

> to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's production in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway.[9]

(3) It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a species-being. This production is his active species-life. Through this production nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the objectification of man's species-life: for he duplicates himself not only as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created.[10]

To be human, then, is to work upon the outside world in order to duplicate oneself in that world. The transformation of nature through labour was originally only an activity assuring the satisfaction of man's basic needs. The more man knew about the world and about himself the better he was able to transform nature - the latter prompting further interest. In turn, the domination of nature made it easier to satisfy basic needs and gave man freedom which is a precondition for the appearance and satisfaction of other, more subtle, human needs. Man, as Marx says, "only truly produces" when his physical needs are satisfied, or rather, labour is life itself - a struggle for survival (for both man and animals); labour becomes expressly human only when man masters nature, so that nature appears as his work.

Because labour, combined of course with many physiological (such as the size of the brain) and anatomical factors (upright stature, the hand), was necessary to make a man out of an ape, it could be said that art, understood in the widest possible sense, i.e. as an activity, a process between man and nature, was

necessary to man from his very beginnings. This statement, though essentially correct, needs further qualifications that would at least in part separate art from the well of 'all activity'. Thus we need to look closely into the Marxist view of man's relationship with nature.

The following three excerpts from the Manuscripts might offer certain insights in this direction:

(1) Nature is man's inorganic body - nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man lives on nature - means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.11

This is to say that man is at the same time a part of nature - being an objective material being, and opposed to it for he must work upon nature to satisfy his needs. In the process he does not create 'natural objects', but 'human objects'.

(2) But man is not merely a natural being: he is a human natural being...human objects are not natural objects as they immediately present themselves, and neither is human sense as it immediately is - as it is objectively-human sensibility, human objectivity. Neither nature objectively nor nature subjectively is directly given in a form adequate to the human being.12

For a human being, there is no nature in itself, but a humanly constructed nature. Such unity of man and nature in 'human' objects is social.

(3) Activity and consumption both in their content and in their mode of existence, are social: social activity and social consumption; the human essence of nature first exists only for the social man; for only here does nature exist for him as a bond with man - as his

> existence for the other and the other's existence for him - as the life element of the human world; only here does nature exist as the foundation of his own human existence. Only here has what is to him his natural existence become his human existence, and nature become man for him. Thus society is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature - the true resurrection of nature - the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment.[13]

From this we see that it would be wrong to think that man superimposes a man-made environment on some sort of primeval nature. Man is natural and nature is human, for it is not only the nature that changes in their interaction, but man as well - his 'nature' changes. Moreover, the substance of this interaction is the satisfaction of needs which, because man is essentially a social being, occurs through the social mediation of nature.

Hence, the argument underlying the Marxist conception of the origin of art is as follows. The ultimate origin of art is labour. Labour is life activity, and all activity is geared towards satisfying certain needs. The satisfaction of needs occurs in man's relationship to nature. This relationship is such that nature is not an ontic substratum but a system of relations existing between man and material forces and substances made according to socially mediated human activities.[14] The human essence of nature exists for man as a bond with other man, because man is essentially a social being, that is, his activity and consumption, in their mode of existence, are social. Now, to the extent to which man is a social being the needs tied to his physical well-being are not automatically his necessary needs. That is, as a social being man's necessary needs are his historical needs that appear in the

course of the social mediation between individual activity and the external world.

Physical needs are a constant. They belong also to the animal world. Other more expressively human needs are social needs. Which of these are necessary can be learned only through an investigation into a given historical period. This is to say, as Agnes Heller states, that there are no fixed natural parameters which determine which needs at every given moment in human history can be considered man's necessary needs. After a certain point in human auto-genesis so-called 'spiritual' needs were humanly more essential than elementary physical needs. Once the spiritual needs had developed and found satisfaction their effects extended backwards to modify the sense and function of more basic needs in human life.[15]

What Fischer, Lukacs and Zis emphasize the most about the genesis of art is that in its beginnings art was and is social. This understood in the light of their later statements (in the chapter on the nature of art) about the essentially human character of art, reveals their assumption that a human product is always a social product.

In addition to this, it is also emphasized that art in its origins, whether, as it appears at the dawn of humanity (in magic) or at every particular moment in history (in particular in everyday life, in general in social being) is an answer to a specific need. Only at the beginnings of humanity art was not differentiated from other 'magical' activities and the need for art was not differentiated from other needs. Like most other

activities art was a tool in humanizing nature, an activity done communally so that it increasingly developed social relationships. As a natural being man was a being with needs. In order to satisfy his needs he had to be a social being; satisfaction of needs in this way made him increasingly human. Art appears in this process of satisfying needs.

In which needs art originates later on, at any given moment in history neither Fischer, Lukacs, nor Zis specifies. It is said that they are social needs (Lukacs) which arise out of material production - life activity itself (Zis). That these needs cannot be specified is not surprising since, as we said, the specification of 'human' needs is tied to a given time or place.

If art originates in labour and labour is a life activity, which is to say activity geared towards the satisfaction of needs, then art in its origins is necessary only if the need for art is a necessary need. In our explanation of the relationship between man and nature, as perceived by Marx, we have noted that necessary needs are not judged by any fixed parameters (such as 'natural' needs) but change throughout the history of mankind. This, it would appear, allows us to judge the necessity of art on the basis of its presence in early societies and on its presence in subsequent historical periods. This also shows that in Marxism (a theory grounded in materialism) it is ultimately the presence of art that counts in the question of its necessity. And since there are very few societies that have left no evidence of art production, a truly scientific conclusion can only be that art-production satisfies a necessary need of a human group from its very beginnings.

NOTES

1. Ernst Fischer, Necessity of Art (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 20.

2. Ibid., p. 36.

3. With this Lukacs simply asserts the Marxist materialist position: that there is one objective, material reality and that products of our consciousness are always conditioned by our material production (i.e. that social being is prior to social consciousness).
   Also, the term reflection of reality is a traditional Marxist term. Lenin uses it in his theory of knowledge - the famous theory of reflection. The principal claim of this theory is that thought is a reflection, copy, photograph of reality. Lukacs agrees with this claim (although not with all of its implications) and uses the word reflection in a similar way. Agnes Heller in one of her papers on Lukacs remarks that Lukacs clings to traditional Marxist terminology because he upholds the cause of the renaissance of Marxism with unbroken loyalty and is moreover capable of reconquering the world of Marxists concepts that were impoverished and rendered suspect by dogmatism.

4. Georg Lukacs, "An Introduction to a Monograph on Aesthetics" in Maynard Solomon ed. Marxism and Art (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), p. 404.

5. Avner Zis, Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics (Moscow: Progress, 1977), p. 29.

6. Ibid., p. 30.

7. Ibid., p. 31.

8. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 (Moscow: Progress, 1974), p. 68.

9. Karl Marx, Capital in the Marx-Engels Reader ed. by R. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), p. 344.

10. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 (Progress), p. 69.

11. Ibid., pp. 67-68.

12. Ibid., p. 136.

13. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 in R. Tucker's reader, p. 85.

14. Serge Moscovici, Essais sur l'histoire humaine de la nature discussed by Edward Swiderski in The Philosophical Foundations of Soviet Aesthetics (Dodrecht, Holland: Reidel Publishers, 1979), p. 157.

15. Agnes Heller, The Theory of Need in Marx (1976) in E. Swiderski, p. 158.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STRUCTURE OF ART: CONTENT AND FORM

The interaction of content and form is an issue that remains as important for a Marxist as it was for Plato, Aristotle or Aquinas. Traditionally this interaction has been explained as one between a ruling spiritual element, the form, and the inferior material element, the content. Materialism, hence, had to demystify the form, by explaining all the phenomena tied to this notion in terms of matter. However, since dialectical materialism is ultimately the science of the general laws of motion both of human thought and the external world,[1] its analysis should go deeper than simply demystifying the metaphysicians' ideas of form and content. Content and form are, in fact, one of the categories of materialist dialectics (others are cause and effect, essence and phenomenon, possibility and actuality, necessity and chance[2]). The basic tenets of the materialist dialectics concerning the category of content and form are that content and form are inseparable, that the content plays the pre-eminent role, while the form has an active role as the organizing principle.[3] These basic tenets have been reached by an analysis of both natural and historical phenomena, and for that reason apply to both. In the following pages we will see how the materialist conception of content and form, and their interaction, applies to the specific phenomenon of art.

i. Ernst Fischer

The starting point in Fischer's explanation of the structure of art is the thesis that since the world - both natural and social - is material, certain generalizations about content and form apply to both natural and social phenomena. Thus he first explains the relationship of content and form in nature i.e. in solid matter, then shows the relevance of this relationship to our understanding of society, and concludes by showing that the same relationship holds for social products, or forms of social consciousness, such as art.

Nature. Concerning the form and content of solid matter Fischer writes:

> What we call form is only a specific grouping, a specific arrangement, a relative state of equilibrium of matter; it is the expression of the fundamental conserving and conservative tendency, the temporary stabilization of material conditions. But content changes incessantly, at times imperceptibly, at other times in violent action; it enters into conflict with the form, explodes the form, and creates new forms in which the content becomes, for a while stabilized once more.[4]

Using a crystal as a case in point this is to say that the content of a crystal is its atoms, while its form is a result of the properties and interactions of its atoms. This conclusion has been reached after numerous observations of physicists that the form of crystal depends on the arrangement of its atoms, and that this arrangement is determined by a specific equilibrium of attraction and repulsion. We need not go into the intricacies of the atomic structure of a crystal as Fischer does, for the whole point is to present a materialist or scientific conception

of content and form in crystals and hence distinguish it from the idealist notion that a crystal's form is due to a non-material crystalline lattice which is 'beyond substance', and that the form is present as an idea, or a wish for perfection in every crystal.[5]

The relationship between form and content in solid matter is dialectical, which is to say that they are two opposing tendencies, and that the struggle and tension between them is the reason for development and change. This conclusion, Fischer says, is based on observations surrounding the perpetual movement of atoms and their constant tendency to form groups at specific intervals within the equilibrium of attraction and repulsion. This is how Fischer describes these two tendencies that operate in all matter: "the conservative tendency, the 'tough persistence', the clinging to a form of organization once it has been achieved, inertia; and the revolutionary tendency, perpetual movement, the inability to remain at rest, the continuous change of state".[6] Without these two tendencies, Fischer argues, there would be no reality. With this Fischer presents us with the essence of dialectical materialism: the idea that reality is not a <u>state</u> of matter, but rather matter understood as a <u>process</u>. What we call a state is actually a tension between being and non-being (thesis and antithesis) in which being and non-being are unreal (that is, neither exists in reality independently of the other), while what is real is their interaction, or becoming. In the same way content and form are inseparable, and only through theoretical analysis do we realize that they are in a relationship of tension, form being conservative and content revolutionary.

Society. Marx's analysis of socio-economic phenomena, Fischer believes, allows us to apply the notions of form and content to the opposing tendencies appearing in those phenomena. The form of society is the relations of production: social organization, institutions, laws, ideas, prejudices. The content of society is the productive forces: the different ways of adapting the outside world to man's material and spiritual needs. The relationship between the form and the content of society Fischer resolves by stating that although social interactions are far more complex than those in nature, in principle, the laws of dialectical contradiction between the conservative tendencies of form and revolutionary tendencies of content apply to human society as well as to nature.[7] The dialectical contradiction implies that states of equilibrium occur when the relations of production coincide with the forces of production, while states of upheavel and change occur when the relations of production become outdated and hinder the development of the forces of production. Thus, since capitalism exemplifies an imbalance between social relationships and productive forces, there is in capitalism a tendency to overlook the content which is impossible to glorify, and to emphasize the form as the only essential thing (i.e., democracy). More specifically, the ruling class hides the content of its domination and fiercely protects the outdated form which it presents as eternal.

The dialectical relationship of content and form, therefore, where it pertains to social development appears in the form of historical materialism. The question we now face is: How is all this related to content and form in art?

Art. The connection is by no means simple for the above conclusions give only a general framework and, being a social product, art has its own socially conditioned laws. Fischer starts with an explanation of content, stating that the content of an artwork is not the same as the subject matter: content is determined not only by what is depicted but by how it is depicted. Form enters into the argument with the claim that the content in art is prior to the form. Finally, the relationship between the content and form in art is explained in its relation to the changes occurring in a given socio-historical context (i.e., in its relation to the relationship existing at the time between the content and form of society).

The idea that content is more than the subject matter means that content is more than what is depicted in an art work. It is also how it is depicted. The how, Fischer argues, refers to how the artist, consciously or unconsciously, expresses the social tendencies of his time.[8] To clarify this we shall use Fischer's example concerning the subject matter of human labour in the history of painting.

The mural painting of Ancient Egypt represented swarms of peasants ploughing as the master would see them — men who were not subjects of their own activity, but an object for the observer. Baroque painters, such as Giorgione, represented the process of work through a shepherd who plays the flute, dances country dances, and serves wine to his rulers surrounded by carefully pruned and scented nature. Finally, Millet, a supporter of the 1848 revolution, depicts the work of the peasants as a dehumanizing

affair. His corn gleaners have no faces, their backs are bowed, their hands grubbing in the dust. Thus it appears that the answer to the question of why the meaning of the subject of labour changes, or why the content changes, is to be found in the social conditions of the time. A social structure of ranks and castes, in which the peasant is for the rulers a work unit, not an individual, is the assumption behind the Egyptian murals. In Baroque painting, such as that of Giorgione, the precarious position of the nobility that closed its eyes to peasant uprisings dictated the portrayal of peasants as the good countrymen of pastoral scenes, and in 19th century capitalism the inhuman exploitation of the proletariat whose struggle had already begun necessitated Millet's depiction of the labourers as faceless and oppressed.

The subject matter of human labour, it appears, becomes a content only when it is invested with a social context in which it acquires meaning. The <u>how</u>, then, is tied to the fact that art is a form of social consciousness, hence that the artist views any subject from his social position. The subject matter, moreover, is to a great extent arbitrary; how one depicts it is far less so. For that reason the <u>how</u> tells us far more about the world art is trying to convey than the subject matter.

In fact, it could be argued to support Fischer's view that the artifacts we label <u>kitsch</u> do not have a content properly speaking, but only a subject matter. For they are either brought from another era, and mean little in our own time (18th c. style porcelain figurines made in Hong Kong) or are simply made

for purpose of looking sweet and pretty thus disregarding, at least consciously, social and other realities of the time.

The second point of Fischer's argument is that content is prior to form. This is a general tenet that applies to nature, society and art. Since the content of an artwork has to do with expressing the social situation at the time, the form, Fischer tells us, can be defined as the solidification of social experience; the content 'finds' the appropriate form and thus solidifies the social experience that it expresses. The forms, once they are established, are conservative. That this is so we see, Fischer believes, from the fact that the forms tied to magic still exist in word, dance, and pictorial forms, although the original meaning has been largely forgotten: "The magic-social law is only very gradually diluted to make an aesthetic one".[9]

The form, as Fischer explains it, can be understood as the experience of mankind of how to transform matter in order to fit different social purposes. Man, on the other hand, is always reluctant to give up what he and his predecessors have acquired through laborious search. The form, in other words, reflects man's need to assert his power over the world (natural and social) by seeing that world as fully intelligible and consequently unchanging. The new social purposes are, however, always appearing — with them the new solutions of how to satisfy them — hence new forms.

Content in art, therefore, just like the content of society is subject to continuous change, for it arises directly out of the social experience of a collective. Form in art, just like

the form of society, tends to be more stable for it fixes the social experience, and even long after the given experience has passed, it persists. Content and form are, of course, inseparable. Their relationship, it appears from what we learned from Fischer thus far, could be discussed in two ways: in relation to specific art forms such as works of painting, poetry, music etc., and in relation to art as a phenomenon. What Fischer has to say about the latter i.e., the content-form relationship in general, is in line with the content-form relationship in nature and in society. Namely, the content of art, which in the last instance is the social element, is in tension with the form, which, when it does not suit the content, or better, the social realities, has to be broken down and reconstructed so as to suit the content. It appears, then, that only at certain periods of history are content and form in harmony. To support the 'tension and change' conception we may use some of Fischer's examples, which will also relate content to form as they appear in particular works of art, hence in specific art forms.

The first example is to be found in the transition from church to secular music. The purpose of church music, according to Fischer, was to unite individuals by crushing every trace of individuality, thus welding individuals into a submissive collective. The content of this music assured one of one's worthlessness and sinfulness, and of the need to identify oneself with the sufferings of Christ in order to be saved. Such content, in turn, reflected and also supported the social system in which the clergy and nobility were rulers. With the appearance of a

new class, the bourgeoisie, music slowly acquired new content which expressed in itself feelings, ideas and experiences, and not only evoked them as did church music. Because secular music had this subjective and expressive character it lent itself to individual, subjective associations. The transition was, of course, by no means sudden and it went from the works of Pergolesi, through those of Bach and Handel, to the striking individuality of Bethoveen's Missa Solemnis, which is, as Fischer put it "too vast for any church".[10] The major point, however, is that with the change of social content, the content of music changes and so do its forms. The change of form that occured in our specific example is the change from the polyphony of church music (one voice following the other without competition) to the homophony of secularized music (struggle between themes, which are in tension and in contrast).

Another example is readily found in the difference between the poetry of Classicism (Pope, Racine) with its rigid rules of form and its heroic subject matter, and that of Romanticism (Goethe, Keats, Shelley) in which the belief in the unity of man and nature takes the shape of dreamlike and often irrational poetic images. The first comes from the seventeenth century, the age of Rationalism, of enlightened monarchs, and yet of the belief in a 'natural order' which justified the existing class structure. Romanticism, on the other hand, in England, France and Germany, came after the French Revolution as a revolt against the rule of the aristocracy and the church. The poetic images of witches' rides and devil's weddings masked the defence of

superstition against cultivated nobility.[11] With the social changes that led to the French Revolution, therefore, came the change in the content and form of poetry. It was transformed form a balanced, intellectually controlled form to a working through associative "logic", not reason.

At this time, we find a transformation in painting which ranges from the works of David whose call for revolution is hidden behind the classical themes (e.g. Le Serment des Horaces), to the approach of Daumier whose sketches of the working people in trains show them as an oppressed, exploited class and thus anticipate the uprisings of 1848.

The conclusion that we reach after this analysis of Fischer's text is that he adheres to the following theses: one, that certain basic tenets of dialectical materialism, such as the one concerning the content-form relationship, apply to all phenomena, natural or historical; second, that the content of art is the social element out of which art arises and which it therefore manifests; third, that form is a 'concentrated social experience' or experience of how to transform matter so that it satisfies different social purposes; and finally, that content is prior to form, that content which is revolutionary gradually changes form which tends to be conservative.

ii. Georg Lukacs and Avner Zis

There is little to be said here about the content-form problem as discussed by Lukacs and Zis. They are essentially in agreement with Fischer, for they share Fischer's belief about dialectics:

that the dialectical principles concerning content and form are applicable to art in the same degree to which they are applicable to any phenomenon of nature and social activity.[12] However, it must be noted that Zis' analysis of content and form is much more careful, hence much more refined than that of Fischer. The few points I will mention here should therefore serve as a clarification of Fischer's analysis. Lukacs, because he is, above all, a literary critic, can offer some examples of the application to literary works of their common precepts about content and form.

Concerning the content of art, Zis makes a fine and important distinction between (1) the reality reflected in a work of art which he equates with subject matter, and (2) the content of the artistic reflection of reality in the work of art: the content of the intellectual and artistic interpretation of reality by the artist. The distinction rests on the observation that the content of each artistic image embraces not only the objective element i.e. life, but also the subjective element — the artist's world outlook. For Zis this observation translates into the conclusion that the content is the artistic reflection through images of specific phenomena from the real world, aesthetically interpreted and ideologically evaluated by the artist.[13] The essential elements of form, Zis believes, are composition and plot. Only a well ordered composition coupled with a carefully devised plot ensures a good form. Further, although content and form are equally necessary to a work of art, content plays a decisive role. The form, however, should not be neglected (here Zis admits that at one point in the Soviet Union the drive against

Formalism led to the neglect of the question of form), for in the creative process form is as important as content. The complexity of the form-content relationship Zis expresses by the following:

> There is no one straightforward path to be followed in creative work. At times the clarity of a central idea enables an artist to achieve expressive form. It can however happen that an artist only finally achieves a clear vision of the idea-content of his work while working at the form....Sometimes work at form can even bring an artist to modify the idea-content of his original conception.[14]

Perhaps more important than the active role of form in the creative process is the fact that different aspects of life and different interpretations of life demand different forms of expression. For that reason Tolstoy's novels are different from Balzac's novels and Gorky's plays are different from Shakespeare's plays. Each era gives birth not only to ideas or contents of its own, but also to artistic forms of its own.[15]

The above shows that Zis' and Fischer's analysis are quite similar, although Zis proceeds more as an aesthetician, while Fischer more as an art historian. Zis also puts more emphasis than Fischer on the subjective aspect of the content: the emotional and ideological element. For Zis, this subjective element, as far as the quality of a work of art is concerned makes all the difference. For example, a German director Grunges (Hamburg) interpreted Goethe's Faust in such a way that it was always Mephistopheles who emerged as the winning party; Faust was at his mercy and the subject of his mockery. This interpretation was for Zis essentially false and this falsity greatly

diminishes the artistic value of the work. It can, though, be explained as a reflection of a world in which the Mephistopheleses feel more at home than do the Fausts.[16] However, such an explanation does not make Grunges' production into a good work of art.

For Fischer the ideological element is integral to the social element in art. At least this is so in his Necessity of Art (1959). In Art against Ideology (1966) (Kunst und Coexistence) Fischer is almost solely interested in the ideological element in content and in the negative effect this element has for art. Fischer's transformation from something like Zis' position to an almost hostile rejection of any ideological message in art has to do with the split that occurred in the Austrian Communist party in the mid 1960's. In 1968 the split was complete, and Fischer, Marek and others, disillusioned with the events in Czechoslovakia, took a party line that was essentially in contradiction with the Soviet one.[17] At this point Fischer rejected Zis' distinction, mentioned earlier, between false consciousness and ideology, the latter being socialist ideology which in relation to art has a positive role. Socialist ideology becomes equated in Fischer's mind with guided party-mindedness. Thus he writes in Art against Ideology:

> In this critical period of history, art and literature can hardly avoid becoming aware of their educative, ethical and political possibilities becoming committed to the struggle for the being or non-being of humanity; and the more they are free from any guided 'party-mindedness' the more effective will be the stand they take.[18]

The disagreement, therefore, between Zis and Fischer, which we first mentioned in the section concerning the genesis of art, is now clearer and more encompassing. Art, for Fischer, can be explained by Marxists but not directed by them. For Zis, on the other hand, the direction is part of explanation. To explain art is to say what it should be. The programatic aspect of Marxism — it functions as a corrective to social reality — is for Zis the ideological aspect. Fischer perhaps believes that it is not the content of art that should be directed or corrected, but more basic phenomena at the level of the content of the society. The curious point about this disagreement as it applies to the content-form problem is that it makes sense only as it refers to the socialist society, for Fischer does not deny the ideological element in art, but is against consciously putting this element into art, thus directing art. It is perhaps worth noticing here that Zis is living in a socialist society, while Fischer is not.

The content-form problem is, however, best understood in the art of the past. Lukacs' reflection upon the European literature of the 19th century after 1848 (Zola, Flaubert) in his paper "Idea and Form in Literature" illustrates this. In this paper he emphasizes the importance of a correct world view for a writer, and shows how an incorrect world view (i.e. one based on false consciousness) or a lack of a world view, weakens the art. The weaknesses of the naturalistic school lie in their unconditional surrender to capitalist society. This does not say that they approved of capitalism, but that they showed only the struggle of contradicting forces in capitalism. They depicted,

in other words, only the effects, without revealing the causes of the senselessness of human life under capitalism. The poverty of content, or the lack of understanding of the objective reality, resulted, Lukacs believes, in narration and description being the basic methods of composition. On the other hand, it is the art of the epic that has the ability to show typical and humanly significant features of social life of a given period.[19] Thus he says:

> The dominant literary method of description is not only a consequence; it is at the same time also a cause — the cause of a still further withdrawal of literature from epic style. The domination of the capitalistic prose over the inner poetry of human life, the fact that social life is becoming ever less human, the lowering of the level of humanity — all these are objective facts of the development of capitalism. Out of them inevitably arises the method of description.[20]

This observation brings a new element into our discussion of the content-form issue. It appears that all art forms or ways of composing an art work, are not of equal artistic value. Since form is ultimately the expression (what Fischer called solidification) of social experience, if the social life is inhuman or meaningless the form has little value. This is to say that the inevitable style, or the style that arises out of the existing social situation, is not good by virtue of it being genuine. In fact it can prove to be artistically false, distorted and bad.

These claims implicit in Lukacs' paper are only a part of his larger thesis that it is in the nature of capitalism to

destroy the possibility of culture at its roots. Culture has to develop organically out of the soil of social being. Where ideology and production are in opposition (i.e., where the way of thinking and the way of life are not in harmony), as in capitalism, there the content and the form of cultural expressions are in contradiction with one another, since the forms of cultural expression (such as art) are independent of what is presented to them by the economic and social order at the time.[21] In other words, in capitalism there can be no true art because form and content are not in harmony: content which has to do with ideology falsifies the true material basis of society; form, on the other hand, appears as a genuine expression of the existing social order (i.e. existing form of society). Because of this, Lukacs says, "the culture of capitalism to the extent that it truly existed, could consist in nothing but the ruthless critique of the capitalist epoch".[22] Since a ruthless critique of society implies an attempt to demystify the existing ideology, then it is an attempt to harmonize the content and the form of an artwork.

Therefore, the very possibility of culture depends on a harmonious content-form relationship. Form is always social experience solidified. The artistic quality of form depends on whether the social experience asserts man's humanity. The artistic quality of content depends on whether it truthfully depicts the social element. If it does, then it is in harmonious relationship with the form and creates the possibility of art (although not necessarily good art). If the content falsifies the social element, then is in contradiction with the form, thus making the phenomenon of art impossible.

iii. Summary

Art is a form of social consciousness and as such it is an expression of social being i.e., the economic life i.e., the content of society. For this reason, as we have seen in Fischer, Zis and Lukacs, Marxist aesthetics views the content and form in art in their relationship to the content and form of society. Content, which is traditionally the 'materialistic' aspect of an art work, is the social element in the work of art consisting of a subject matter and the evaluation of the subject matter. Form, which is traditionally the spiritual element, is secondary to content and represents different ways of mastering matter to express the existing social order and ultimately, the content. Form, what Zis calls "expressive form", is the expression of content's inner structure.

The relationship between content and form is again, viewed in the light of the relationship between the modes of production (content of society) and productive forces (form of society). Content in art, just as content in society, is revolutionary; form in both is conservative. This is to say that the content changes or adapts the form to the present social experiences (for example, the form of a pyramid is quite incapable of expressing the experiences, hopes and aspirations of our society). Further, art has value only when it is a genuine expression of the social experiences of the collective or when it is a reflection of the social life. Thus a poor form is not only a question of mastery, but also of the poverty of human experiences, ideas and hopes

that it expresses. It is a result of an historical situation which has not yet fully developed i.e., in which the social contradictions are either manifested too abruptly or are undeveloped. Poor content arises out of not understanding, perhaps as a result of false-consciousness, the social tendencies of one's time. Harmony of content and form implies not only a talented and intelligent artist, but also a society in which social being and social consciousness (esp. ideology) are in harmony. When these two are in contradiction, art as a form of social consciousness contradicts or falsifies the social being, thus losing its purpose, its value, and ultimately its art.

Given what has been said in the first chapter about man as essentially a social being it is now easy to perceive the assumption behind Fischer's, Lukacs' and Zis' analysis of content and form, and therefore to explain the necessity of art in terms of that assumption.

The assumption behind the conception that content and form in art can be defined only in their relationship to the content and form of society, is that our consciousness is always an expression of our social experience, that is, that our consciousness is always social consciousness. Thus, in the Manuscripts Marx says:

> My general consciousness is only the theoretical shape of that of which the living shape is the real community, the social fabric. Consequently, too, the activity of my general consciousness, as an activity, is my theoretical existence as a social being...
>
> In his consciousness of species man confirms his real, social life and simply repeats his real existence in thought, just as conversely the being of the species confirms itself in species-consciousness and is for itself in its generality as a thinking being.[23]

In other words, because man is a material being and a social being, the way he lives (and he lives in a society) determines the way he thinks. Hence, the categories we use to analyze society can also be used to analyze human thought. Art, as a form of social consciousness, thus, can be analyzed into the categories Marxists use in their analyses of society. The essential characteristic of all categories in dialectical materialism is that they represent a process, which is to say that they have an historical dimension to them. Thus, historicity of thought is implied by the actual historical process, so that the content and form of the products of our mind, undergo the changes corresponding to the changes that the content (the productive forces) and the form (relations of production) of our society undergo. Such historical development of consciousness is expressed in the following excerpt from the German Ideology:

> Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exists. Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first confronts men as completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion) precisely nature is as yet hardly altered by history — on the other hand, it is man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him, the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in a society at all. This beginning is as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is distinguished from sheep only by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension

> through increasing productivity, the increase of needs, and what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these three develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act, then the division of labour which develops spontaneously or "naturally" by virtue of natural predisposition (e.g. physical strength), needs, accidents, etc., etc. Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material from mental labour appears. From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, morality etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, morality etc., come into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing productive forces.[24]

With this Marx wants to underline that although thinking might seem independent of social life its genesis is inextricably tied to it. Hence, we can analyze consciousness into those categories we find in reality, thus apply the laws of social development to the products of consciousness. The categories we find in reality are dialectical categories, one of them being content and form. The laws of social development are the laws of historical materialism, which explains that the moving force of history is the opposition of content (modes of production) and form (relations of production). The background, then, of the Marxist conception of content and form in art is an epistemological claim that social consciousness is a reflection of social being, and also the materialistic conception of history according to which the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life. Thus the whole course of history can be defined in terms of the

relationship between the material productive forces and the existing relations of production (i.e. property relations).

From this it follows that a mode of social consciousness such as art is determined by the socio-economic conditions. This, in terms of the structure and the development of art means that the general laws of structure and development of society are reflected in art. Hence, just as the forces of production (content of society) tend to develop beyond the scope of the existing social relationships (form) so do the new contents in art tend to break the old forms. Similarly, just as the existence and the development of society depend on the relationship between the modes of production and the forces in production, the existence and the development of art depend on the content-form relationship.

The ultimate source of the conception of content and form in the works of Fischer, Lukacs and Zis is, therefore, one of the basic tenets of historical materialism: "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness".[25] The topic of content and form takes part in the necessity of art in the sense that in its structure, art <u>necessarily is</u> a social product and a reflection of society. For that reason the explanation of content and form is necessary for understanding that art, as a social product, is necessary to society — an issue tied to the function of art.

NOTES

1. F. Engels in Lenin, Marx, Engels, Marxism (Moscow: Progress, 1973), p.17.

2. B.M. Boguslavsky et al., ABC of Dialectical and Historical Materialism (Moscow: Progress, 1976), p.171..

3. A. Zis, Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics, p.14.

4. E. Fischer, Necessity of Art, p.124.

5. Ibid., p.118.

6. Ibid., p.129.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.138.

9. Ibid., p.165.

10. Ibid., p.190.

11. Ibid., p.170.

12. A. Zis, P.124.

13. Ibid., p.126.

14. Ibid., p.156.

15. Ibid., p.154

16. Ibid., p.128.

17. D.N. Mochalin, "Communist Party of Austria" in Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, vol.12 (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p.246.

18. E. Fischer, Art against Ideology (London: The Penguin Press, 1969), p.217.

19. Juan ed. Marxism and Human Liberation, essays on History, Culture and Revolution by G. Lukacs, (New York Delta Book, 1973), p.121.

20. Ibid.

21. From Lukacs' essay "The Old Culture and the New Culture" in Marxism and Human Liberation, p.11.

22. Ibid.

23. K. Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 in R. Tucker ed. Marx-Engels Reader, p.86.

24. K. Marx, The German Ideology in Marx, Engels, On Literature and Art (Moscow: Progress, 1978), pp.130-131.

25. K. Marx, Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy in Tucker, p.4.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF ART

The nature of art refers to the question of what is the essential characteristic of art which distinguishes it from other forms of social consciousness, such as science, religion etc., and yet which also contains the traits common to all human creations. These are ultimately the traits of art's necessity.

i. Ernst Fischer

In his Necessity of Art Fischer does not explain the essential features of art. Here he is satisfied with the general claim that art is a form of social consciousness, for his main task, as he sees it, is to explain the role art plays throughout the history of the human collective, and to explain the way in which art's social function is reflected in the structure of art itself (the issue of content and form). Hence, he focuses on the different aspects of art's social role at different periods of history, rather than on a unifying feature of the phenomenon as a whole.

The question of the essence of art Fischer addresses in Art against Ideology. Here he speaks both as a man of practice, a political activist, and as an intellectual and a humanist. The widespread alienation of man and coexistence are his major concerns. Both in capitalism and in socialism - as it exists today, he believes, human beings feel the same emptiness and are unable

to adequately express themselves. This problem, coupled with the ideological and potentially physical clash between the two super powers, serves as a background for Fischer's analysis of the role of art vis-à-vis ideology. We must look for solutions with the help of art, not with that of ideology, he believes. Fischer's message is that we must and can revive artistic and intellectual forms which have been deadened by both capitalist and socialist ideologies and which, though they cannot overthrow governments, perhaps can contribute enough to mankind "for humanity to be able to withstand its own inventions".[1]

In order to make this call for the revival of art, Fischer finds it necessary, first, to explain what is essential in art, or what it is that has been lost, and, second, to explain the relationship of art and other forms of social consciousness, especially ideology.

Art. The major condition for the revival of art and culture is, for Fischer, the revival of imagination. From the following passage we see that the 'mythical image' is the essential in art:

> imagination is a way of cognition of the world. Cognition of what world? Of what is not, but could be .... It is not a question of abandoning the Logos — reason and science — but on the contrary of supplementing them by the imagination, by concrete vision and mythical image. Without imagination there is a world of facts, conditions and events, but no reality.[2]

In order to understand what Fischer means by saying that only logos and mythos combined make reality accessible, we must recall his thoughts on reality which we discussed in the previous chapter. There we saw that reality is a process,

becoming rather than being, by which he means that it is historical. Human reality is always historical; for that reason, if cognition is limited to a series of facts, or information (logos) without 'depth' being given to those facts, without our seeing them as a part of the human past, present and future, we are not knowing 'reality' in Fischer's sense of knowing 'reality'. The 'historical', that which gives 'depth' and meaning to facts, hence makes them 'real', is the mythos. The mythos is also the essential in art.

Fischer first explains what myth is and then why and how it is the essential feature of art.

Historically, myth originated between magic and religion. Its source is some shattering experience such as an earthquake, a flood, a volcanic eruption, a dream. Three elements are combined in a myth. Firstly, myth speaks of nature in grand images. For example, the function of many nature myths is to appease nature for the injuries done to it with tools and weapons. Thus, in certain Australian tribes trees brought down are addressed as sisters who are being married off.[3] The second feature of myth is that it tells the story of mankind. It suffices to recall that the myths of creation, the separation between light and dark, signify the birth of man, biologically and historically. Also, the Fall of the Great Mother, first associated with might, goodness and comfort, signifies that the division of labour between man and woman ceases to be a natural one, and becomes an enforced one. The Great Mother now becomes a witch and the principle of evil[4] (the Pandora myth). Finally,

the third component of myth is that nature and history serve as a parable of the life of man, of birth and growth, conflict and death. This, Fischer claims, is obvious once we realize that although all myths originate in an historical period, nevertheless all Prometheuses, Odysseuses, Abels and Cains, Antigones seem timeless, for in them reside fundamental recurring characters and situations. It is here worth noting that all three elements: the relationship between man and nature, the story of mankind, and man's social life (parable) appear also in art.

Historically myth is between magic and religion. Magic, for Fischer is a state in which man is one with community. This unity, he believes, is preserved in the mythical, for there man is still present both actively and passively. Thus in the myths about Olympians the divine is not situated in the beyond. It is when a myth becomes a dogma that religion establishes man's alienation from himself; in religion man is present only passively. Yet even in religion, Fischer claims, using as an example the myth of the Son of God, myth is the secularizer of the Divine.

All this, Fischer argues, points to the following: mythos represents historical matter, not as something irrevocably past, but as the present anticipating the future.[5] This is a crucial statement, for it shows that for Fischer mythos is the authentic, the real, because it is historical matter, which is to say that what is authentic is always a part of history. Further illustrations of this are, in Fischer's mind, the three words for "word" in Greek. One is epos which means the narrator's word, the other is logos or word as the fruit of reflection, and

the third is mythos or the thing in itself, "history". Fischer quotes Walter Otto for whom myth is: "the word as direct testimony of that which has been, is and will be, as self-revelation of being in the time-honoured sense which makes no distinction between word and being".[6]

For Fischer, therefore, the concept of myth signifies the thing in-itself: what is. Since reality is a process, what is must be historical matter itself. In view of the fact that reality is human reality, myth is a model of human life and human relationships at the core of all situations.

It is in this sense of myth as the model of human life that we find the explanation of its importance for art. In the work of art, says Fischer, this model takes the form of the structure of a situation, which is neither an individual case nor idealized reality, but merely a possibility which allows other possibilities to be conceived of.[7] Moreover, the main qualities of myth as a model are that (1) it is free from mystification or otherwordliness, (2) it is free from a moralizing intent, and (3) it brings order into the world.

Lack of mystification refers to the Greek word mythos in which there is no distinction between word and being. Myth is reality or the essential. What he means by freedom from moralizing Fischer illustrates with Machiavelli's The Prince. Machiavelli, he believes, did not idealize his 'model' but portrayed the prince with extraordinary realism yet in an aura of greatness. In this sense myth does not moralize, but is a suspended state between 'it is so' and 'it could be so'.[8] The ordering capacity

of myth goes back to the early myth — the desire to overcome chaos; in art, especially today, it expresses the desire for simplification. The myth's capacity to simplify, Fischer argues, reveals that today there are two sorts of myths in art. These are false myth and modern myth.

False myth, modern myth, and also anti-myth are the categories which he uses to explain the three types of art in existence today. False myth refers to the type of art which Fischer labels agitational propaganda; it is tendentious, party-minded, patterned neatly of black and white. False myth relates to the false-consciousness of ideology. This sort of art, Fischer says, belongs to the socialist world, specifically the Soviet Union. His main objection against party-mindedness is that it deprives art of even serving as a weapon in the class struggle, for art is effective only when it speaks for humanity i.e. for that which is above the interests of class and state, and not for an 'ideological front'.[9]

Modern myth applies to that art which is against 'prescribed' art. This type of art does not prescribe a point of view but allows other possibilities than that explicitly stated in the work. The modern myth, says Fischer, reveals the horror of apparently everyday things and people's self-assertion against them. By poetic, not agitational, simplification the modern myth is capable of revealing the invisible reality between an obscured and objectified world of established powers, authorities and institutions.[10] The characters Fischer associates with the modern myth are the surveyor K. in Kafka's Trial, the servant

Clov in Beckett's Endgame and Ivan Denisoyich in Solzhenitsyn's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.

Finally, anti-myth refers to art which insists upon precise and critical representation of the here-and-now, without the dimension of infinity or timelessness implied by the myth. Examples of such art Fischer finds in Balzac's later novels, and in the works of Stendhal and other novelists such as the Naturalists who were critical of their society. Fischer claims that novels such as Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina have nothing mythical about them. Yet he does notice that in Stendhal the mythical is present through the 'pure', unquenchable passion of Duchess Sanseverina and that in the end Naturalism retreated into symbolism and fairy tales. Hence, it appears that anti-myth is more in the attitude of the artist, like that of Flaubert, than in the work, for often in a work we find traces of myth, though these traces do not necessarily mean that the author intended them to be there.

Therefore, according to Fischer the essential in art is the mythical, significant both by its presence and by its absence. Because myth is the historical matter itself, what is, the presence of myth means that art is concerned with human reality or with man's social world — ultimately with what is real, human or historical (authentic) in that world. The absence of myth, strictly speaking, does not occur in the art, but in the attitude of the artist. This is to say that l'art pour l'art is in the intention of the artist, while the work itself always bears the mark of its human origin, hence of history.

Art and other forms of social consciousness. Since the aim of Fischer's book is to prove the need for the revival of art, and the importance of such a revival for the future of mankind, his main concern is to show the relationship between art and ideology, and the devastating consequence of that relationship for art. Consequently, Fischer does not analyze in any detail the relationship between art and other forms of social consciousness — scientific, political, religious and philosophical. The distinction that Fischer makes clear is that all forms of social consciousness other than ideology are cognitive. For his purposes, however, it is enough to show that art is a form of cognition, while ideology is not.

The idea that art is a form of cognition is implicit in Fischer's claim that mythos and logos put together are the modern myth. In this union the voice of the collective memory i.e., what is mythical in art, becomes the reader's emotional and intellectual awareness of his own self. Mythos needs logos, or imagination needs reason, claims Fischer, for imagination has always been a mediation between sensuality and reason, between the possible and the real, the past and the future. Hence "it reaches out beyond here-and-now, it complements our fragmentary existence, it can make life be felt as a single whole, it can temporarily replace the principium individuationis by a sense of unity with nature and mankind".[11] Since this unity of man with mankind (the whole man) is the ultimate end of art, both mythos in the sense of infinity and timelessness (myth of mankind), and logos or the intellectual and emotional grasp of

that infinity, are necessary to the fulfillment of art's purpose. Hence, it must follow that art ~~is a~~ form of cognition.

Ideology, however, according to Fischer is not a form of cognition. Since both art and ideology are part of the social superstructure, it is of some interest to look into Fischer's view of the relationship between what Marx called the material transformation of the economic conditions of production and the legal, political, religious, philosophic and aesthetic — in short ideological forms.

In his work Le Marxisme Veritable (1968) Fischer explains in the chapter on historical materialism the relationship between social being and social consciousness. His major claim is the following:

> l'être social est davantage que la somme de situations économiques; divers éléments de la conscience, qu'elle soit fausse, trouble ~~ou~~ juste, agissent sur elle; comme les hommes sont des êtres de conscience, il n'y a pas de limite fixe entre l'être social et la conscience des hommes.[12]

Fischer thus warns us that it is wrong to imagine a Marxist idea of society as a building, the foundations of which are economic relationships, while the levels constructed upon the foundation are the 'superstructure'. The process of constructing a building is quite different from an historical process. The superstructure of a society does not come into being after the economic basis. This is how he sees it:

> La production intellectuelle ne suit pas la production matérielle, elle naît en même temps qu'elle, en interaction constante. La "superstructure" que s'en dégage est un ensemble de prescriptions, d'interdits, de lois, d'institutions, de jugements et de préjugés qui correspondent à la structure économique de la société au degré de division de travail et, par cette division du travail à ceux qui sont toujours devenus la classe dominante. Les pensées de la classe dominante sont donc les pensées dominantes mais non les seules pensées d'une époque...
>
> Les pensées dominantes sont donc constamment contrariées par d'autres pensées rebelles, qu'elles soient vers le passé ou vers l'avenir, de telle sort que la lutte des classes se manifeste non seulement comme une lutte économique, mais aussi comme une lutte politique et intellectuelle.[13]

Fischer is thus, above all, against the over simplification of the relationship between material production and thinking, in the sense that the relationship is more complex than the claims about social consciousness being a mirror-reflection of social being frequently convey.

Of interest to us here is Fischer's distinction between the cognitive forms of art and science, in which what matters is truth, and that of ideology. One way of describing this distinction is to say that dominant ideas form ideology while other (rebelling) ideas which undermine the status quo form the rest of thinking. This however would be wrong, for not all dominant ideas (in politics, art, morals etc.) can be claimed wrong, nor can all 'rebelling' ideas (for example those of the Red Brigades) be claimed true. Something different is in question here.

In Art against Ideology Fischer explains that ideology has to do primarily with power, and not with truth. He also offers Leszek Kolakowski's definition with which he agrees:

> We understand by ideology the sum of ideas which serves a social group (a class, but not exclusively) for the organization of the values which express the mystified consciousness of that group and its activity....Ideology therefore is not 'pure' theory, and cannot be this, because knowledge of reality per se cannot impel anyone to action; ideology contains evaluative and descriptive judgements, which either are already the mystified expression of belief in certain values or which subordinate their content to strengthening such belief and such values.[14]

From this it can be deduced that for Fischer ideology is not cognitive because it is concerned not with what is the case, but with what is good for a group to be the case. Moreover, it fixes ideas thus making impossible the combat between ideas which tests them against one another — this being the characteristic of critical knowing. Other forms of social consciousness, among which is art relate to each other in the sense that each, in its own way, tries to pierce the smoke-screen of ideology. Each is influenced by dominant values and prejudices, yet each gropes for the truth. The following paragraph explains how Fischer sees the artists' task:

> The artist is not autonomous, not untouched by the dominant ideas, prejudices, value concepts — the ideology — of his time. His time moves, forms, develops him: but as <u>an artist</u> he does not experience that time through the <u>filter</u> of an ideology, i.e. not in falsified or distorted form, but is able to perceive the latent reality so that it grips him not as <u>a state</u> but as <u>a process</u>. His sensibility breaks through the crust of conditioning, of that which is accepted as 'normal' and sanctioned by an unchallengable 'order'; in 'being-thus' he senses the possibility of 'being-otherwise', in the daily occurrence he discovers the exceptional, in the inconspicuous detail he finds access to the essential, to the hitherto obscured connection.[15]

This "exceptional", this "essential", this "hitherto obscured" is the mythos which with logos and epos create art. Here all the pieces of the puzzle seem to fit together. Fischer's first claim is that without imagination, and implicitly without art, there is a world of facts and events, but no reality. What in art reveals the real world behind the apparent one is the mythos which represents history not as something irrevocably past but as the present anticipating the future (the 'could be') — for mythos is a model of human life (birth, growth, death) and human relationships (comfort and warmth, split and conflict) which is at the core of all situations. Mythos is joined by logos, for logos is necessary for one's intellectual grasp of reality presented by a work of art. Fischer would certainly agree if we added that in a work of art mythos would have to do with the content — what is conveyed, while logos and of course epos (the reproduction) would have more to do with the form — how it is conveyed.

Furthermore, if we view art only as a phenomenon per se its nature can also be expressed through the categories of mythos and logos. Thus Fischer's division of art into false myth, modern myth and anti-myth. If we view art as a form of social consciousness, then mythos and logos break through the screen of surrogate reality (the latter is exemplified in kitsch and worse trash[16] in the sense that mythos shows what 'is', the thing in itself, the history, while logos allows the grasp of that 'is' in one's context. Thus what makes Hamlet significant is his condition humaine — the mythos — that

'bursts through the confines of the historically conditioned here and now'. All this is directed against ideology — ideology implying the disjointed and distorted reality which Fischer understands in the sense of false consciousness i.e., not as a cognition of the world but as a sum of values that serve the interests of a particular group. The relationship of art with other forms of consciousness is not clearly stated, but it is understood that they all act towards the demystification of ideology and ultimately towards the end of all ideology — the ever recurring dream of the whole man.

ii. Georg Lukacs and Avner Zis

The underlying statement in both Lukacs and Zis is the same as the one in Fischer: art is primarily a socio-historical phenomenon. Lukacs and Zis also basically agree with one another, although they discuss their views in different frameworks. The disagreement that exists between them concerns the ideological in art. Neither of them, however, would agree with Fischer that ideally there is no place for the ideological in art, if art is to yield a genuine understanding of the world.

In his book, Osobenost Estetskog (The Specific Nature of the Aesthetic), Lukacs sets out to inquire into what specifically distinguishes art from other forms of reproduction of reality, such as science. Here we have to remind ourselves of his ideas that (1) all human activities reflect the same objective reality, and (2) that human activity, art included, stems from and returns into everyday behaviour. Both claims should at this point be explained in more definite terms.

By saying that science, art, everyday thought, are all reflections of the same reality Lukacs implies that the same categories operate everywhere in reality. For, as he says, unlike subjective idealism which sees categories as a mysterious product of a subject, dialectical materialism sees them as constant, universal forms of objective reality itself. Since categories give form to the content of thought, the reflections of reality, such as science, art, etc., can be understood only if they have in them these same categories. The objective existence of dialectical categories, Lukacs claims, shows itself in that they can be infinitely used for understanding reality, yet there can be no awareness of them being categories.[17] This is to say that categories are an expression of an ontological fact that reality is unified (unity of differences and contradictions) and continuous (unity of continuity and discontinuity). Hence, even if we are not aware of the categories, we experience reality as unified and as developing. The consequence of this is that everyday thought, science, and art reflect the same content (everyday life), and that since the same categories operate in all of them there is a methodological basis for a unified and dialectical understanding of the whole man in his actions and reactions to the external world.[18]

Lukacs' idea of everyday life, as both the originator and the recepient of various forms of reflections and reproductions of reality, is better understood in relation to his notion of spontaneous materialism. The main characteristic of everyday behaviour, according to Lukacs, is that in it the subject is

always aware that it stands against the material external world — a world independent of human consciousness. This materialism, however, is purely spontaneous in the sense that it is directed only towards the present objects of practice, and for that reason has a limited character. Its strength is in that no idealist, or even solipsistic, view of the world can stop the functioning of this spontaneous materialism in everyday life (One will never behave in accordance with Esse est percipi when crossing the street). Its weakness is in that it has almost no consequence as a view of the world, for it can coexist in the subject's mind with idealist, religious or even superstitious views.[19] For that reason only if our view of the world is materialistic, does the spontaneous materialism of the everyday life acquire significance in the sense that we realize the absence of any 'higher' reality other than the material world we encounter every day. Only then are we able to understand that everything (all thought) starts from the spontaneous materialism of everyday behaviour and develops into more complex and more precise forms of understanding reality.

The process of transformation from everyday life to science and art represents a transition from a less organized, less precise activity, to an organized form of working behaviour. This corresponds to the transition from what Lukacs calls the 'entire man' (der ganze Mensch) — man as he belongs to the everyday, geared towards reality with the whole surface of his existence, to 'man's entirety' (Menschen ganz) — man as he expresses himself in one form of objectification of reality

(art, science) by means of the totality of his thoughts and feelings.[20] The idea of the transition from the 'entire man' to 'man's entirety' is a key idea in the understanding of the essence of art. The following paragraph from Agnes Heller's essay "Lukacs' Aesthetics" is a brilliant explanation of this transition:

> Everyday existence is heterogeneous: the "entire man" is no other than man living that heterogeneous life, taking part in it with his whole surface (where both "whole" and "surface" have equal emphasis); his most diverse human potentials are at work in that world, but pragmatically so. He is a particular being, insofar as he is unique and non-repeatable, insofar as he starts out from himself in his contemplation and manipulation of reality; at the same time, he is a being on the level of the human species (Gattungswessen) insofar as he speaks, works, and the like — though not consciously. Whenever man raises himself in self-objectification (in the most classical form and meaning of the word reification) consciously to the level of the human species, the "entire man" becomes "man's entirety". In such moments all of his human powers are concentrated on the execution of a single task (and here, again, "all" and "single" receive equal emphasis). At such time he "suspends" the heterogeneity of the world, and also of his own tasks; the one task "absorbs", raising to itself, all his abilities: it makes them homogeneous. In the process of their becoming homogeneous, the particular contents are always constituted by the morals, the customs, the "social demand" of the society or the communities that more or less carry and develop further the human essence of the given age. Such an approach is not the prerogative of the aesthetic. We can witness a similar heightening in scientific activity and also...in significant moral decisions and political actions....achievement of homogeneity is the only possible means of rising to the level of the species.[21]

The point, then, is that the creative process is a process in which the artist raises himself from the level of a particular being to the level of the species. The level of the species is the level of objectivity. However, an art work is possible

only if the artist concentrates all his subjectivity in the task of creation. Subjectivity does not mean the particular individual but the "concentration of all that there is of the substance of the human species in that subject".[22] The creative process can also be defined as a process in which the content, the human or social essence as it is perceived in the given age, is embodied in the form.

Once the creative process is over the art work makes its return to everyday life. What happens then is that the form is translated back into the content by means of the evokative power of the work of art. Through form, then, the content—the history of mankind, the essence of man, what Fischer calls the collective memory or mythos, return to life.

In light of this we can understand why Lukacs insists that

> the essence of artworks is in that there is a mutal relationship between what is objective and what is subjective. That which in every other field of life would be philosophical idealism ie. the fact that no object can exist without a subject — is in the aesthetic the essential trait of its specificity.[23]

This is to say that art is wholly human: its object is the human species which the subject (the artist) is able to grasp by virtue of concentrating his own humanity into the creative process. Art, in other words, exists not only subjectively (for the artist) but also objectively only in the process in which it is created by man. This might be clearer if we notice that the object of science, even when it is comprehended by scientists i.e. made into a scientific object, is the same as the yet un-comprehended object of nature. The being in itself of an object in nature is the same as the being in itself of the scientific

object, only the latter through the subject (the scientist) also becomes being for us.[24] With art, on the other hand, because the artist invests his own humanity into making an object, we can all directly perceive this humanity, without the artist as a mediator.

The major implications of such an understanding of the essence of art are that (1) the aesthetic is something that developed historically - given the historicity of subject-object relationship (the sense) and that (2) the artists' making of art is simultaneous with their making a judgment - for the subject-object relationship is not only indissociable but also historical i.e., tied to values of a certain period in a certain society.

The first point refers primarily to Marx's claim that the development of our five senses is the result of all world history until the present. From this Lukacs argues that the origin of art, its production and also reception can be dealt with only within the world history of the five senses.[25] Since the development of our senses, their mutual relationship and also their specialization through the division of work, is an historical process — the result of which was man's gradual mastering of both the inner world and the environment; the essence of art can be understood in the context of man's mastery of his environment and in the formative influence that environment had on him. That is, we cannot assume as the idealist that the state of mind we refer to as the aesthetic has always existed, and hence that particular arts at any moment in history can be deduced from 'the essence' of man. In connection

with this Lukacs mentions that even Hegel, for whom the historical process is central implicitly assumes all categories of the developed art forms in his symbolic stage.. The subsequent development of art is in fact no more than these categories becoming explicit.[26]

Only the discovery that work is the instrument that created man can bring about the correct understanding of man's activities. Work, in other words, includes history. For if we recall from the first chapter: labour is man's life activity and the history of labour is the history of man. This discovery of work thus brings about an historical concept of man, hence an historical concept of the aesthetic. In any inquiry, Lukacs wants to say, this historicity must be our starting point.

The correct approach to art is expressed in the second implication of Lukacs' definition of the essence of art. By saying that art is simultaneously a reproduction and a judgment Lukacs claims that aesthetic reflection cannot be a simple reproduction of the immediately given. What is specific or essential about the aesthetic reflection of reality is that it always represents humanity in the form of individuals. That is, the individuals in art, on the one hand, have sense-immediateness different from immediateness of everyday life, and on the other hand without losing their immediateness also represent types of human beings.[27] From this it follows that the aesthetic reproduction of reality is not limited to the choice of the essential in phenomena (this is science) but that in the very act of reproducting reality - as inseparable from it - is the moment

of a positive or negative judgment of the aesthetically reflected object. Lukacs, however, insists that this is not a subjective ingredient in the objective reproduction of reality. All other kinds of reproductions of reality embody subject-object dualism. Only in art does the social in its relation to the subject (the artist) involve an inseparable simultaneousness of reproduction and of taking a stand, of objectivity and commitment. "The simultaneous existence of both of these moments", Lukacs says, "is the unrevokable historicity of every work of art".[28]

In light of Lukacs' concept of subjectivity as 'all that there is of human species in a subject' the simultaneousness of objectivity and commitment is easy to understand, for the 'human subject' is socially conditioned, thus represents the essential historicity of human essence.

The major difference between science and art now becomes clear. The claim that an object of art cannot exist without a subject and that the object of science exists without a subject, coupled with what was said above, makes it clear that science fixes the factual state while art immortalizes (this word is deliberately used because of art's anthropomorphic character) a moment in the historical development of the human race. In other words, in science only the activity involved is subject to social development; in art both the activity and the objects of that activity are products of social development.

All Lukacs' ideas presented here can be put under the following three claims. The first is that art is a form of work or labour. Lukacs asserts this when he insists that the

development of art and science is essentially the development of work; and when he discusses the difference between arbitrary activity of everyday life (the entire man) and the precise, highly organized activity in art and science (man's entirety). The second claim is that art is historical. This follows from the fact that man's interaction with the world depends on his senses which developed through time. Hence the interaction we label art also developed through time. The third claim is that art is social, which implies that it represents a specific sort of subject-object relationship. And this is where the specificity of art appears — it is in that the object of art is a result of social development, just like the activity involved in making an art work. Art's essence is wholly anthropomorphic; and it is important to note that the close intertwining of the subjective and the objective does not destroy the objectivity of art work. On the contrary, it creates its specificity.

These three claims are in no way contradicted by what Zis says on the subject of the nature of art, although he is more precise in his qualification of art as a social product. Zis agrees that art represents a specific form of labour, although he warns us against the extreme of this view which reduces art to 'making of things' and thus ignores its "cognitive, ideological and aesthetic essence".[29] Art, of course, is also historical and this historicity is for Zis a starting point in any discussion of art, and for him, just as for Lukacs, it is in the social nature of art that its true essence lies.

As in any other form of social consciousness, in art there are, Zis claims, two interrelated tendencies: the cognitive

process shaped by the accumulation of knowledge about nature and society, and the ideological process shaped by the interests of various classes. Thus, he says "Art is both artistic cognition and ideology".[30] By artistic cognition he means the aesthetic element which is always, although in different degrees (depending on different art forms) combined with the cognitive element. The link between the cognitive and the ideological element is the idea that in class society art is a vehicle of ideology, hence the knowledge art gives us is always knowledge from the point of view of a particular class. The importance of approaching art as a vehicle of ideology is justified by the following:

> The definition of the social essence of art must not only ascertain the subject of reflection and its methods (the epistemological aspect), but also pinpoint the role and place of art in social life, and the content of the social needs and interests relating to art's very existence and course of development, that is the social and class evaluation of art (the sociological aspect). Analyzing the nature of art in its sociological aspect and approaching art as the vehicle of a specific ideology substantially complement the definition of the essence of art in its epistemological aspect as reflection of social being via substantiation of the active role of the agent of reflection in the process of artistic creativity.[31]

Zis' basic assumption is that in all forms of social consciousness there is an organic unity of knowledge and evaluation.[32] Hence art, in reproducing reality, combines the objective (artistic cognition) and the evaluative (ideological). Further, what is specific about art is that it depicts reality as <u>human</u> reality. Thus Zis says that man constitutes the main, all important subject of reflection in art irrespective of what the work of art may depict.[33] As such art exerts an influence on the formation of man's aesthetic sense - by teaching him to

apprehend the beauty intrinsic to the phenomena of life. Moreover, the importance of art surpasses that of all other forms of social consciousness when it comes to enhancing man's ability to attain an integral and concrete awareness of the essence of phenomena from the real world.[34]

The ideological element is the artist's evaluation or judgment of the phenomena depicted. In the class-society the artist will depict phenomena in the light of the interests of his class. In the socialist society, the artist will start from a socialist ideology, which for Zis means that he thus "gleans his aesthetic ideals from the world around him and correlates these with reality, which means that his creative method will of necessity be realist".[35] In both cases the historical and class elements cannot in any way be separated from the universal human elements involved in a work of art. If they could art would amount to a mechanical repetition of real phenomena of life. With this Zis wants to say two things. First, that just as the human-cognitive element is essential to art so is the ideological-evaluative. Second, that social consciousness is not merely the ideas belonging to a specific time, but that it also involves certain 'eternal' elements which, as he says, 'shape the continuity of human culture'.[36]

Therefore, what Zis tells us is that at the essence of art is the human, the anthropomorphic. It is in the object of art and in the evaluation; the timeless combined with the timely in an inseparable union. Lukacs seems to be saying something very similar with his explanation of the centrality of the relationship between the individual and the type, of the subjective and

the objective. He does not, however, talk of the subjective as the ideological, but as a positive or negative judgment. What this positive or negative judgment means might be explained by the following words from his essay "Marx and the problem of ideological decay" (1938):

> Inasmuch as major realists, whatever their world outlook, and whatever material they may use, portray the real dialectic of illusion and genuine existence in the human condition, inasmuch as they expose the illusion as illusion by the portrayal of actual existence, they come spontaneously into conflict with the capitalist system and with the ideology of its era of decay.[37] (emphasis mine)

What Lukacs says here is that as long as the artist subscribes to the method of realism his ideology or world outlook is unimportant. This is, moreover, supported by the claims he makes about Zdhanov's type of socialist realism in his paper "Solzhenitsyn and the New Realism" (1949). What he criticizes is not the ideological in art but the way realism is used. Such realism is "a crude falsification of contemporary life".[38] Ultimately, of course, it was the ideology that was at fault in Zdhanov's time, but the breach in this ideology is not accomplished by a new outlook, but by the 'healthy' sort of realism we find in Solzhenitsyn's Ivan Denisovich. It is in relation to this that one author writes: "In Lukacs' programme for realism art fills the gap left vacant by the collapse of his confidence in the proletariat".[39]

In addition to this, Marxism for Lukacs is "the scientific conviction that the Marxist dialectic is the right method of investigation".[40] Hence, according to Lukacs, Marxism is a science, rather than an ideology, although genuine socialist

ideology is directly tied to Marxism. Thus in the paper on Solzhenitsyn Lukacs says that the demystification of the Stalinist era (i.e. Stalinist socialism) is simultaneous with the regeneration of Marxism.

In art, therefore, ideology is present as a world outlook of the artist. Ideology, however, does not distort reality when the correct sort of realism is used; unless ideology is superimposed on the method itself as in the case of Zdhanov's socialist realism.

Zis would only partially disagree with Lukacs. For him, as well, realism is the only correct method. However, true realism <u>today</u> is only one based on socialist, hence Marxist, ideology. I emphasize the word today because he would probably agree with Lukacs that the realist art of the past was more or less a true expression of the time, whatever the artist's ideology. How else can we understand his constant references to Cervantes, Balzac, Tolstoy, Dostoyevski? Realist art today must be founded on a progressive attitude leading towards a socialist way of thinking. Thus most 'critical' works in the capitalist societies today Zis labels as poor art, for though it depicts man's life in an inhumane world, such art turns its back on social analysis and ignores history. Its message is 'the world is terrible, but cannot be otherwise'.[41] In order to show how it can be otherwise — how man can overcome alienation — the artist must have a progressive, socialist way of thinking.

On the question of 'New Realism' Zis would certainly disagree. In his survey of the development of Socialist Realism

in the U.S.S.R. he writes about the 'important achievements of the aestheticians of the thirties'[42], and he also does not note any significant change in Socialist Realism after Stalin's death. Solzhenitsyn is never mentioned.

Hence, the difference between Lukacs' and Zis' positions is in the role of the ideological in art. For Zis the ideological element is intrinsic to art, and its role is positive if that ideology is progressive. Lukacs never denies the ideological ingredient in art, but ideology does not seem to have the same significance as it does for Zis. Important to art is the method of realism. Thus ideology becomes destructive to art only when it prescribes or defines the method of the artist. For Lukacs art is much more and much deeper than the ideological, and even if the ideology is false 'good' art always shows reality as it is. This is so because he puts more emphasis on the human in the subject, while Zis stresses the 'socially conditioned' aspect of the subject. For Lukacs the 'human' element is historical, but not ideological. For Zis, on the other hand, the 'socially conditioned' is both historical and ideological.

Concerning the ideological element in art Lukacs' position is somewhere between Fischer's total rejection of such an element and Zis' insistence on the necessity of such an element. However, on the specific question of the essence of art Lukacs would oppose Fischer together with Zis. The primary indicator of this is Lukacs' and Zis' rejection of the anti-realist method, a method that is implied by Fischer's idea of the mythical as essential in art.

By claiming that the mythical is the essential in art, Fischer opens the door to the world of the subconscious and the fantastic. In Art against Ideology he compares Beckett's Endgame and Solzhenitsyn's Ivan Denisovich, where he says:

> The writer's task /is/ to show that nothing is in order, that indifference and dehumanization have taken over in this iron age, that at the back of convention and hypocrisy there is a very different kind of reality crouching before a leap into nothingness. Often this task is better achieved by apparent exaggeration, by concentrated images and shock, than by traditional realism.[43]

With this he points at Beckett's success in representing the dehumanized world through exaggeration — e.g. Hamm houses his parents, whose legs have been crushed in a car accident, in rubbish bins; thus implying that anti-realism is as valid a method as realism, sometimes even better equipped to fulfill the task.

According to Lukacs and Zis, on the other hand, the mythical cannot represent history. Mythical expresses the abstract subjectivity of man. Only the method of realism can achieve, in Lukacs' words, "a balance between the surface density of appearances (photographic naturalism) and the abstract subjectivity of man as portrayed in expressionist literature and its devices of allegory, myth and symbolism."[44]

The belief in the mythical as essential in art appears to be incompatible with the rejection of anti-realism. Marxist belief in realism originates in the notion that the tenets of historical materialism can only be seen clearly in realism, because the latter embodies the tendencies of the time and its crucial issues in characters and their actions. In realism,

history, in a sense, directly enters into art. The idea of the mythical, on the other hand, puts the emphasis on the eternal in man, the essential in man that is always there, irrespective of the age in which the art is made. Yet both parties agree that art is essentially a socio-historical phenomenon. Do we have here a contradiction on Fischer's part?

No, for the eternal element is also mentioned in Zis and all that it refers to is the objectively human, or to use Lukacs' term the anthropomorphic in art. In fact, perhaps Fischer can accept all methods of art as genuine because for him historical materialism appears in art in a more sophisticated, more complex form. This, however, does not imply that Lukacs and Zis are crudely applying Marxism to art. It might be the case that Fischer gives us a sharper picture of the historical in art (especially in Necessity of Art) because of his disregard of the evaluative element. Perhaps he believes that art should be primarily a source of knowledge; a tool for mastering the world similar to science. This would mean disregarding something intrinsic to the type of cognition involved in art - value - which would put in doubt Fischer's idea of the necessity of art. Namely, it is very implausible that art is necessary exclusively because of its cognitive value. It seems more plausible that its necessity lies in its being an aesthetic expression of our human essence in its historical development — implying the development of our knowledge and our values.

iii. Summary

In Marxist aesthetics what is essential about art is its humanness – the fact that it is wholly a human product. It is about man and it is made by him. More precisely, the work of art is anthropomorphic because it reflects the structure of reality, thus expressing the totality of the relationship of man, nature and society in a given historical period. Concerning the means of bringing about this totality there is a disagreement: for Lukacs and Zis the only appropriate means is realism, for Fischer it is the goal of de-reifying reality that is important, not any method in particular. The ideological in art has also been disputed: for Zis the ideological is intrinsic to art, for Fischer it has no place in art, while for Lukacs it is no more than an artist's Weltanschauung to be revealed by the critic.[45] Also, the essential in art is, in Marxist aesthetics, explained as an inseparable union of the objective and subjective, knowledge and evaluation, which suggests that if art is cognitive as all of our three thinkers seem to think, the knowledge involved is of a particular sort. It should become clearer what sort of knowledge it is once we know what sort of 'knowing' it is made for.

At this point it is important to understand that the necessity of art implied in the question of the nature of art is tied to the principle that complements the Marxist claim that social being (the socio-economic conditions at the time) determines social consciousness, which underlies the content-form explanation. The principle in question is the claim that social consciousness cannot fully be explained by the

socio-economic conditions. The latter underlies the explanation of the specificity of art as presented by Fischer, Lukacs and Zis. It has been partly arrived at through the realization that the development of art does not correspond to the development of the modes of production and the corresponding social relations. In the following, often quoted passage, Marx acknowledges this puzzle:

> As regards art, it is well known that some of its peaks by no means correspond to the general development of society; nor do they therefore to the material substructure, the skeleton as it were of its organization. For example the Greeks compared with modern (nations), or else Shakespeare. It is even acknowledged that certain branches of art, e.g. the epos, can no longer be produced in their epoch making classic form after artistic practice as such has begun; in other words that certain important creations within the compass of art are only possible at an early stage in the development of art. If this is the case with regard to different branches of art within the sphere of art itself, it is not so remarkable that this should also be the case with regard to the entire sphere of art and its relation to the general development of society. The difficulty lies only in the general formulation of these contradictions. As soon as they are reduced to specific questions they are already explained.
>
> Let us take, for example, the relation of Greek art, and that of Shakespeare, to the present time. We know that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also its basis. Is the conception of nature and of social relations which underlies Greek imagination and therefore Greek (art) possible when there are self-acting mules, railways, locomotives and electric telegraphs? What is a Vulcan compared with Roberts and Co., Jupiter compared with the lightning conductor, and Hermes compared with Crédit mobilier? All mythology subdues, controls and fashions the forces of nature in the imagination and through imagination; it disappears therefore when real control over these forces is established. What becomes of Fama side by side with Printing House Square? Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, in other words that natural and social phenomena are already assimilated in an unintentionally artistic manner by the imagination of the people...

> Regarded from another aspect: is Achilles possible when powder and shot have been invented? And is the Iliad possible at all when the printing press and even printing machines? Is it not inevitable that with the emergence of the press bar, the singing and the telling and the muse cease, that is the conditions necessary for epic poetry disappear?[46]

According to Marx, then, the relationship between the development of productive forces and the development of arts is such that the lower the level of the productive forces the greater the possibility for the development of the arts. An illustration of this is Greek art. Because at the time the level of productive was low mythological imagination dominated thinking — 'natural and social phenomena were already assimilated in an unintentionally artistic manner by the imagination of the people'. This imaginative reality was the subject of Greek art. It is thus unlikely that the same epic form would be possible where modern science and technology have rationally mastered these previously mythologically understood things. As part of the same development of productive forces the conditions of invention and transmission of epic poetry disappeared with the invention of the printing press. The understanding of the discrepancy ~~between~~ the flowering of art and the development of society, hence, poses no problems for Marx since it has been noted that even within art itself a particular form (e.g. epic) achieves its highest development at an early stage of the development of art as a whole.

In order to understand, however, why art is more than the sum of the socio-economic conditions at the time, thus why its development is 'unequal' we should look into the effects of the

development of the forces of production on man's relationship with nature (i.e., labor) and on his relationship with his fellow man (society), for it is in these relationships that art originates. In the following two excerpts Marx addresses this issue:

(1) In earlier stages of development the single individual seems to be developed more fully, because he has not yet worked out his relationships in their fulness, or erected them as independent social powers and relations opposite himself. It is as ridiculous to yearn for a return to that original fulness as it is to believe that with this complete emptiness history has come to a standstill.[47]

(2) ...the old view in which the human being appears as the aim of production, regardless of his limited national, religious, political character, seems to be very lofty when contrasted to the modern world, where production appears as the aim of mankind and wealth as the aim of production. In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historical development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? In bourgeois economics — and in the epoch of production to which it corresponds — this complete working-out of the human content appears as complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as a complete alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end. This is why the childish world of antiquity appears on one side as loftier. On the other side, it really is loftier in all matters where closed shapes, forms and given limits are sought for. It is satisfaction from a limited standpoint; while the modern gives no satisfaction; or where it appears satisfied with itself, it is vulgar.[48]

From this it is clear that the major effect of the historical development of productive forces is alienation — i.e., gradual alienation throughout history of man from himself and from other men. In antiquity the individual was fuller because the productive forces had not developed to the point where the division of labour had brought about the alienation of man from his own labour, and consequently from other men. Estranged labour or the phenomenon that the product of labour is alien to the labourer, that it confronts him as an alien power; that it estranges, as Marx writes "man's own body from him, as it does external nature and his spiritual essence, his human being".[49] It is, in other words, man's essential humanity, his creative powers, that are vested in the production of an object, and if that object is estranged from him, then his human essence is estranged from him. An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from his labour, his life-activity, is that he is estranged from other men, for what applies to this relation to this work, applies to his relation to himself and applies to his relation to other men.[50] What arises out of man's relationship with other men, moreover, takes the form of fetishes, such as money. As for human aspirations towards what would be considered best in man, these appear as endowed with life independently of man (God) and as such entering into relationships with man. Therefore, the ultimate result of estrangement is that man is being drained of all human content. Hence, the emptiness Marx is talking about is alienation, while the fulness is the opposite: a state in which men feels that the world is his human world.

In connection with the earlier excerpt, about Greek art, it can be concluded that the unequal development of art is due to the rise of alienation — an effect of the historical development of productive forces (division of labour etc.), and that the less human the world appears to man the less possibility there is of producing art.

Art, however, is never alien to man; it always seeks to overcome the social alienation imposed by economic conditions. For, as Fischer, Lukacs and Zis point out, the specificity of art is that it is wholly a human product; it is made by man and it is about man. Art work can thus never appear alien to its creator, in it he always asserts his humanity, his creative powers to master reality and make it his work. The art object, then, could be defined as an object that cannot be alienated from the artist because its subject is always human life; anthropomorphism is the essence of art, in the object of art and in the evaluation.

Thus, the fact that art is an embodiment of man's humanity makes an art work into an object that can neither be estranged from its creator nor from the public. People, that is, are at all times aware that an art work has been made by man, for man. This explains why art can have a de-reifying effect: it always remains a human product and is thus able to represent the world as a human world. It also explains the notion that there are universal human elements in all art and it is for that reason that we can understand and take pleasure in the art of different ages. Or, as Zis puts it, social consciousness is not merely the ideas belonging to a specific time, but it also

involves certain 'eternal' elements. Since the ideas belonging to a specific time can presumably be adequately explained by their relation to the socio-economic conditions of the time, we here encounter our initial statement that underlying the specificity of art is the fact that art cannot fully be explained by the socio-economic conditions of the time. That is, the human element is also the eternal element, the element that makes art transcend the time of its birth, the element that enables it to withstand the increasing estrangement of all human creations.

The necessity of art is more emphatically present in its essence. For throughout history, that is, the development of productive forces and the increase of alienation, art has remained for man an essentially human product that represents his human condition. Even when the artist's main subject was Christ the awareness that this is his vision of Christ in his relation to other men was always present. The power of art, moreover, is always in direct relationship to the degree to which the human element is preserved in society. The more human the society, the better the art; for the more human the society the more clearly the artist is able to see the universal human traits from his own socio-historical perspective.

The necessity of art is expressed in that no matter how great the alienation of man, the human in him (his creative potentials) will drive him to find some universal human traits in the condition of his culture. An embodiment of this search is art. Hence, for example, much of the art in capitalism depicts man as alienated. Alienation is seen as a universal trait of humanity (e.g. Kafka).

The necessity of art is ultimately in the very fact of being human, of being a creative, thinking being. For that reason all our creations other than art can appear to us as powers alien to us. Only art always remains for us tied to our productive activity, our world, our humanity. This is what Fischer means when he says: "Not until humanity itself dies will art die".[51]

NOTES

1. E. Fischer, Art against Ideology, p.218.
2. Ibid., p.165.
3. Ibid., p.188.
4. Ibid., p.190.
5. Ibid., p.194.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p.200.
8. Ibid., p.183.
9. Ibid., p.176.
10. Ibid., p.184.
11. Ibid., p.164.
12. E. Fischer, Le marxisme Veritable (Paris: Editions Buchet, 1972), p.97.
13. Ibid., p.96.
14. E. Fischer, Art against Ideology, p.44.
15. Ibid., p.57.
16. Ibid., p.170.

17. Derd Lukac, Osobenost Estetskog (Beograd, Yugoslavia: Nolit, 1980), p.50. In English Georg Lukacs, The Specific Nature of the Aesthetic. Translations from this text are mine.

18. Ibid., p.58.

19. Ibid., p.43.

20. Ibid., p.66.

21. Agnes Heller, "Lukacs's Aesthetics", New Hungarian Quarterly vol.7, no.24, (1966), p.85.

22. Ibid., p.87.

23. D. Lukac, Osobenost Estetskog, p.92.

24. Ibid., p.91.

25. Ibid., p.93.

26. Ibid., p.87.

27. Ibid., p.110.

28. Ibid.

29. A. Zis, Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics, p.31.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p.59.

32. On p. 60 Zis notes that Lenin qualified Marxism as a unity of sober objectivity and revolutionary passion.

33. Ibid., p.44.

34. Ibid., p.62.

35. Ibid., p.61.

36. Ibid., p.261.

37. G. Lukacs, "Marx and the Problem of Ideological Decay" in R. Livingston ed. Essays on Realism (Boston: MIT Press, 1981), p.50.

38. G. Lukacs, "Solzhenitsyn and the New Realism" in E. San Juan ed. Marxism and Human Liberation, Essays on History, Culture and Revolution by Georg Lukacs, p.203.

39. R. Livingstone, "Introduction" in R. Livingstone ed. Essays on Realism, p.11.

40. G. Lukacs, "What is Orthodox Marxism" in E. San Juan ed. Marxism and Human Liberation, p.21.

41. A. Zis, p.38.

42. Ibid., p.268.

43. E. Fischer, Art against Ideology, p.17.

44. E. San Juan, "Introduction" in E. San Juan ed. Marxism and Human Liberation, p.xvi.

45. Ibid., p.xvii.

46. K. Marx, draft Introduction to Critique of Political Economy quoted in Cliff Slaughter, Marxism, Ideology and Literature (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), pp.58-60.

47. K. Marx, Grundisse quoted in Marxism, Ideology and Literature, p.70.

48. Ibid., quoted in Marxism, Ideology and Literature, p.68.

49. K. Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 in R. Tucker ed. Marx-Engels Reader, p.77.

50. Ibid.

51. E. Fischer, Necessity of Art, p.225.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUNCTION OF ART

The issue of the function of art is perhaps the most important in Marxist aesthetics, for in this issue the implicit conviction in Marxism that art is necessary, that it matters because of its social, educational and formative force, becomes most explicit. Also, the treatment of this topic shows clearly that Marxists treat any social phenomenon in an historical way. Just as the state of mind we refer to as aesthetic has not always existed (as Lukacs noted earlier) so what we see as the role of art today has not always been its role. The historicity of art is thus evident in the different roles of art, its necessity in that art has always had a function in society. But Marxists are not satisfied only with showing us that art played a role, though of varying importance, in different historical periods, they also want to show that there exist certain permanent traits in the function of art — traits which are tied to its necessity. Finally, the issue of the function of art is truly a conclusion of the issues discussed in the first three chapters, for once we know what art is, it is necessary to ask: "But why art?"

i. Ernst Fischer

It is in his Necessity of Art that Fischer discusses art's function, especially its function throughout history. In Art against Ideology he is more concerned with showing how it is ideology which art must conquer in order to fulfill its function, especially with the position of art today, both in capitalism and in socialism.

The following paragraph from Necessity of Art introduces us into the historicity of art's function:

> We may conclude from a constantly growing wealth of evidence that art in its origin was magic, a magic aid towards mastering a real but unexplored world. Religion, science, and art were combined in a latent form — germinally as it were — in magic. This magic role of art has progressively given way to the role of illuminating social relationships of enlightening men in societies becoming opaque, of helping men to recognize and change social reality. A highly complex society with its multiple relationships and social contradictions can no longer be represented in the manner of a myth. In such a society which demands literal recognition and all-embracing consciousness, there is bound to be an overwhelming need to break through the rigid forms of earlier ages where the magic element still operated and to arrive at more open forms — of freedom, say, of the novel. Either of the two elements of art may predominate at a particular time depending on the stage of society reached - sometimes the magically suggestive, at other times the rational and enlightening....But whether art soothes or awakens, casts shadows or brings light, it is never merely a clinical description of reality. Its function is always to move the whole man, to enable the 'I' to identify itself with another's life, to make its own what it is not and yet is capable of being.[1]

The original function of art, then, exemplified by magic changed with the increasing division of labour, hence with the appearance of class society. At the beginning of the first

chapter we saw how Fischer traces this development from the magician, whose role is that of artist, priest, scientist, physician and philosopher, to the separation of roles, each of which now represents different forms of activity. The artist's share, we saw, was to express through artistic means (word, gesture, voice etc.) the dominant social experience shared by many members of the collective. The dominant social experiences as the above quote makes clear, are the social relationships and contradictions in which men find themselves at a particular moment and which are the cause of their alienation. The role of art is, then, to illuminate social relationships and, implicitly, the ideology that perpetuates them. Fischer claims that in a class society this complex task cannot be done with myths. How are we to understand this after all that we have said about the essence of art?

Although at the time he wrote Necessity of Art (1958) Fischer did not adhere to the thesis that the essential in art is the mythical; in fact he believed quite the opposite[2], I would suggest that here he is not contradicting his later thesis but rather claiming that the form of the myth cannot adequately express the contradictions of the class society. This is also in keeping with the Marxist tenet that content, the social element, is prior to form, and that the content, being revolutionary, gradually changes form which tends to be conservative. The notion of myth is here used to designate the 'magically suggestive' in art and to distinguish it from the rational, cognitive element which became more emphatic as

society became more complex. It is through these two means that art for Fischer fulfills its role. Art both soothes and awakens. Art works both through the Dionysian element: losing of oneself, and the Appolonian: distancing oneself in order to sharpen one's perception.

The paragraph that we have just quoted summarizes, then all that Fischer said here on art. For in this quote he begins with magic as the origin of art, then brings in the notion that history brings not only new social contents for art to express, but also new artistic forms. Because contents are becoming increasingly complex, the forms that express them must be less and less rigid — thus the long history between the rigidity of a myth and the arbitrariness of a novel. However, although the conscious element becomes increasingly important, the magic of the myth is never completely lost. For both are important to the fulfillment of the function of art: magic enables man to identify himself with others, recognition enables him to fulfill his potential in the world. The historicity of the function of art unravels through these two means, depending on the social structure either of the two elements might predominate. This suggests that, according to Fischer, historically the function of art had never been adequately fulfilled, for art was either too magical or too rational. Whether this view is justified we can learn by examining what Fischer says on the function of art today and about its function in the future.

Fischer's major claim concerning the world today, which he greatly emphasizes, is that it is an era in which reality is

lost. In Necessity of Art he explains how today

> a reality that long ago became its own ghost is being conserved in a rigid framework of phrases, prejudices and hypocrisy. The end-product of a vast machinery of research, investigations, analyses, statistics, conferences, reports and headlines is the comic strip, the embodiment of an illusory world of Everyman and No-man. Illusion displaces contradictions. The outcome of a multitude of 'points of view' is a hideous uniformity of minds. The answer precedes the question. A few dozen clichés, some of which were once reflections of reality, are served up again and again. Today they are as much like reality as an oil king is like a holy picture.[3]

Also, in Art against Ideology we find these words:

> The more language and consciousness are outstripped by the progress of the world, new objects, technical discoveries, unimaginable productive forces, mysterious institutions, the greater the need for the final, simplifying cliché. The phrase, the cliché creates the illusion of a stable world, a world not out of joint. It offers shelter from alarming knowledge, from decision and responsibility. In the cliché past conditions are preserved in a form they never had.[4]

In other words, we are today living in the world of appearances which we falsely regard as real. The 'official reality', served to us as a closed system of phrases we find in newspapers, television, does not express, but instead grossly falsifies what 'is'. The major vehicle of such falsification is, Fischer claims, a cliché — either in word or in image. Political catchwords such as "free world" which is used to designate all non-communist countries including such states as South Africa and Chile, or words like "peace missile" which is used for a missile designed to annihilate thousands of people, distort not only our views of the reality they ostensibly describe, but also pervert the medium so that the medium loses its usefulness as a

vehicle for an accurate portrayal of reality.

The consequence of such a state is that many modern artists share the belief that modern reality has little to do with available cliché images, hence that it is necessary to discover new situations and new images characteristic of our time. Eisenstein, Mayakovsky, Chaplin, Kafka, Brecht, Joyce, Makarenko, Léger, Picasso are among those whom Fischer considers able searchers for new images. The mingling of the artist in socialism and in capitalism Fischer explains by saying that they differ in perspective but not in method: ideally all artists reject clichés. An artist's perspective, however, is for Fischer of immense importance. When he praises Brecht for portraying new, essential situations which will create a total image of the new reality as it struggles against clichés, he notes that "this total image cannot be attained without the dialectical philosophy of Marxism".[5] The non-Marxist artist, therefore, contributes fragments of the total image of modern reality, but is unable, because of his perspective, to recreate it as a whole. He too, that is, rejects cliché images, but the fruit of his efforts is not as encompassing as that of the Marxist artist.

In view of the magically suggestive element of art and the enlightening or rational element, Fischer argues that art in capitalism tends "to turn reality into a false myth surrounded by the magic rites of a bogus cult", while in socialism "art is to be subordinated to specific social requirements and to be used as simple means of enlightenment and propaganda".[6] Because today everything that is made for telling us what is real is essentially false, art as well serves us false myths

as reality. To achieve this, art in capitalism tends more towards the magical and the mysterious, while art in socialism uses more the enlightening or the rational. Neither of the two is capable of completely stripping off the layers of clichés and falsehoods that dim our sight and prevent us from seeing what 'is'. Thus, neither fulfills the permanent function of art, which is "to recreate as every individual's experience the fulness of all that he is not, the fulness of humanity at large".[7]

Hence, Fischer turns towards the future, towards communism. Although in communism there will be no conflict between the individual and the collective, and the individual will attain the highest form of consciousness, art will be necessary, for even this highest attainable consciousness will not be able to make one man encompass the whole human race. The following is Fischer's vision of art and its function in the future:

> When the third, Communist, period is reached... the essential function of art will consist in neither magic nor social enlightenment.
>
> We can only dimly imagine such an art and our vision of it may well be mistaken. Marxism rejects any ideal Utopia with all the severity of science; yet Utopia is its golden background. And so we may be allowed, as we dream of the future, to evoke a picture of the world where human beings, no longer exhausted by labour, no longer weighed down by today's cares and tomorrow's duties have time and leisure to be on 'intimate terms' with art.
>
> We need not fear that a prosperous and highly differentiated society will mean an impoverishment of the arts. The differentiation will be between personalities, not classes; between individuals, not social masks. Everything will encourage the interplay of the intimate and the universal, the fanciful and the problematic, reason and passion. Highly developed means of art reproduction will

> allow the 'public' to become individuals, each becoming familiar with art in his own home. At the same time public festivals and competitions of all kinds will encourage direct participation. It may well happen that apart from the novel, whose essential function is to analyze and criticize society, there will be a revival of the epic, for the epic is the literary form that affirms social reality. Tragedy will doubtless continue to exist, because the development of any society — even a classless one — is inconceivable without contradiction and conflict, and perhaps because man's dark desire for blood and death is ineradicable. Our own appetite today for the grotesque and the scurrilous in art may not only be the consequence of the juxtaposition of the terrible and the comic in modern life; it may also be the forecast of a rebirth of comedy. Hitherto comedy has generally meant criticism — destructive laughter, or as Marx puts it, 'a merry farewell to the past'; in a distant future it may reflect the life of a sovereign man, his freedom, gaiety and spirit.[8]

We have given much space to Fischer's speculations about the future in order to show the great hopes he has for the era of the whole man in which art will no longer need to demystify what people believe as real, but will affirm it. That is why he asserts that its function will consist in neither magic — for man will feel at home with himself and with others, nor in social recognition — for society will enable him to fulfill his human potential. Hence in communism art will not be, as it is today, a means of overcoming the limitations imposed on man by society, but a means of overcoming the limitations imposed on man by nature — the fact that man is a limited 'I' and at the same time part of the whole, both mortal and infinite.

The function of art is by Fischer discussed only in these abstract terms. The reason for this is that he is mainly concerned with the de-reifying power of art. For he is alarmed by the

gradual loss of reality — the apex of which is capitalism today. Hence he strives to show us the power of art and the importance of its function. From what he said it appears that there is a gap between the role art actually played in history, and the role that, according to Marxists, it is able to play. For Fischer this gap existed since the primitive tribal unity, although at some times more than others (art has always been either too magical or too rational). Today, because of alienation, this gap is becoming dangerously wide. What is in danger is the humanity of man, which Fischer hopes is still hiding underneath man's surface hypocrisy and destructiveness. In everyday life the latter take the form of a cliché. For that reason he finds it necessary to remind us of the capacities of art, of its ability to entertain, to teach and to bring together under a common cause. For the same reason he comforts us with the promised land in the future: a world where the gap between what art does for society and what it can do no longer exists. Just as man will be an embodiment of humanity art will be an embodiment of its power to evoke that humanity. Those who still disregard and reject the theoretical evidence, hence see this as merely a utopian hope should, I believe, be answered with Fischer's words: "Perhaps, But what would life be without the breath of inexhaustible possibilities".[9]

ii. Georg Lukacs and Avner Zis

Lukacs and Zis both agree with Fischer that the essential function of art is to bring the true face of the world closer to men. Lukacs' and Zis' argumentation is different from one another and from Fischer's, in such a way that the disagreements on the role of ideology surface again — only now it becomes possible to reduce them to a more basic difference — their notion of the real.

In Osobenost Estetskog (The Specific Nature of the Aesthetic) Lukacs states clearly that the role art assumes is that of de-fetishizing reality. By fetishization he means the general implications to culture of the role commodities play in capitalist economy. In Capital Marx explains this role:

> The existence of the things quâ commodities and the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of relation between things.[10]

The general implications of this assertion about economics is that in many human activities such as science, religion, philosophy or everyday life, the products of the human mind appear as being independently endowed with life and as such, as entering into relationships with men and with one another. The idea of divinity first comes to mind as a fetish.

The major tendency of art, according to Lukacs, is to abolish these fetishes which appeared in the course of the

development of mankind and which take part in everyday life, in science, in philosophy, etc. Art gives a proper place in the world both to objects and to those phenomena that only appear objective; by doing that it puts man into his proper place — it gives him back his humanity which is lost when the world is seen as a sum of fetishes which act independently of man and control him.[11] Art, in other words, puts man back into control; it shows him, as Fischer would say, that reality can be transformed, mastered, turned into play.[12]

The de-fetishizing tendency of art exposes art as a representation of man's 'natural' environment in its 'natural' relationship with him. This is, in fact, its essential function. Art is, Lukacs says, essentially a representation of man as he really is; it shows him in his relationship to objects (nature) that exist outside his consciousness. The role of art, in other words, is to clearly show that certain objects and phenomena (including their relationships) which man sees as independent of his mind and of his relationship with other men, are actually results of certain social interests (class interests etc.), thus do not belong to the natural world. In that way art demystifies the social limitations of man, thus reveals his true relationship to the world.

More specifically, the de-fetishizing role of art concerns the spontaneity of everyday life mentioned earlier. "The naturalness of everyday life", says Lukacs, "which perceives things spontaneously in their relatedness and in their movement, develops in art into a 'view of the world' — the content of

which is the preservation of precisely these relationships and movements. No matter how much the socially conditioned fetishes are part of the everyday, artistic practice (and not necessarily a conscious world view of the artist) struggles against these tendencies which are threatening to schematize man's sensory and human environment, thus to stop movement".[13] Lukacs' 'schematization' relates to Fischer's idea of 'official' reality — in which complex relationships take the form of a cliché. The cliché is a consequence of fetishization; for it is an articulation of the fact that relations between people are being falsified into relations between objects. Hence the struggle against the cliché is the struggle against the fetish.

De-fetishization occurs through the enjoyment of a work of art. In his enjoyment of the work of art the recipient of artistic reflection suspends his everyday existence and his activity. In the act of enjoying, that is, he raises to the level of man's entirety or the level of the species, identifying oneself with the species necessarily shatters the fetishistic world view of everyday life; for the recipient is confronted with the question: how much of this world is a human one? — the world of the work of art being on the one hand, and his own on the other.[14]

For both Lukacs and Fischer, then, art appears to have a similar function in society: it debunks the sources of falsification of reality. The emphasis in both Lukacs and Fischer, however, is not on the critical aspect of art's function (demystification of the existing ideology etc.) but on its

positive aspect: its reproduction of the true relationship between man and world.

Zis emphasizes only the positive aspect of art's function. For him the function of art follows from his notion that art is both artistic cognition and ideology. Thus he says: "The cognitive, ideological, and educative functions of art are realized hand in hand with its aesthetic function, via aesthetic impact".[15]

The cognitive potential of art is, for Zis, essential because its epistemological aspect enables us to pinpoint all its other aspects and principles.[16] The cognitive function of art is more prominent if we deal with such forms as literature or music and less prominent if we are dealing with architecture, which has to do more with utility. In order to see what sort of knowledge we can glean from art we must, Zis argues, compare it with science. Hence he says:

> Despite all the differences which exist between these two forms of social consciousness, art like science telescopes the experience of the precipitous flow of life and broadens man's horizons, giving him varied knowledge of men's lives at different periods and in different countries, shedding light on the essence of phenomena taken from real life and singling out in the latter such aspects which remain beyond man's grasp in the ordinary circumstances of his life experience.[17]

The knowledge of life acquired through art differs, however, in subject and form from the knowledge acquired through science. Nevertheless, it is wrong to say that scientific objectivity and artistic objectivity move in opposite directions. In fact, it is impossible for science, just as it is for art, to alone

reproduce a universal picture of the world. In this sense, to understand why the October Revolution occurred it is as necessary to read history as it is to read Chekhov. It is here that Zis criticizes Fischer and Garaudy for their notion that myth is at the essence of art. Fischer, by contrasting myth (the magical) and knowledge (the enlightening), and by claiming that the artist is essentially a prophet and a magician, is attempting a de-epistemologisation of art, which in Zis' view is bound to Fischer's efforts to separate art from ideology.[18]

The ideological function of art, hence, appears to be in Zis closely connected with its cognitive function. This is because when art reflects reality the knowledge of life we get is not knowledge of life in general but life as it is seen by a certain social group living in a certain historical period. The aesthetic function of art is also tied to this, for art "helps men to assimilate a specific socio-aesthetic ideal and develop their artistic potential".[19] Socio-aesthetic ideal means the socially progressive ideal or a class that is represented in art as the class' vision of the truth of life. Finally, the educative function of art refers to the power of art to influence men in their understanding of the world. This power, it is worth noting, is much greater in the socialist world, for the simple reason that people are exposed to art, rather than to trash of the entertainment industry which is daily unloaded on the people in capitalist countries.[20]

From what has been said it seems that, according to Marxists, the major, though not the only, function of art is its

cognitive function. Thus all three of our authors find it necessary to relate art to science. In Fischer the relationship between them is such that science equips every individual with the knowledge acquired by the human race as a whole, while art makes every individual understand that he/she is a microcosm representing humanity, the human race. In Lukacs, both science and art originate in everyday life as a result of different social needs. But the role of science is to fix the existing factual state, while the role of art is to immortalize a moment in the historical development of the human race. By immortalize Lukacs means to make it human or represent it as a result of human activity and of relationships between people. Also, for Zis, the sort of knowledge about the life of man we acquire through art complements the type of cognition characteristic of science. Only through both can we get a universal picture of the world.

All three writers also believe that the knowledge characteristic of art has to do with what is essential in the phenomena of real life. This essential is for all of them what is objectively human and, in a certain sense, eternal. Thus Fischer talks about the humanness of man that can be restored only through art. Lukacs talks about art representing man's 'natural environment'; through this art's anthropomorphic essence is fully realized. While Zis says that the historical and class factors which shape art are inseparable from the universal human values involved. This historical element brings in the ideological function of art.

That art voices an ideology or a class evaluation is of no dispute here. Disputed is whether the ideological element is harmful or beneficial to art; whether art should and can struggle against it. From what has been said on the ideological in art in the previous chapter (The Nature of Art) and also here, it appears that Fischer and Lukacs believe that part of art's role is to struggle against the existing ideology, while Zis believes that ideology is intrinsic to art, which is to say that our knowledge of the world, like the one expressed in art, is always from a socio-historical point of view, and that the point of view cannot be eliminated. The concrete way of struggling against ideology is for Fischer in rejecting the language, the images, the ideas of the 'official' reality — reality that we get through newspapers, television, radio, etc. Genuine reality cannot be had so cheaply; it requires a difficult search for new situations and new images. Also, for Fischer an awareness of this role on the part of the artist seems to play an important role, for he considers 'good' artists only those who reject cliché images. Fischer's rejection of the cliché, however, does not imply a rejection of the socio-historic in art; it is a rejection of a false presentation of reality which, necessarily, is socio-historic.

Lukacs' notion that art de-fetishizes reality appears the same as Fischer's struggle against official reality. However, in Lukacs, this tendency is inherent in art. All art, that is, represents life in its dynamism through numerous relationships between man and the world. Art de-fetishizes the world because

it never represents life as fixed, unchanging, disconnected or dead. Also, and more importantly, art always anthropomorphizes — everything transcendental becomes human. This Lukacs calls the spontaneous dialectic of art. Further, because of its tendency to de-fetishize art often comes in conflict with the everyday life in which fetishes operate.[21] Another way of explaining this is to say that the spontaneous materialism of everyday life is powerless against fetishes because, being limited to practice, it is unable to develop into a way of thinking. By its nature art sees life as a process, as a result of human activity, of relationships between people; hence it is a dialectical way of thinking that might resist the fixedness of fetishes. The everyday life here assumes a similar role as Fischer's official reality. It should also be added that although the de-fetishizing tendency is inherent to art, it does not necessarily become actual, for there exists art which accepts fetishes as genuine reality. Such art Lukacs calls reactionary, and opposes it to progressive art. The progressiveness of art does not depend on the artist, as in Fischer, for the attitude towards-fetishes in an art work in independent of the artist's awareness. This claim is also implied in Lukacs' insistence on the method of realism, rather than on the artist's world view, as essentially de-reifying.

Zis' notion that the ideological is intrinsic to art, to artistic cognition, might become clarified by the following definition of ideology, which, though simplified in itself, is here quite appropriate:

> Through their ideologists classes justify their policies i.e., their aims and goals. Ultimately, any policy stems from material interests, but its theoretical justification (the justification of class aims, goals, strategy and tactics) rests with ideology. Ideology is a sort of political compass. It may contain illusory ideas, fallacious goals, groundless "grounds", pipe dreams and vain hopes. All such things are characteristic of the ideology of classes doomed by history and leaving the historical arena.
>
> There is only one ideology which does not deal in illusions. It is the scientific Marxist-Leninist ideology of the working class.[22]

This being essentially Zis' idea of ideology, it is clear that everything that relates to one's understanding of life has to do with ideology. Thus to represent life in art is to represent it from the point of view of an ideology. And as we explained in the chapter on the nature of art, for Zis, 'good' art today is realism based on socialist, hence Marxist, ideology. As for the art of the past the more progressive the point of view the better the art; because the more progressive the ideology the closer to reality, which in the final analysis is truly represented only by Marxism.

Therefore, all three of our thinkers say that the cognitive function of art is its essential function because it helps man understand what is real. Only for Zis does ideology contribute to these efforts. There are two ways of explaining this. Our philosophers might differ in their understanding of what is real and, also they might differ on the role of values in artistic cognition.

An indication that Fischer, Lukacs and Zis might not share the same definition of the real first appeared in the chapter

on the nature of art, when we explained that Fischer's notion of the mythical as essential in art opens the door to the anti-realist method, to which Lukacs and Zis are firmly opposed. Since all three believe that the ultimate role of art is to evoke that which is real as opposed to that which is illusory, we have to ask: But what is real?

It seems that for Fischer the real is the human potential or the infinite possibilities concerning man's control over natural and social environment. Official reality, he believes, tries to present the world as the stable, which is to say as if the human possibilities are exhausted. The modern myth is good art because it does not assert that the world must be thus, but allows other possibilities to coexist. Also, the struggle against ideology is essentially a struggle against the illusion that one group can speak for all humanity. Artists must not simply assert what a group <u>is</u>, but what the whole of humanity <u>could be</u>.

Lukacs sees reality as the everyday world in which man is always aware that he stands against the material external world. Fetishes, and hence ideology, operate in the everyday world, thus are a part of reality. The inherent tendency of art, however, is to de-fetishize reality, to show the true relationship between material reality (ultimately the modes of production) and man's consciousness. Hence what is real is the ways in which man is affected, and determined by the world around him.

For Zis, real is that social being (material production) determines social consciousness (ideas) in such a way that the

forms of social consciousness (including art) are not merely a complex of ideas belonging to a specific time or specific social formation, but also certain eternal principles, which, as he puts it, shape the continuity of human culture. We have already mentioned this claim in relation to Zis' assumption that in all forms of social consciousness there is an organic unity of knowledge and evaluation. For that reason the cognitive function of art goes hand in hand with the ideological function.

Because Zis believes that the evaluations tied to a certain period and place in society are as real and as important as the reality expressed through eternal human traits, such as the infinite human potential or the fact of limitations imposed on man by the world, he insists upon the ideological function of art. But Fischer and Lukacs are not saying that the sort of knowledge we get from art is the same as the sort of knowledge we get from science. They seem to say that the evaluative element is the very fact that the subject of art is humanized through the process of art-making. This view is particularly evident in Fischer's work, for he believes that art should always project into the future, hence create new, fresh situations and with them new values. Class evaluation or ideology is, for both Fischer and Lukacs, an illusion superimposed on the 'natural' human evaluation inherent to the sort of knowledge art gives us.

Zis' position here can be explained in terms of the perspective from which he is writing; he is primarily concerned with the socialist artist and with socialist art. Given his

conception that Marxism-Leninism does not deal in illusions, he claims that although ideologies of the past and the capitalist ideology today did and do falisfy reality, the ideology of Marxism can only bring us closer to it. Ultimately this whole problem reduces to the difference between the idea that Marxism is a science, hence that it only enlightens reality, and the idea that Marxism is also an ideology, hence that it can also guide us. Fischer and Lukacs use Marxism to understand art, Zis to understand it and also to direct it.

iii. Summary

What has been said here on the function of art points to the major concern of Marxist thought about art: its social function, how art illuminates for men their relationship with the world and with one another. Fischer's "whole" man is no more than the man who is at home in the society in which he lives because in his society he can fulfill his human potentials. Lukacs' attack on fetishes and Zis' promotion of socio-aesthetic ideals both concern the need to restore man's social essence which makes him human. That the role of art is primarily a social role is of no surprise. The initial assumption of all three of our writers and of this project is that art is a social product, a form of social consciousness. The question that now arises for us is to examine summarily the various functions of art and to show their relationship.

It can be said with considerable certainty that for Fischer, Lukacs, Zis and other Marxist aestheticians art fulfills three

roles: aesthetic, cognitive and educative. Because art is a socio-historical phenomenon, all of its roles are also social, for art is always made in a society and for society, and bound to an historical period. We have noted at the beginning of this chapter the historicity of art's function. Such historicity became more obvious as we explained the emphasis put on the cognitive function of art. When we speak of art as revealing what is, we do not mean revealing some mysterious being in itself, but rather revealing to man, through the language, images and concepts of the time, his true relationship to reality i.e., the fact that reality can be mastered. This should not be understood as the message of art, for the message has to do with the specific content. The specific content of an artwork, on the other hand, is arbitrary and does not in any way determine the functions of art. All that we here label functions of art is inherent to art; it is not something we give to it, but something we discover in it.

Let us briefly explain this by recalling what Lukacs said on the nature of art: the essence of art is in that there is a mutual relationship between what is objective and what is subjective; it is only with art that no object can exist without a subject. Objects of nature, on the other hand, exist without a subject, hence their function is not something intrinsic to them; they acquire it only if humans utilize them. Because the subject is always present in a work of art — art is wholly anthropomorphic — its functions are inherent to it. By putting art aside we cannot take away its functions, as we can take

away the functions of a piece of wood or a stone by never utilizing them.

Another important point is that because art is a social product its functions can be manifested only within a certain social context. Thus Lukacs states that although the de-fetishizing tendency is inherent to art it does not necessarily become actualized, for there is art that accepts fetishes as genuine reality. The same notion that only in a certain context all functions of art, which are at the same time its potentials, become actual, is found in Fischer's speculations about the future: for him communism is a context within which art will be able to exert its powerful, positive influence. The dreams that Fischer has for communism are, for Zis, to a considerable degree already fulfilled in the socialist world through Socialist Realism.

Hence, the putting into practice of powers inherent in art depends on a context. In that sense when we say that function is inherent to art we do not mean that it is a property of an art object, but that it is a potential inherent to art, that will manifest itself under favourable conditions. Given this the role of the aesthetic function of art can be seen as the Czech aesthetician Mukarovsky sees it:

> an active capacity for the aesthetic function is not a real property of an object even if the object has been deliberately composed with the aesthetic function in mind. Rather, the aesthetic function manifests iteself only under certain conditions, i.e. in a certain social context.[23]

This seems easy to accept given the differing standard of beauty in art, dress, or landscape in different places at different times. What poses problems for some aestheticians is the implication: that 'the aesthetic' is not a separate abstract dimension, or a separate function that is extra-social. For many aestheticians, that is, the aesthetic belongs to the spiritual or intellectual essence of man both productively and receptively. Hence, the aesthetic is produced and received by man's imaginative, emotional or reasoning powers, and for the sake of these powers. The search for the aesthetic is hence tied primarily to an analysis of man's mind, not to an analysis of his world. Thus for them, too, the origins of art are in what is the truest in man. In Marxism, only, the essence of man is, as Marx puts it in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 1844, that he is a "natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being", with natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective needs, the satisfaction of which is outside him and independent of him.[24] Ultimately, man's essence is a social essence, for man satisfies his needs in a group and his life activity is social activity.

Because man is seen by Marxists as primarily an objective material being, rather than as primarily an intellect or mind, art is seen as arising out of an objective social need preceded by an objective biological need. (The magic of the cave paintings at first had to do with acquiring food, but the magician-artist also had the social role of unifying and organizing men for the accomplishment of the common task: hunting. Social relationships developed out of the necessity to master nature and satisfy

man's biological needs.) The aesthetic function of art thus appeared much later, when man mastered the world to the point where his social needs became more refined and more complex. That is why Fischer tells us that only in a developed class society, such as the Greek, could the forms originally designed for magic, gain any aesthetic significance.

The actual content of the aesthetic function is the pleasure that a work of art, or rather our recognition of the human element in a work of art, gives us. That recognition, as Lukacs would put it, raises us to the level of the species. Also, because we 'enjoy' a work of art we can also 'learn' from it, for the pleasure of joining our limited 'I' with humanity enables us to understand that humanity. The importance of the social element for this enjoyment is expressed in Chernyshevsky's definition of the beautiful:

> Beautiful is that being in which we see life as it should be according to our conceptions; beautiful is the object which expresses life or reminds us of life.[25]

To enjoy art we also have to share a conception of life (or a world view) with the work of art, and this conception is always social. Hence this only points to the fact that we can grasp the universal (in art through enjoyment) — humanity at large — only from our own socio-historical perspective.

Another way of putting this is to say that an awareness of the universal significance of a work of art (such significance presumably can only be expressed through a world view) is a

precondition of our enjoyment, hence of an aesthetic impact. In view of this it is easy to explain why, for example, art was much more important for medieval man that for man living in capitalism today. The response of the medieval man had to do with the unity of his world view which explained to him the social and the natural order. The world for medieval man was a text written by God, and what he read in books and saw in cathedrals was important not just for what it said, but for what it meant.[26] And what it meant had to do with man's journey to God, with the world view ultimately grounded in the social order and a way of life. For man living in capitalism art has no universal significance, because his social existence, hence his view of the world, is fragmented. Art relates to him only as to an individual, to his personal tastes and aspirations. Hence he is unable to see the essential unity of man and the world expressed in art.

Therefore, the aesthetic function of art, like all other functions of art, depends for its fulfillment on a social situation, i.e., it elevates man to the extent to which the social situation in which he lives allows, hence must be examined historically. Fischer, Lukacs and Zis do not fix as eternal the state of mind we call today aesthetic, and do not examine only the inner laws of the aesthetic, but view the aesthetic in an evolving, social context in which the aesthetic function of art coexists with the cognitive and the educational.

The Marxist principle underlying the above discussion, and hence the principle on which the Marxist belief that art plays a necessary role in society is founded, brings together all that we have said on the necessity of art in its beginnings, in its structure, and in its essential traits. This should be of no surprise since, for Marxists, art's purpose, hence its necessity, must be ultimately reducable to the role art plays in society.

Our conclusion concerning the necessity in the essence of art was that what is unique to art-work is that for man it is always a human object. What this entails is expressed in the following words from the Manuscripts:

> We have seen that man does not lose himself in his object only when the object becomes for him a human object or objective man. This is possible only when the object becomes for him a social object, he himself for himself a social being, just as society becomes a being for him in this object.[27]

Hence, art's human essence is also its social essence. Thus, not only can an artwork never be separated from its human essence, but it can never be seen as other than a social product. For to be human is to be social being. To be an artwork is to be social object, hence to play a social role.

This is the thinking underlying our conclusion concerning Fischer's, Lukacs' and Zis' explanation of the function of art — that all functions of art: aesthetic, cognitive, educational, are essentially social in their nature. This, we said, means that they are potentials inherent to art that will manifest themselves under favourable social conditions. On the whole,

art elevates man to the extent to which the social situation in which he lives allows. This is so because, as we noted in the previous section, the development of art in a society depends largely upon the degree of alienation in that society. Thus it is harder for the artist both to bring about and to spread the idea of human universality (either directly or through criticism of society) in capitalism, where men are highly specialized, fragmented and estranged for their fellow men, than it is to bring this idea to a 'fuller' man of antiquity. Alienation dulls the humanness of our senses.

When Marxists speak of the elevation of man through art they primarily think of the de-reifying or the de-fetishizing effect of art. This effect is the direct consequence of art's wholly anthropomorphic character. For if art is an object that can never be aliented from man, and also an object which reflects the (alienated) society in which it is created, then its effect (aesthetic function) must be de-reifying, for art's mere presence <u>enjoyed</u> by man shows man that he is <u>human</u>, while art's content reveals (cognitive and educative functions) the world in which he lives. The two brought together ideally give to man the knowledge that reality is his: it is a human reality, reality that can be mastered.

Moreover, in order to see the necessary role of art, the knowledge acquired through art must be understood in light of the relationship between man and nature we first mentioned in the conclusion of the first chapter (necessity in the genesis of art). The scheme we presented there was need — satisfaction

— knowledge — domination — freedom. (Man starts off as a needy being; in satisfying his need he learns about the world, hence is able to dominate nature which enables him to grow beyond the realm of physical necessity, thus he achieves more freedom). Art did originate in the process between man and nature, and in its beginnings did help man to master nature. However, at all times art was also a social product, and art as we know it today was born only when man, or better, a certain group, grew beyond the realm of physical necessity (division of natural and mental labour). With this division of work came alienation. Our scheme in relation to art must thus start from a social need.

The need for art, we noted, appears to be a necessary need, for it has been with most societies from their beginnings. The social essence of art is also asserted in its structure: the content and form of art relate to the content and form of society. Finally, the social character of art is also its human character. Art, therefore, functions against social alienation, it 'humanizes' the social world which appears as ruled by objects (fetishes) not by people. In de-reifying reality art enables men to dominate it — hence, ultimately, to be free. The role of art, expressed by the kind of knowledge it gives us (knowledge that demystifies) is, therefore, a necessary link between a mere satisfaction of social need and the domination of social reality, thus freedom.

The power of art to de-reify and the necessity that lies therein is also evident by the fact that where men better dominate their external environment (economic and consequently

social life) art is prominent. Hence the difference between the role of art in socialist and in capitalist countries. The ultimate domination — freedom — is to be achieved only with communism, for it is only then that reality will be fully intelligible to man. In the Manuscripts Marx states:

> Communism is the positive transcendence of private property, as human self-estrangement, and therefore, is the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore, is the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e. human) being — a return become conscious, and accomplished within the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man — the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species.[28]

Therefore, from this we see that because art by its nature, or its humanness is directed against estrangement of man it is a necessary vehicle for the social emancipation of man. But once man is on 'human' terms with nature, with himself and with other men, it might appear that the role of art will be dispensible. It is a grave error to think this, for art's continuing function is to assert man's humanity. This role represents a potential to de-reify only in a certain context; that of alienation. It is not de-reifying in itself. Hence, in a world without alienation art will be even more important, for all newly won human activities, in everyday life, in science, in politics — many of which represent today tokens of alienation — will be reflected in art, thus asserting their newly won human face. In

other words, the end of the domination of economy over the totality of life means the beginning of the domination of art.

Notes

1. E. Fischer, Necessity of Art, pp. 13-14.

2. When discussing art as a myth-creation Zis notes that in 1958, in his article "Mystification of Reality" ("Die Mystifikation der Wirklichkeit" in Sinn und Form, 1958, Erstes Heft, p. 84), Fischer dismissed attempts to designate as myth the singling out of features of the universal in the particular as "terminological slovenliness". If such a path be taken, Fischer pointed out, then Hamlet, King Lear, Faust, La Comédie Humaine, Tolstoy's Ressurection, Gorky's Mother can all be declared myths and all that will result is that the concept of the mythical will lose all definite meaning and be fused together with the ideal or the essential. (A. Zis, Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics, pp. 55-56).

3. E. Fischer, Necessity of Art, p. 197.

4. E. Fischer, Art against Ideology, p. 118.

5. E. Fischer, Necessity of Art, p. 205.

6. Ibid., p. 219.

7. Ibid., p. 223.

8. Ibid., p. 220.

9. E. Fischer, Art against Ideology, p. 218.

10. K. Marx, Capital, in R. Tucker ed. The Marx-Engels Reader, p. 321.

11. D. Lukac, Osobenost Estetskog, p. 413.

12. E. Fischer, The Necessity of Art, p. 223.

13. D. Lukac, Osobenost Estetskog, p. 416.

14. Agnes Heller, "Lukacs's Aesthetics", New Hungarian Quarterly, vol. 7, no. 24, (1966), p. 88.

15. A. Zis, Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics, p. 61.

16. Ibid., p. 53.

17. Ibid., p. 49.

18. Ibid., p. 56.

19. Ibid., p. 61.

20. Fischer, who lived in the Soviet Union from 1934-1945, writes in Necessity of Art: "The socialist world takes art seriously. I have discussed Yessenin, Blok, Mayakovsky, Yevtushenko, and Voznessensky with young workers in Moscow, and have admired their intelligence and understanding. New books, films, plays, and musical works are not only consumed by hundreds of thousands, by millions of people, they also stimulate them to passionate discussion. The social, education, formative force of images is taken for granted ... art and the discussion of art are a forward-thrusting part of life in the socialist world" (p. 207). Also, in Art against Ideology he says: "Socialist society creates the objective conditions which are requires in order to be a power capable of gripping, moving and changing men. The production of kitsch and trash offers no commercial benefit. Leisure is not raped by an unrestrained entertainment industry" (p.172).

21. G. Lukacs, p. 417

22. B.M. Boguslavsky et al, ABC of Dialectical and Historical Materialism, p. 316.

23. J. Mukarovsky, Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts, quoted in R. Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: University Press, 1977), p. 153.

24. K. Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 in Tucker ed. Marx-Engels Reader, p. 115.

25. A. Zis, p. 184. Chernyshevski, Nikolai Gavrilovich (1829-1889) was a Russian radical journalist who greatly influenced the young Russian intelligensia of the 1860's. In the USSR he is interpreted as a forerunner of Lenin. His famous work (written in prison) is a didactic novel Shto Delat? (1863: in English What is to be done?).

26. David L. Jeffrey, "The Self and the Book: Reference and Recognition in Medieval Thought", in D. Jeffrey ed. By Things Seen: Reference and Recognition in Medieval Thought (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979), p. 14.

27. K. Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 in Marx, Engels, On Literature and Art (Moscow: Progress, 1978), p. 126.

28. K. Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844 in Marx and Engels on Literature and Art, ed. by Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (St. Louis, Milwaukee: Telos Press, 1973), p. 70.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NECESSITY OF ART

The initial assumption of this project was that art is in some way necessary to man. The intention was to explore this view from a Marxist perspective; in particular, through the works of Fischer, Lukacs and Zis. The necessity of aesthetic experience as it related to Marxism can be explored from without and from within. From without means to treat Marxism as a particular approach to experience i.e., as a view of experience as transformation, which is a pre-condition for seeing aesthetic experience, a paradigm of transformation, as necessary. An approach from within means to show that the necessity of art is couched in the basic principles of Marxism. This has been already done in the conclusions of each of our four chapters. Here it needs only be summarized.

i. The Necessity of Art in Marxism as a View of Experience

Given that experience is our sole link with reality, it can be said that all philosophy is about experience, for all philosophy is an attempt to define reality in its relationship to man. The meaning of 'reality' has changed throughout the history of mankind. Consequently, philosophers have conceived many different views of how experience works. Perhaps the most basic division is in those who believe that experience gives us some knowledge of reality, and in those who disbelieve any possibility of knowing reality — the skeptics. Among those who are not

skeptics the views are basically two: either that what is real is 'raw chunks of reality', basic sense givens, and that any interpretation through our cognitive faculty only takes us further away from reality, or that reality is not in the basic givens of experience, but we arrive at it by structuring experience, by somehow transforming it.[1] The combination of the two is the Kantian view: that reality is in the basic givens (thing-in-itself), but that even the primitive sense intuitions are already structured a priori by space and time. Experience, in order words, is structured (by sensibility and understanding) so that it determines objects as objects — these form the phenomenal world in which we live. We can, hence, never know the thing-in-itself, the noumenon. The point for us, though, is that basically there are two ways of viewing experience — either as direct or unstructured, or as structured or transformed.

Marxists view experience as structured or transformed. For them, experience is first of all a process; it undergoes constant evolution. This process is structured; the structure is dialectical i.e., consisting of three stages labeled somewhat artificially as thesis, antithesis and synthesis, or the negation of negation. Experience is, hence, a structured development of simply a dialectical movement. In this movement, as Hook explains, "thesis and antithesis are resolved in such a way that the pretensions of each to constitute a whole of a relation are denied; yet aspects of each are retained or conserved in every new whole or situation; are reinterpreted or elevated as subordinate moments in a more inclusive whole".[2] In this way Marx

expresses the continuity of our experience, which for him is historical and social. This view of dialectics differs from that of Hegel, for whom the continuity of our experience is purely logical, thus experience essentially a development of a concept, and dialectics a power of our mind which we bring to any subject matter. For Marx, experience is something actual, a material life-process and dialectics is a general principle exhibited in actual (social and historical) experience.

Since the history of experience is for Hegel the history of the mind, he begins his analysis with the concept of Being. In contrast, for Marx history of experience is the real course of history itself, including the very process of knowledge. Hence, he begins his analysis of capitalist society with the actual economic relations in which men find themselves. These take the form of an opposition between the capitalists and the proletariat, between the necessities of production and the needs of consumption. The dialectical relation is, therefore, primarily a social relation; within the social whole the elements of opposition are the objective conditions of history and human needs. The result of the synthesis is class action in which the moments of opposition become phases of development. Equilibrium is thus both destroyed and regained by human action.

Concerning the point about dialectical relation being primarily social relation, it should be noted that, according to Engels; not only society but also nature is dialectically constructed. The dialectical structure of our experience is thus explained by the fact that the subject is himself part

of nature and since the most general laws (laws of dialectics) appear everywhere (nature and society) they are also the laws of the cognitive activity of the subject.[3] Dialectics as it pertains to the world, natural and social, is labeled objective dialectics. As it pertains to thought, subjective dialectics.

Since art is matter that has undergone a certain transformation or humanization, aesthetic experience can be considered important or necessary only with the view that our experience, in order to give us access to reality, must be somehow transformed or structured. If we hold the alternative view: that reality lies in the basic givens of experience, it is difficult to see how art, which transforms and sometimes even misrepresents sense-data, could have any claim to knowledge. The view of experience as transformed is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the acceptance of art as necessary to man's knowledge of reality. Examples abound. In Kant's philosophy, for example, art belongs to the judgment and thus is not really a genuine area of knowledge (this is one of the points on which Hegel criticizes Kant for imposing too severe restrictions on knowledge[4]). For Plato, art is a mere appearance of some higher reality which will always lag behind its object.

For Hegel, on the other hand, aesthetic experience is necessary. In his theory of knowledge there are three levels of experience: apprehension, perception and concepts. He classifies art under apprehension, religion under perception, philosophy under concept and considers them as ruled by these forms of consciousness.[5] Art alone cannot give us a perfect

understanding of reality. Yet without art there would be no philosophy.

A valid question to inquire into is: What are the distinctive features of, on the other hand views like Plato's that consider art a dispensable part of experience, and Marx's and Hegel's that consider art indispensable, given the assumption that both sides see experience as structured and transformed sense-intuitions? We cannot pursue this issue in depth, but there are reasons to believe that the indispensability of art is tied to seeing reality as essentially historical. If the world and thought are not seen as moving and progressing, then art's essential features, which are always bound to a certain time and place, appear as arbitrary and unimportant. In other words, because through history the world appeared in art in many different forms, with different faces and contents, unless we see reality as many-faceted, as moving and progressing, we do not see art as an essential part of our experience, or as an essential link to reality.

For Hegel what is most real is mental or spiritual in character; the dialectical development or movement of the real is thus purely logical. For Marxists the real is material; the movement of the real which is reflected in the continuity of our experience, is primarily social. It seems that for both views what makes art a necessary part of experience is that the nature of any one thing is seen as contained in its relation to other things, and that every relation can be viewed from the point of view of the terms it relates.[6] It is thus the continuity,

the movement, the many-relatedness of our mental experiences (in Hegel - levels of consciousness), and of our life experiences (in Marx - social needs) that makes art indispensable for elevating us to the higher, more encompassing level of experience, in Hegel (religion and philosophy) and in Marxism for making us more human, less alienated in our work and in our society.

We may, then, say that part of the reason that art is necessary in Marxism is in that our experience of reality is seen as structured in a dialectical way. Reality in Marxism consists of the whole of human actions. Basic among these are economic activities. We experience this reality through an ideology which structures all reflection on action. Because art transforms material objects in order to represent some aspects of reality, the artistic process can be seen as necessary because it is no different (as far as the transforming is concerned) from other kinds of experiences. In fact, it could be said that art process is a paradigm of transformation, for the subject consciously transforms the sense data and the structure of that transformation is present in the object itself, thus revealing the transformative process which in other kinds of experiences might not be as obvious.

The second reason for which art can be seen as indispensable is that experience is a process which changes through history, so that men throughout history have understood reality in very different ways. Art being an attempt to understand reality, as it is understood at the time of its creation, can be seen as a necessary part of the historical experience throughout which men attempt to grasp the world from their perspective.

ii. Summary: Necessity of Art in the Principles of Marxism

Marxist thinkers, represented here by Fischer, Lukacs and Zis, see art production as an activity necessary to mankind. The principle pre-condition for such a view is their notion of experience as structured or dialectically transformed sense-data. Art is matter transformed, and since in Marxism the world is material and there are no levels of consciousness, all other human activities can be defined in the same way as art: the transformation of the material world. All experience is thus tied to such transformations. The point to stress is that if art is to be considered important and necessary the art object and the experience tied to its production must be seen as having an ontological status equal to that of any other object, and the aesthetic experience as following the same general structure of all experience. The art work, in other words, must be considered real.

Because of its foundation: dialectical materialism, Marxism easily fulfills this principal pre-condition. Other more specific reasons for considering art indispensable are to be found in the Marxist view of man and his socio-historical development.

In Marxism man is a material and natural being who is conscious of his life-activity: hence he is a thinking being. As a natural being man has physical needs which he must satisfy. Because he is a conscious being, in satisfying his needs he does not only dominate nature but also expresses his own humanity in the process of domination. Hence, man's domination over nature is a process in which the world becomes his world.

In Marxism, then, the human power to control nature has, besides the instrumental dimension, also an expressive one. Both are important and necessary. The instrumental dimension of man's activity represents his yoke: that he is a needy being, the expressive dimension his freedom: his creative potentials, his humanity.

All the power that man exercises over nature, he exercises as a social being, for it is only through social labour that man can transform the world. Hence, art belongs to the expressive dimension of the life-activity of man as a social being, or rather, it is an expression of a social being. This, in turn, means two things. One, as a product of a social being art is determined by the social conditions of the time. Second, as an expressive, rather than as an instrumental creation of man, art is able to transcend its epoch. For by being expressive it contains the universal and uniquely human trait of expressing and changing one's own nature while mastering the world. This is to say that, although activities and instruments for those activities differ throughout history, our need to express ourselves in whatever we are doing is always there. The first point explains the content-form relationship in art, the second explains the essential humanness of art, or the fact that art is social.

The expressive dimension of man, a means to his self-realization, has been severely frustrated throughout history. History proves that for the majority of people there is nothing intrinsic in the exercise of their power over nature: there is

only the instrumental. The reason for this is the division of labour necessary for mastery over nature. Once there was division of labour, there were classes. In Marx's view a class-divided society cannot have a conscious control over its power over nature, simply because each class is conditioned by its place in society, and no single class has control over the entire process. In fact, in a class society the process of mastering nature exercises control over individuals. This is what Marx calls alienation. In capitalism, a stage of history at which men came to a full power over nature, alienation means an almost total emptiness of human content, for all activity is reduced to an instrumental dimension.

The conclusion we arrived at in our analysis of Fischer, Lukacs and Zis is that art is always human, always expressive. Marx's point about the 'unequal' development of art supports this view. He noted that the development of art is not parallel to the development of the forces of production; on the contrary. We explained this in terms of alienation. The more there is alienation, the less there is art. Yet art is always there: at almost all times and in almost all places.

Given all we have said, the role of art, as a means of human expression, must be de-reifying. In working against alienation the role of art is necessary simply by virtue of the relationship between social being and social consciousness. Let us here recall Fischer's words: "La production intellectuelle ne suit pas la production matérielle, elle naît en même temps qu'elle, en interaction constante"[7] (emphasis mine). Because social

being and social consciousness are in constant interaction, and moreover, because, as Lukacs puts it, although being is considered prior to consciousness no hierarchical subordination or consciousness to being follows[8], the historical process, thus change, requires the interaction and transformation of both social being and social consciousness. Art, in that context, is a vehicle for making people aware of their situation in the world. This awareness, in turn, is important for historical action. This is implied in the following words of Brecht:

> We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.[9] (emphasis mine)

But art does not have to be Brecht's working class drama to help men change the world. Art always confronts us with the facts that there is no fulfillment without the expressive dimension of our lives, and that the expressive dimension is the social dimension, that our lives are social. The paradox facing people in capitalism today is that although they have developed a great potential to control their lives, their power to express themselves in a humanly meaningful way is less than it has ever been. A humanly meaningful way of expression, art has sharpened consciousness of this sort of paradox in the minds of people. The necessity of art is ultimately in the potential implications of their realizations for the historical process.

Finally, the Marxist conviction that in communism art will be more important than it has ever been, points at conviction

that art is necessary to man at all times, for in fact, in communism all men will be able to express themselves in society. Marxist ideas about life in the future society assume art as an ideal form of human expression: thus Marxists fashion their dreams of life in communism in accordance with art. Fischer's vision of communism is a case in point. The importance of art in Marxism lies ultimately in that art is an activity of free individuals; people for whom their own power over nature has become the object of expression. Thus it reveals the expressive, human dimension of man; the dimension which has been suppressed for the sake of our domination of nature, but which will become in the future actual for every person, not only for the artist.

Notes

1. I am deliberately not putting further qualifications, such as whether being is real or ideal, material or spiritual, for in this general discussion that would only complicate the issue.

2. S. Hook, From Hegel to Marx (Toronto: Ambassador Books, 1962), p. 68.

3. M.M. Rozental, Principles of Dialectical Logic, quoted in T.J. Blakeley, Soviet Theory of Knowledge (Dodrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishers, 1964), p. 34.

4. J. Kaminsky, Hegel on Art (New York: State University of N.Y., 1962), p. 10.

5. G. Lukacs, "Introduction to a Monograph on Aesthetics", in Solomon ed. Marxism and Art, p. 413.

6. S. Hook, p. 67.

7. E. Fischer, Le Marxisme Veritable, p. 97.

8. G. Lukacs, "Introduction to a Monograph on Aesthetics", p. 410.

9. B. Brecht, "Epic Theatre" in Marxism and Art, p. 368.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have presented a certain number of Marxist ideas in order to justify and to clarify my profound intuition that in the Marxist world view art is necessary. We have dealt with three central Marxist ideas: (1) labour is at the same time man's life activity and a social activity, (2) being is prior to consciousness i.e. social being is prior to social consciousness, and (3) alienation applies to man in two ways: ontological and social.

In the argument for the necessity of art it is the idea of alienation that becomes central, for it implies the concept of social being and also the idea of labour. Both types of alienation signify a limitation imposed on man, one by society, the other by nature. Social alienation is a result of man's historic and economic development, hence of his domination of nature. It implies man's alienation from his own activity (by denying its expressive dimension), from the products of his labour, thus from nature which he is dominating and from his fellow men (ultimately from his own nature which is social). More concretely, social alienation means that people are controlled by their own power over nature or by the instrumental dimension of their labour. Ontological alienation or the limitation imposed on man by nature refers to man's physical limitedness — man is at the same time an individual, a limited I, a particular and also a species, a whole of humanity. Man is at the same time mortal and infinite.

Art is necessary because it is an activity of man which cannot be alienated from him; and further, art is disalienating. In relation to social alienation this means that art debunks

the sources of falsification of reality, and thus reproduces a true relationship between man and the world, or man and society. In relation to man's ontological alienation it means that through aesthetic enjoyment man raises himself to the level of the species. By recognizing the human element in art, that is, man recognizes his own humanity.

Art is hence necessary in two ways: in virtue of its role in society — in helping men overcome social alienation, thus realizing the historic destiny of man in Marxism: a society in which man has dominated his power over nature; hence in which he has overcome social alienation, and also in virtue of what it is: an embodiment of man's humanity which satisfies man's need to identify himself with the species.

Further, the necessity of art tied to its role in society, thus to social alienation, is an historic or temporary necessity. For the need to overcome social alienation will vanish with the end of social alienation. The "permanent" necessity of art lies with ontologic alienation, with man's natural condition rather than with his socio-historical condition.

Finally, from our examination of Fischer, Lukacs and Zis it is clear that for Marxists the necessity of art is tied primarily to an actual social context, and only secondarily to Marxist principles about man and society. This thesis has been mainly concerned with Marxist principles and with the way these principles explain the necessity of art for man. However, at no time should it be overlooked that, for Marxists, art can be necessary only within a social context. For, as we have said, art elevates man only to the extent to which the social situation

in which he lives allows. An important consequence of this is that a Marxist discourse on the role of art is always a discourse about art in an actual social context. For that reason whenever there is talk of art today, especially on Fischer's part, a clear distinction between art in a socialist context and art in a capitalist context must be made. However, it is not only art that must be treated as an evolving social phenomenon, but also the aesthetic state of mind and, more importantly, Marxist aesthetics itself. Hence, the principles we have presented here should be seen as only a basis for a discourse of the necessity of art. This thesis, hence, is a beginning of a Marxist discussion on art, which opens many possibilities; it should be seen as an initial justification of the need to talk about the necessity of art.

Further discussion of the necessity of art should start, not from Marxist principles, but from the art of a given socio-historical context, or better, from the relationship of art and a way of life. Of all the concepts that we have used the concept of labour here becomes of particular interest. For a way of life can always be defined in terms of the relationship between expressive and instrumental labour. And it is this relationship which ultimately allows us to determine the position of art. The concept of labour is especially important for understanding that there is an interaction between a way of life and art, and that art plays an active role in society, even if sometimes society is unaware of this role. Such an inquiry should serve to reveal in concrete terms the intimacy that exists between the complex social phenomenon we call art and actual social and

historical developments, and should reveal the dynamism of that relationship. Implicitly this would exemplify the capacity of Marxist aesthetics to evolve and its sensitivity as a theory to new situations and to new art.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ernst Fischer

Fischer, Ernst. "Synopsis of the Contributions of Professors G. Lukacs and E. Fischer to the Wroclaw Conference 1948, reported by Roy Pascal". Modern Quarterly (London), Summer 1949, pp. 53-58.

_____. Necessity of Art. tr. by Anna Bostock. Markham, Ontario: Pelican Books, 1963; rpt. Peregrine Books, 1978.

_____. "Art and Ideological Superstructure". Marxism Today (London), Feb. 1964, pp. 46-51.

_____. Art against Ideology. tr. by Anna Bostock. London: Penguin Press, 1969.

_____. Le Marxisme Veritable. E. Fischer avec la collaboration de Franz Marek. Traduit par B. Spielman et C. Cassin. Paris: Editions Buchet/Chastel, 1972.

_____. An Opposing Man. tr. by Peter and Betty Ross. London: Allen Lane, 1974.

Georg Lukacs

Lukacs, George. The Meaning of Contemporary Realism. tr. by John and Necke Mander. London: Merlin, 1962.

_____. Osobenost Estetskog. Beograd, Yugoslavia: Nolit, 1980. Original Title: Die Eigenart Astetischen, 1963.

_____. Studies in European Realism. New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1964.

_____. Marxism and Human Liberation. ed. and with an Introduction by E. San Juan. New York: Dell, 1973.

_____. "Introduction to a Monograph on Aesthetics" in M. Solomon ed. Marxism and Art. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979, pp. 404-420.

_____. Essays on Realism. ed. and with an Introduction by R. Livingstone. Boston: MIT Press, 1981.

Avner Zis

_____. "Present-Day Revisionism in Aesthetics". Current Digest of the Soviet Press (New York), Oct. 1, 1958, pp. 9-10.

_____. "Axiological (Value) Aspects of Art in the Light of the Interaction of Forms of Social Consciousness" in I. Kulikova and A. Zis ed. Marxist-Leninist Aesthetics and Life. Moscow: Progress, 1976, pp. 55-67.

_____. Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics. tr. by K. Judelson. Moscow: Progress, 1977.

Other Sources

Althusser, Louis. "The 'Picollo Teatro': Bertolazzi and Brecht" in For Marx. tr. by B. Brewster. London: Verso Editions, 1979.

Arvon, Henri. L'esthétique marxiste. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970.

Baxandall, L. and Stefan, M. ed. Marx & Engels on Literature and Art. St. Louis, Milwaukee: Telos Press, 1973.

Blakeley, T.J. Soviet Theory of Knowledge. Dodrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1964.

Boguslavsky, B.M. et al. ABC of Dialectical and Historical Materialism. Moscow: Progress, 1976.

Davydov, Yuri. The October Revolution and the Arts. tr. by Bean and Meares. Moscow: Progress, 1967.

Gilbert, E. and Kuhn, H. A History of Aesthetics. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1972.

Heller, Agnes. "Lukacs's Aesthetics". New Hungarian Quarterly, vol. 7, no. 24 (1966), pp. 84-94.

Hook, S. From Hegel to Marx. Toronto: Ambassador Book, 1962.

Kaminsky, J. Hegel on Art. New York: State University of New York, 1962.

Kopeczi, Béla. "Socialist Realism — The Continuing Debate". New Hungarian Quarterly, vol. 7, no. 24 (1966), pp. 94-106.

Kostelanetz, R. Esthetics Contemporary. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1978.

Lenin, V.I. On Tolstoy. Moscow: Foreign Publishing House, 1950.

Lifshitz, M. The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx. tr. by R. Winn. London: Pluto Press, 1973.

Marx, K. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts 1844. Moscow: Progress, 1974.

Marx, Engels. On Literature and Art. Moscow: Progress, 1978.

Mochalin, D.N. "Communist Party of Austria". Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, vol. 12, p. 246. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Parkhomenko, M. and Myasnikov, A. ed. Socialist Realism in Literature and Art. A collection of articles. Moscow: Progress, 1971.

Planty-Bonjour, G. The Categories of Dialectical Materialism. tr. by T.J. Blakeley. Dodrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1967.

Plekhanov, Georgi. Selected Philosophical Works, vol. 5, Moscow: Progress, 1981.

Scanlan, J.P. "Can Realism be Socialist?". British Journal of Aesthetics, vol. 14, no. (Winter 1974), pp. 128-136.

Swiderski, E. The Philosophical Foundations of Soviet Aesthetics. Dodrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1979.

Tucker, R. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1978.

Volpe, Galvano Della. Critique of Taste. tr. by M. Caesar. London: N.L.B., 1978.

Williams, R. Marxism and Literature. Oxford: University Press, 1977.