Alastair Hannay
Lukács and Kierkegaard: Decadence or Despair

Abstract: A distrust of focus on subjectivity and the individual provoked by his meeting with Sartrean existentialism led György Lukács to turn his early but qualified admiration of Søren Kierkegaard into an accusation of fostering a bourgeois culture of the kind Kierkegaard is usually thought to have opposed. Not every Marxian thinker has been equally wary of subjectivity, but all have found in Kierkegaard a crucial absence of concern for human exploitation within a context of natural scarcity. However, a more measured reading suggests a case for resolving the need to choose between Lukács's insistence on "spirit" as a collective notion and Kierkegaard's as cultivation of a trans-historically oriented, self-stabilizing social will.

An earlier admirer of Søren Kierkegaard, the Marxist apologist György Lukács later described the Danish writer, along with Schopenhauer, as a pioneer of "bourgeois decadence." Although these two nineteenth-century thinkers showed a "consistency" and "good faith" not to be found in the writers inspired by them, they began a trend that with its "superior...intellectual and moral pretensions," catered to "a bourgeoisie's increasingly reactionary needs."[1]

The earlier enthusiasm had already been qualified, but Lukács was now charging these nineteenth-century writers with responsibility for what he called a "permanent carnival of fetishized inwardness."[2] Under the shadow of all-important real-life developments, the post-World War II circus known as *Existenzphilosophie* being led by its managers Karl Jaspers, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, was a distracting sideshow. Kierkegaard, by being dragged into its advertisements, was in posthumous collusion with Husserl and Heidegger somehow responsible, together with those three, for fostering a tradition of "pure apologists of bourgeois decadence, and nothing else."[3]

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[1] Georg Lukács, *Existentialisme ou marxisme?*, Paris: Nagel 1948, p. 84.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, trans. by Peter Palmer, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press 1981, p. 296.

Corresponding author: Alastair Hannay, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo, P.O. Box 1020, Blindern, 0315 Oslo, Norway, e-mail: rahannay@icloud.com.

The diagnosis is interesting in itself but, in retrospect, invites a riposte on Kierkegaard's behalf. It can begin by noting that the choice Lukács saw confronting his age was one between Marxism and "bourgeois philosophy." By making Kierkegaard partly responsible for the emergence of bourgeois decadence, Lukács nicely avoids having to make that other choice between a Marxist and a Kierkegaardian critique of this decadence. And yet, if not properly, and certainly in its own terms inappropriately, called decadence, some form of bourgeois decline tending in that direction was quite obviously also Kierkegaard's target.

I Competing Either/Or's

In the Hegelian dialectic inherited by both of these writers, and in spite of Kierkegaard's reputation as its critic, the "either/or" of understanding was originally resolved in a higher unity owing to a synthesizing Reason. For both Kierkegaard and Lukács, the synthesis is achieved not by a merging of concepts in an abstract Absolute, but in a potential here and now, in the one case through a willingness to combat "human nature" and the strategies of self-deception and, in the other, through political action aimed at combatting similarly obstructive economic forces in society at large.

Potentially misleading here is the talk of trends, a treacherous notion in any retrospective survey of a past thinker. It was Lukács who brought this dubious medium for marking a writer's historical responsibility onto the table, but by pointing to the still unravelling history of Marxism since his time, the tables can easily be turned. It is hard not to see the various chapters in the story of Marxism over the last century, and more, as anything but a catalogue of decline. The recent death of Pol Pot's executioner-in-chief, "Comrade Duch" represents a Marxian legacy far from anything Karl Marx himself envisaged as he sat in the British Museum pondering the ways and means to a world free of exploitation. Should we then not be entitled to an equal skepticism about a "dialectically" traceable connection between Kierkegaard writing *Works of Love* in 1847 and an orgy of bourgeois decadence in 1947?

Lukács naturally doesn't accuse Kierkegaard himself of being a bourgeois decadent. He could hardly do that, since the label applies conventionally to conspicuously anti-social life-styles, or to artists who cultivate these or to their apologists. It should of course be even harder to accuse a political activist like Lukács himself of the same: his own reason for dismissing the existentialists as apologists of bourgeois decadence was that in a world where bourgeois forms offer no foothold for true human expression, the call to inwardness

leads people to seek out their own realities in "private" and thus to "despair" of the humanization of the world.

From their opposite perspectives both writers thus deplored bourgeois forms of life, at times even questioning the entrenched and strictly codified virtue of "decency" itself. We have a sense of an "either/or" of this kind in Lukács's friend Béla Balázs. A credible real-life stand-in for Victor Eremita's Seducer, this writer made a point of distinguishing a decent life from a true one.[4] For Balázs, who joined the Hungarian Communist Party soon after it was formed in 1918 (though more impulsively than Lukács), the problem of finding a true life was for communism to solve. Readers of the later Kierkegaard from about 1853 will recognize it there as a task to be faced by Christianity.

II The Hegelian Context

Both Lukács and Kierkegaard shared with Marx a past in Hegel's dialectic, all three being its critics from within that heritage. Although not in any sense a "pioneer," Lukács took on the role of custodian of an already established tradition whose future he aimed to bend in a more humanistic direction. In all three cases, philosophical categories and distinctions are used to define a goal, while reaching it requires translating the dynamics of their interaction from the abstractions of traditional philosophy, including Hegel's, into a language of everyday life. In this way it is not unlike the recent development known as the "naturalizing" of epistemology[5] that reduces the categories of knowledge and semantics to those of empirical science. Problems once treated as perennial and systematically resisting any final solution, are brought to earth in a frame that allows possible solutions to be looked for in space and time. With Kierkegaard and Lukács these are expressed in terms of a stock-in-trade subject/object dualism that has been endemic to philosophy from its start. Kierkegaard's extra-philosophic resolution of this "opposition" calls for a dynamic in which the subject (or subjectivity) plays an increasingly greater role (in "self-activity"),[6] while for Lukács the aim is to reform society by political means until it can be seen to be inspired by forces describable as humanly

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4 See Arpad Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács: Life, Thought, and Politics*, Oxford: Blackwell 1991, p. 125.
5 See, e.g., Willard Van Orman Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in *Epistemology: An Anthology*, ed. by Ernest Sosa, Jaekwon Kim, Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2008, pp. 528–537.
6 See, e.g., *SKS* 7, 220–221 / *CUPH*, 203–204.

creative. In both cases the alternative to be avoided is bourgeois sterility and complacency.

In terms of the subject/object framework, Lukács talks in the familiar Hegelian language of an identity in social practice of subject and object, whereas for Kierkegaard the task is to live a life poised inescapably between the traditional philosophical dualities of infinite and finite, possibility and necessity, and time and eternity. The eternal, for Kierkegaard, is not something you can leave to posterity as a common legacy; it is a feature of human activity in the actual doing. Lukács, on the other hand, following Hegel and Marx, has the eternal enter time in a historical process through the collective actions of a proletariat exceptionally positioned in history to be able to discern the inhumanity of humankind's present state and thus given the historic opportunity to make the necessary revolutionary changes.

In balancing Lukács and Kierkegaard against each other in this way, it is interesting that Lukács's pupil Lucien Goldmann refers to what he calls the "Marxian-Lukácsian standpoint" as a "philosophy of incarnation," meaning here an identity of subject and object.[7] Readers of Kierkegaard's *Postscript* will note that, due to incarnation in the Biblical sense being unthinkable, no *philosophical* directions for how to live a life can be built on it: it is a "postulate" resorted to in a fundamental need that we do our best to sublimate, but which, when we see it, may encourage us to see a need to go beyond an innate reliance on reason, in order to accept this condition of its satisfaction.[8] For Lukács, in adopting a practical solution to the dualism of subject and object, rationality consists in seeking available economic and political, and in part (his own contribution) cultural, means to a long-term end. For Kierkegaard (however passionate the acceptance of that "postulate" or condition), it is a cool self-awareness that sees the need to sustain a balance between ideality and reality in a way that allows the objective side, "reality" or in Hegel "substance," to express itself within the category of the individual.

So, while Lukács advises us to play down any growth potential that subjectivity may seem to provide in the humanizing cause, for Kierkegaard the rejection of inwardness as something to be cultivated within subjectivity is itself a sign of bourgeois complacency. In *The Sickness unto Death* it would be "necessity's despair." There, the super-Christian pseudonym Anti-Climacus calls it a flight

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7 Lucien Goldmann, "Lukács and Heidegger," *Philosophical Forum*, vol. 23, nos. 1–2, 1991–92, p. 25. Goldmann regarded Lukács as *Existenzphilosophie*'s true founder. See Lucien Goldmann, *Lukács and Heidegger: Towards a New Philosophy*, trans. by William O. Boelhower, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1977, p. xiii, p. 17 and p. 18.
8 *SKS* 7, 183n. / *CUPH*, 168n.

from inwardness. As "spiritlessness"[9] it is too well protected against knowing itself as such to have any chance of waking to its true nature. It can be guided back into the stream from the backwater it has "chosen" as its refuge only by being stimulated or provoked into creative choice by rebels. These, of course, will then be readily identified by the *status quo* as "decadents."

It is easy to see how, through selective reading, Kierkegaard himself can be identified as one of their number. *Either/Or* produced a divisive furor. The young liberals took to the book with relish while the establishment was shocked. Its literary leader was even "disgusted, revolted and offended" by the thought that a supposedly decent person could put himself into the shoes of the diarist.[10] The increasing focus on subjectivity in the later works hardly helped. Stripped early of its religious coating by the influential Georg Brandes's critical biography,[11] the focus on subjectivity originating in Kierkegaard was early misinterpreted as romanticism and quickly found its cultural feet in that narrow corridor opening onto the street where Lukács could catch sight of the carnival.

The earlier Lukács had himself played with the growth potential of subjectivity. Although the neo-Kantian idea of the "form" of the subject's activity, and more basically of the subject's consciousness, was not available to Kierkegaard, Lukács could make use of it in his first major publication, *Soul and Forms*. There he gave a privileged place to "tragedy" as the form of the soul in which reality is faced most openly and fully and, as we also have in Heidegger, with death as the limit of that awareness.[12] In line with Marxist theory, however, the later Lukács revised this neo-Kantian version of privileged epistemic access. Rejecting the narcissistically narrow access to reality implied by the notion of individual consciousness, he widened it to embrace the clear vision of the Proletariat. For the mature Lukács, a tragic perspective actually gets in the way of human progress. What we need is insight into the causal dis-relationships—provisional tragedies, as it were—to be found in existing societies in the form of inter-human exploitation. Here too like Hegel, Lukács sees the cult of the individual as a spiritual dead-end.

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9 *SKS* 11, 156–157 / *SDP*, 72.

10 J. L. Heiberg, "Litterær Vintersæd," *Intelligensblade*, vol. 2, no. 24, 1 March 1843, Copenhagen 1843, pp. 285 ff. For a detailed account, see Jon Stewart, "Johan Ludvig Heiberg's 'Literary Winter Crops' and Kierkegaard's Polemic," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2020, pp. 325–337.

11 Georg Brandes, *Søren Kierkegaard: En kritisk Fremstilling i Grundriss*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal 1877.

12 Georg Lukács, *Soul and Form*, trans. by Anna Bostock, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1971.

III History and Nature

Not all Marx-inspired thinkers have seen it in this way. We can look at two. First Theodor Adorno, another post-Hegelian reader of Kierkegaard but also inspired by Freud. Adorno claimed that the "greatest truth" lays in the aesthetic sphere of life. In typically allusive style, he notes that Kierkegaard's philosophy comes "closest to reality" when "in the self-consciousness of its mythical semblance" it "encounters aesthetic characteristics."[13] It is here that we can escape the sterility of the bourgeois life's assumption of having arrived at the world-historical terminus with nowhere else to go. Kierkegaard's further "stages on life's way", or "spheres of existence," are not to be recommended.

Adorno was not alone in seeing Judge Wilhelm's ethical stage as opening the way to bourgeois complacency and human arrogance. Like others, he saw the main fault with Kierkegaard in a failure to see that "there can be no impetus for reconciling with reality without first coming to grips with both history and nature." The dialectical "interweav[ing]" of these can be neither "reduced nor sublated." By "fleeing both," Kierkegaard had opted out of this "dialectics."[14]

Regarding nature, Adorno was especially sensitive to any appearance of indifference. With their stress on rising above nature and self-determination, it was for him a sign of the anthropocentric arrogance endemic to both idealism and Kantian ethics, something he might well see repeated in Kierkegaard's focus on the individual. Such glorification of humankind amounted to a declaration of war against animals and, in turn or conversely, the exclusion of humankind from nature.[15] Readers of Kierkegaard's journals will know that he himself was far from indifferent to nature. But in a still largely agricultural Denmark the more immediate moral problem of exploitation for a Danish citizen would be its recent participation in the more crudely exploitative slave trade to the West Indies. It was something from which his own father's wealth was derived. As for his own dealings with nature, they were, as one might say, 'natural' in that they had to do with nature as he found it in the Danish landscape. It was to be enjoyed, and the food it gave was for reflection. A theological background helped here too, giving him something quite basic to chew on, namely the split from nature that deprives human beings of a natural

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13 Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. and ed. by Robert Hullot-Kentor, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1989, p. 66.

14 Ibid., p. 66.

15 See, e.g., Theodor W. Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott, Cambridge: Polity Press 1998, p. 80.

habitat and leaves them with the task of compensating for its lack.[16] Nor is it just a matter of sustaining life. There is the "yawning abyss" into which "freedom" looks down and "becomes dizzy," and to which an all-too-common balance-saving solution is to cling together in a 'we' embrace.[17]

As for history, we can be too quick to accuse Kierkegaard of ignoring it, or of presenting an itinerary for human fulfillment without taking history into account. It is as well to recognize that in being addressed to compatriots, and in a definite setting, Kierkegaard's authorship was in fact, and consciously so, time-and-place specific. Its aim was the local one of upsetting his bourgeois compatriots, telling them that in the light of the *New Testament*, whose words they so easily repeated, their faith was a sham. As one of their number, he felt "under an infinite religious obligation" to do something about it. What stopped him from leaving them to it and absconding to some "isolated place" to just "sit down and laugh and laugh," as he says in typical Kierkegaard fashion, is that even if he did that, behind the laughter there would be the "pain" that "this backwater [*Kråhwinkel*]" was also his "beloved native land," and that his "beloved Copenhagen" was a "residential city of a prostituted philistinism."[18]

Then we have Sartre, whose Marxism has been accused of being an affectation, but who declared it to be the only philosophical landscape possible as long as scarcity is not overcome, the Sartre who quoted a Marx affirming that the "reign of freedom does not begin until the time when the work imposed by necessity and external finality shall cease."[19] Within this still inescapable landscape, Sartre was not only willing and able to find a place for Kierkegaard but was obviously very keen to have him on the team. He managed that by identifying Kierkegaard, along with all of us, as the "singular universal." The Danish thinker's special and lasting "merit" was to have posed "with his very life" the problem of whether "death puts an end to the paradox by denouncing it as a purely provisional appearance, or…pushes it to the extreme," so that,

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16 See *SKS* 11, 13 ff. / *The Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air: Three Godly Discourses*, trans. by Bruce H. Kirmmse, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016, pp. 9 ff. See also the translator's introduction.

17 *SKS* 4, 365 – 366 / *CAH*, 75.

18 *SKS* 21, 184, NB8:96 / *KJN* 5, 191 (trans. modified).

19 Karl Marx, *Capital III*, quoted in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. by Hazel E. Barnes, London: Vintage 1968, p. 34.

"since we die, all history is paradoxical, an unsurpassable conflict between being and existence."[20]

Here too, however, Kierkegaard misses the role of history, which Sartre saw in mutual interplay with the subject, an interaction more abstractly conceived as between "being" and *subjectivity.* It is in forcefully stressing the participation of the latter that history, as one might say, produced in Kierkegaard its messiah. Sartre makes of Kierkegaard's polemic on behalf of the individual an "adventure."[21] It is one that we can all emulate, not of course by copying his adventure, but by each of us becoming our own adventurer. Kierkegaard's adventure was to "[be] unintelligible but not dying as such," which means that he lives on as a "disqualification of knowledge, as a virtual lacuna" that "escapes" the concept. Adventuring in this way is a way of "not dying" that is open to us all as the "singular universal," that category being thereby, as Sartre puts it, a response to history "fold[ing] its universality back into itself."[22] Like Kierkegaard, we can survive our deaths by "affirm[ing] the irreducible singularity of each man to history," but at the same time being conditioned by history "rigorously."[23]

For Sartre, Kierkegaard's sense of religious obligation was a variable of this rigorously conditioning history. But then who is to say that blanket atheism is not also a stage, or a hiccup, on humanity's historically conditioning path to its fulfillment? Some form of religiousness, even in the spirit of Christianity, may still be waiting its turn. Regarding Christianity's focus on the particular individual, Kierkegaard notes in a journal entry that everything in his own age indicates a tendency "toward the absolute significance of the category of the individual," this being "precisely the principle of Christianity."[24] The depersonalized and atomized society soon to be diagnosed as such by Max Weber,[25] might be the reason for its new appeal, but it could also be a long-awaited occasion for self-discovery and appropriation of the "message" in its true and most challenging guise. Who is to tell?

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20 Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Singular Individual," *Kierkegaard: A Collection of Critical Essays*, trans. and notes by Peter Goldberger, ed. by Josiah Thompson, New York: Doubleday 1972, p. 233, p. 240 and pp. 262–264.

21 Sartre, "The Singular Universal," p. 233, p. 257, pp. 262–264.

22 Ibid., p. 263.

23 Ibid., p. 264.

24 *SKS* 20, 88, NB:123 / *KJN* 4, 87.

25 See, e.g., *Max Weber on Capitalism, Bureaucracy and Religion: A Selection of Texts*, ed. by Stanislav Andreski, London and New York: Routledge 1983.

Another of Kierkegaard's "despairs" is that of denying anything "eternal" in the self.[26] Any such claim would, for Lukács, be a form of irrationalism. It is, he says, a "delusion that 'spirit' resides in the self...[o]n the contrary, it indwells in the masses and should be searched out there."[27] Thinking perhaps of Kierkegaard, who Sartre later calls the "martyr of inwardness,"[28] Lukács says, in the same place, that "the greatest sacrifice is not dying for one's ideals but sacrificing the self for an ethical future."[29]

IV Kierkegaard on Communism

There is an irony in the fact that the very same words can be used to describe Kierkegaard's "spirit." In *Postscript* we read of a "self-annihilation" that finds a relationship with God, that is to say, with a deity that is "in the ground [*i Grunden*—in the foundation]" only when everything that obscures it is cleared away and "first of all the individual himself ..."[30] Many tracts could be written on the difference behind these parallel expressions of self-denial. In the Marxian version, God is officially absent: at best there is a dialectically material replacement of the Hegelian 'Mind,' one that can be seen bringing ever nearer the goal of a classless society. For Kierkegaard, instead of piloting history to its final haven, individual "self-activity" grips the problem trans-historically through participation at any moment in the long-term and even perennial historical process of humanization. God plays no part in the affairs of the world: they are up to us in a relationship with or to God.

As for the "masses" to which the Marxist looks in order to find "spirit" at work, it may have been Kierkegaard's own negative experiences that influenced his decided views on the budding Communism of his time. At home in Copenhagen, after being caricatured in the media, he had been mocked by a "faceless" crowd. Further abroad, in the still recent revolutionary times of 1790s France, the revolutionary "masses" had been fired by an idea that gave their collectivity at least a profile and shared meaning, providing them as it were with a common mask. But since those taking part related to this idea collectively and not one by one, there was no literal sharing and they were, accord-

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26 *SKS* 11, 157 ff. / *SDP*, 73 ff. *SKS* 11, 175 ff. / *SDP*, 91 ff.

27 From a conversation recorded by Anna Lesznai, see Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács*, p. 202 and p. 491.

28 Sartre, "The Singular Universal," p. 231.

29 Kadarkay, *Georg Lukács*, p. 202.

30 *SKS* 7, 509 – 510 / *CUPH*, 469. See also *SKS* 7, 520 / *CUPH*, 480.

ingly, "untrue" to themselves.[31] In the terms of "two ages" brought to life in a novel of that name that Kierkegaard reviewed with copious comment, the French Revolution belonged to an age of passionate engagement. The revolution itself was driven by outrage at perceived injustice. The Communist Revolution would be different and belong to Kierkegaard's own age, one that he describes as a time of expediency and reflection. It would be essentially a clinical affair that divided populations into the usable and the disposable. The result of its search for "spirit" in the masses would be diametrically opposed to Kierkegaard's hopes for finding it in the ideal of inter-personal relationships as promoted in *Works of Love*, which happened to be published in the same year that Marx and Engels began their co-operation on the Communist Manifesto.

On Communists themselves, noting in 1848 that those "at home and elsewhere" are fighting for human rights, Kierkegaard says: "Fine, so do I." It was exactly for this reason that he was "fight[ing] with all [his] might against the tyranny of fear of human beings." Pointing at Paris with its June Days uprising that same year, he writes: "[C]ommunism leads to the tyranny of the fear of others," which is "precisely where Christianity begins," a Christianity that assumes equality "as a matter of course."[32]

That would be a naïve claim if it implied that being equal can be abstracted from actual social, economic, and systematic inequalities. But it is better interpreted as a prophetic rejection of the motto attributed to a Russian revolutionary, that a good enough moral goal justifies any means to its attainment. If not self-contradictory in theory, that jingle has proved self-defeating in practice. An alternative extracted from *Works of Love* would require the means to a moral goal to be in the spirit of the goal. Inequality, in other words, is not to be achieved by eliminating a below-par minority or even majority, nor by imprisoning ideologists that get in the way. "Christianity shudders at this atrocity that wants to abolish God and institute the fear of the human masses, of the majority, of the people, of the public."[33]

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31 *SKS* 8, 63 / *LR*, 57.

32 *SKS* 20, 338–339, NB4:113 / *KJN* 4, 340 (original abbreviation expanded).

33 *SKS* 20, 339–340, NB4:113 (original abbreviations expanded) / *KJN* 4, 340. Cf. *SKS* 20, 339, NB4:114 / *KJN* 4, 341: "A mediocre ruler [*Regent*] is a much better constitution than this abstraction, 100,000 grumbling non-people."

V The Tables Turned

Accepting that Marx's theories need updating in the light of late capitalism's globalizing neo-liberalism, with its inherent disregard for the source of production's raw materials, many take Marx himself to have been right.[34] But if Stalinism, Maoism and the Cambodian Khmer Rouge, even Leninism or perhaps Engels himself, can be dismissed as deviations, we should be able similarly to reel back the history of the influence of Kierkegaard's writings on a decadent bourgeois philosophy to *its* source, and to consider the possibility that he, too, was right—yes both of them, each providing a dimension that the other lacks.

For Lukács, any idea of finding something eternal in the *self* is to mark time, getting nowhere, and worst of all it is to miss the world-historical bus. But having an inner history that reveals a self with a personal hold on reality—even producing a hidden self that "works" incognito—may well provide what we would expect anyone driving a bus to possess, namely a personally appropriated knowledge of the route. The ideal here, in this admittedly all too simplistic picture, is one where we can all take turns as the driver and that sounds as though it would require all of us, that is to say each, to be driving it together. Not just an unattainable idea no doubt, but scarcely intelligible. Sartre wrote of the need of a "margin of real freedom...beyond the production of life" before Marxism's "span" could come to its end. A "philosophy of freedom would then take its place," but "we have no means, no intellectual instrument, no concrete experience which allow us to conceive of this freedom or of this philosophy."[35]

If that seems unduly shortsighted or overdramatic, we may reflect that a philosophy of freedom is not *carte blanche* just to go anywhere: it has to be a highway code that tells people to watch out for others when travelling to their own destinations. We can at least imagine it being universally followed, even if given human nature the possibility of that ideal state ever happening may seem scarcely credible.

In these terms, however, those two rich men's sons, Søren Kierkegaard and György Lukács, can be seen as self-employed bureaucrats devising such a code. Each standing or sitting at his desk, the one produced mind-changing literature, the other looked inside literature as a source from which to provide current

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34 E. g., Slavoj Žižek, *The Relevance of the Communist Manifesto,* Cambridge: Polity Press 2019; Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2018; Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. by David Macey, London: Verso 2015.
35 Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 34.

Marxism with a human face—its true face, as he believed. It is hard to pin any damage Kierkegaard may have caused on the man himself when we read the whole corpus, but with Lukács it cannot be denied that, in turning a literary heritance to Communist advantage, he dismissed as decadent large, and what many believe potentially enriching, tracts of the European canon. It also led him to simplify and distort the works of authors that his cause favored. If he had much to do with the irrational soul's strivings that he believed to find in books, there was little to show for his own personal part in these strivings. But in the light of his official views on subjectivity, there may be some consistency in this after all.