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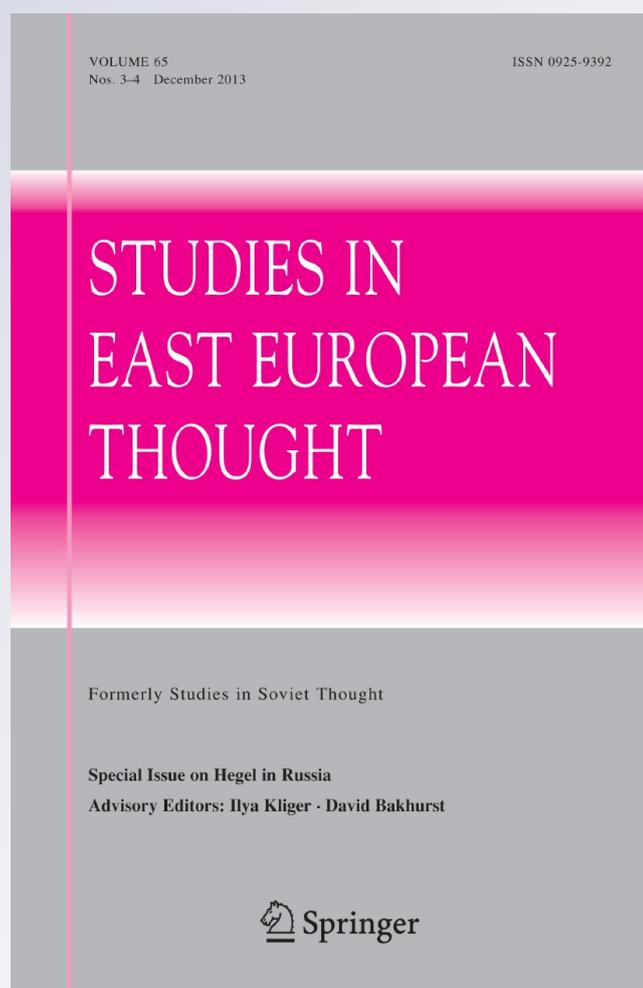
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Goethe and Hegel in the Commissariat of Enlightenment: Anatoly Lunačarskij's program of Bolshevik–Marxist aesthetics

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Abstract The study of the processes and methods through which elements of Hegelian philosophy and aesthetics have been appropriated and adjusted to the needs of Marxist–Leninist criticism is essential for understanding Bolshevik–Marxist aesthetics in the process of its consolidation into an official doctrine in Soviet Russia. By looking at the career of the Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment, Anatoly Lunačarskij, it is possible to discern the extent to which the process was forged by the unsanctioned presence of Goethe and Hegel. The article traces their important contributions in the causes of sustaining revolutionary romanticism and its eventual overcoming in favor of the rationality and solemnity of socialist realism.

Keywords Goethe · Hegel · Lunačarskij · Marxist aesthetics

The study of the processes through which elements of Hegelian philosophy and aesthetics were appropriated and adjusted to the needs of Marxist–Leninist criticism is essential to answer the larger question of the extent to which Hegel's thought was a constituent part of Bolshevik–Marxist aesthetics, playing a role comparable to the presence of Hegel and Hegelianism in other branches of philosophy in Soviet Russia. To this end, we must consider key episodes that reveal the quiescent turning of critical thought into a docile tool of ideological manipulation. One of the

Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Russian originals quoted in the text are mine.

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foremost examples is found in the contribution of the Bolshevik Commissar of Enlightenment, Anatoly Lunačarskij (1875–1933). Lunačarskij's views changed often: from positivism he was brought to empiriocriticism and the philosophy of God-building, he then resorted to militant atheism—albeit with many eloquent lapses on the way. In the end, he became a mouthpiece of lower-brow Marxism–Leninism for the masses. By looking at his eclectic evolution, however, it is possible to discern the extent to which Marxist–Leninist aesthetics was forged by the unsanctioned presence of Goethe and Hegel during the time when Lunačarskij “stood on his head”—at the highest point of his idealistic absolutism—and to reevaluate the important details in the fundamental remake that Hegel suffered in the peripatetic scheming of early Socialist ideology.

By focusing attention on Lunačarskij's obsession with Goethe's dramatic art and philosophy of life, including Lunačarskij's attempt to rewrite *Faust* for socialist consumption while responding to Hegelian and Marxist–Leninist critiques of Goethe, it becomes possible to disclose the strong connection between Lunačarskij's aesthetic and ideological vision of freedom of action as a variety of creative, performative history-making, one the one hand, and his own attempts to conduct and codify such a performance, on the other. It is here, in the realm of *conducting conduct*, that Lunačarskij relies on Hegel's ambivalent but disciple-like relation to Goethe, a relation that informs Lunačarskij's own dissension from Lenin and Stalin in his role of Academician and Commissar of Enlightenment.

Retired by Stalin to direct the Institute of Literature and Linguistics at the Communist Academy in Moscow and the Institute of Russian Literature at Pushkinsky Dom in Leningrad, in the final years of his life Lunačarskij contributed strongly to the formulation of Marxist–Leninist aesthetic doctrine while also playing a major role, in 1931 and 1932, in the publication of significant academic editions and the staging of events to commemorate the centenary of Hegel's and Goethe's deaths. These seminal events coincided with the final stages of the elaboration of Socialist Realism on the eve of the Great Terror and the victory of National Socialism in Germany.

“Revolutionary times are not charitable: they beat you up and no weeping is allowed—the weeping party is considered criminal, ‘an enemy of the people,’ or a vulgar philistine, a reactionary burgher at best.” These are the words of Ivan Bunin, who wrote about the mayhem started by peasants on one of the estates in the Elec region in the Orlovskij Gubernija in spring 1917 and sent the story to philosopher Pavel Juškevič, editor of the Odessan paper *Rabočee Slovo* (*Workers' Word*). Bunin related the following: at the peak of their destructive vigor the rummaging crowd stripped local peacocks of their finery, the birds symbolizing the aesthetic refinements of the *ancien regime*, and let the bloodied shrieking flock scuttle to and fro in dying agony. Juškevič got back to Bunin with a reprimand: “You ought not, dear venerable Academician, Monsieur Bunin, approach the revolution with a yardstick and concepts of a criminal column chronicler who laments peacocks—such petty philistinism! It is not in vain that Hegel taught us about the rationality of all that is real.” Bunin responded to Juškevič in the pages of the Volunteer White Army paper. As he put it, “the plague, cholera and the Jewish pogroms could too be justified—should one believe in Hegel so religiously; and yes, I pity the peacocks of

Elec: for they knew not that there had been a Hegel and therefore had nothing to console themselves with” (Bunin 2003, 510–11).

Juškevič’s accusation of “petty philistinism” is rhetoric typical of the firebirds of the revolution in response to those who would defend cultural values. Bunin overestimates the scope of Hegel’s influence where the formulations of the aesthetics of revolutionary action and its spontaneous procedures were concerned. He was not alone in making the false assumption. In his Dostoevsky book (1929), Bakhtin responds to Lunačarskij’s criticism of polyphony and implies that this line of anti-polyphonic, monologic thinking must have been influenced by the totalitarian monotony of Hegel.¹ Although he likewise exaggerates the degree of Hegel’s influence on official Soviet aesthetics, only Bakhtin could intuit the distant and non-apparent connections where Lunačarskij personally was concerned. Lunačarskij’s perception of the revolution was indeed aesthetic and, moreover, quite literally German-Romantic. He felt lifelong gratitude to Plekhanov who, years before, had introduced him to Fichte and Schelling, finding that the views of his young friend had been shaped too crudely by a precocious and uneven absorption of Marx and Marxism in the same brew with positivism, pragmatism, Mach, and Avenarius. Only *after* he had read Fichte and Schelling, said Plekhanov, could Lunačarskij approach Hegel. And only then could he understand Marx and Engels and implement the philosophy of changing the world (Lunačarskij 1968, 21–22). The question of violence stood in the way of such implementation and its deliberation coincided with the peak of the controversy over empiriocriticism, which produced Lenin’s lone substantial philosophical opus against idealism, *Materialism and empiriocriticism* (1908) and initiated his all-out campaign against idealism along with his attempts to tame Hegel’s dialectics for the necessarygnoseological substitution [podstanovka] that would put Hegel “back on his feet” (Lenin 1960–65, vol. 18, 367). Aesthetics in its connection to politics is not the usual focus for discussions of this controversy, but it is relevant, and should not be neglected.

In one of his many recriminatory responses to Maxim Gorky, who had similarly complained about the bloody hands of the first proletarian uprising in Russia, Lenin wrote angrily on February 12 (25), 1908 that “in the heat of the revolution” philosophy needed to deflate and adjust (Lenin 1960–65, 47, 141–45). Lunačarskij recalled that Lenin accused him too of being an artistic type [artističeskaja natura] in his appreciation of only the transcendent moments of the revolution. According to Lenin, Lunačarskij sought to find epiphany in politics by means of identifying too closely with what he believed were the artistic symbols of the revolution: “do not pity what is being destroyed during the revolution—it is throwing doors open before the new world order that can create beauty which could not have been even dreamed about” (Lunačarskij 1968, 30, 34). This telling example of Lenin’s Mephistophelian selling of the revolution to Lunačarskij sheds light on Juškevič’s simultaneous attempts in 1917 to justify violence through Hegel. In this relationship,

¹ Lunačarskij’s essay on Bakhtin’s multi-voiced Dostoevsky with criticisms of his petty bourgeois fixation on suffering is titled “O mnogogolosnosti Dostoevskogo” (1929; Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 1, 157–178). Bakhtin responds to these criticisms by saying that Dostoevsky will outlive capitalism (Bakhtin 1984, 28–37).

empiriosymbolism confuses the symptom of the experience with the essential. How much was Hegel implicated in the doings of the revolution?

In the years when Goethe published his *Faust I*, Hegel indeed wrote that Spirit was Artist. But already in his earliest philosophical work discussing the differences in the method of Fichte and Schelling, *Differenzschrift* (1801), Hegel warned that unless one was not afraid of ending up with a “broken neck,” as he put it, he did not recommend deciphering reality through the operations of logical elevation, transposition, or reduction (Hegel 1978, 106–09). Hegel was known for eschewing the idea of violence—although he did say that what is ethical must be actual regarding an individual’s crimes against the established political order (Hegel 1977, 424). Hegel exhibited no apparent interest in the bylines of violence and certainly had nothing to say about peacocks as either political symbols or as harbingers of future disasters. But the revolutionary episodes in post-Napoleonic Europe led him to prefer the idea of enlightened absolutism in which Realpolitik took control over political romanticism. As Lukács famously put it, Hegel did not traduce the contradictions of capitalism into a fake truce, but framed them at the highest level of objective generality (Lukács 1976, 410).

In this growing temperance, his closest intellectual ally of the time was Goethe. Their ambiguity about political violence, especially that of the masses, these “un-alienated spirits transparent to themselves” (Hegel 1977, 261), was joined with their praise of ethical creative freedom. Hegel could not have known *Faust II* (1832) in its entirety, and, in his view, Goethe’s dramatic characters caved under the weight of the supreme action imposed on their shoulders during their pursuit of losing historical causes (Götz or Egmont) or, worse, of really trivial causes (Werther and Faust chasing after love). Not adapted for the execution of historically significant tasks, they were like oaks planted in exquisite vases. However, in the huge chunks of life that Goethe was capable of fitting into his superbly-crafted forms of lofty realism, reality was beautiful precisely because it sublimated irony rather than the other way around, as was characteristic of the Romantics.²

Despite these semi-criticisms, Goethe was to Hegel a living demigod. But his own philosophical fame, when it fully developed, was to Goethe merely notoriety for everything ponderous and abstract, although he liked Hegel the man.³ For many contemporaries, the friendly sentiment between the two great Germans was often seen as the token of their shared political restraint. Their ultimate *Entsagung* (resignation) was the hubris of their fatal bourgeois conservatism whose élan of radicalism was too checked to reach far enough. This was duly discussed as such by critics as diverse as Marx and Engels, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, and

² Hegel’s references to Goethe are steady and numerous, but the most representative summary may be found in his Lectures on Aesthetics. See Hegel (1978, vol. 1, 17–21, 203–04, 229–35, 271–97, 467, 583, 834 and vol. 2, 1012, 1131–32, 1178, 1224–1232).

³ Hegel’s nascent philosophy could only have enjoyed ephemeral presence in *Faust*, unlike Schelling and Fichte, who are featured in the *Walpurgisnacht* in Part I, finished in 1806. Goethe helped with putting Hegel in charge of arboreal supervision and involved him in the work of his optical laboratory and they communicated on issues of natural philosophy and on Goethe’s theory of colors (Hegel: The Letters 1984, 444–74).

Nietzsche. For all the chief Western and Russian Marxists this resignation from active politics was extended into matters of revolutionary struggle.⁴

It should not surprise us that Bukharin reflects on the connection in his *Philosophical arabesques* written during his time in the Lubjanka:

Hegel in many ways resembled Goethe, the other giant of his age. If, as Engels remarked, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is Hegel's embryology and paleontology, then Goethe's *Faust*, that great artistic epic, in essence has to do with the same thing. Hegel was exceedingly fond of underpinning his thoughts with ideas and artistic images from Goethe. In his own fashion, Goethe was undoubtedly a dialectician, and [...]Hegel took with enthusiasm to the artistic contemplation of the whole, protesting against intellectual vivisection. [...] However, [...] Goethe decisively objected to Hegel's idealist abstractions and theological tendencies (Bukharin 2005, 299).

Bukharin's statement on Goethe and Hegel as a sort of a touchstone principle for the development of Marxism echoes the opinions of other Marxist thinkers. For Bogdanov, both Goethe's materialist vitalism and Hegel's dialectics teach that "the criterion of truth is practice" and that a pragmatic dialectical method (what Marx took from Goethe and Hegel) was a fine prototype in the struggle for an integral worldview that is not constrained by Kantian epistemology. Bogdanov argues, counter Juškevič, that had these approaches been practiced, they could have prevented the bloodshed of 1917–1921 (Bogdanov 1920, iii–vi).

In Lukács's opinion, Goethe and Hegel prompt to Marx the right idea, namely that classical antiquity, supplemented by historically informed class optimism, should replace the economic and cultural standards left behind by the "shabby inhumanity" of bourgeois civilization (Lukács 1976, 408–409). What is necessary is the "negation of the bourgeois ideal by an elimination of its social bases" (Lukács 1968, 122) and, by implication, of the social bases of its literary and spiritual striving. According to Lukács, Gorky's speech at the Writers' Congress in Moscow (1934) strongly introduces this idea into the Socialist Realist doctrine (Lukács 1976, 409). Interestingly, in his comparisons of Goethe and Hegel, Lukács repeats Bukharin's Engelsian extensions practically verbatim, adding that in the tragedy of *Faust*, "the 'divine comedy' and the 'human comedy' converge" providing "an abbreviation of the evolution of mankind itself." But although *Faust* and *Phenomenology* belong together as "the greatest artistic and intellectual achievements of the classical period in Germany," only Hegel's *Phenomenology* "synthesizes most succinctly all the tendencies of the time and rises to the highest level attainable at the time" (Lukács 1968, 176–77).

In these discussions from the 1930s, Goethe and Hegel complement one another: Goethe's materialism sets off Hegel's idealism; Hegel's dialectics sets off Goethe's

⁴ Kierkegaard fears that the new *Faust* would be overcome by Hegelian-caused despair over his inability to develop an all-embracing total vision of reality, that would be annulling all relativities and yet lacking in the sensuality of the first *Faust* (Kierkegaard 1996, 80–81). This fear is shared by Bukharin awaiting execution in 1938: he quotes from Goethe's conversations with Eckermann (March 23, 1827) that concern the instances when Hegelian philosophy becomes associated with the loss of capacity for "unprejudiced natural contemplation" of tragedy (Bukharin 2005, 299).

cold Olympian balance; Goethe's vision of the individual as part of the human race sets off Hegel's treatment of humanity as a vehicle for history. They share in the greatest substantive impact on modern thought to which Marxism added the right method: Goethe's Faustian striving and Hegel's self-consciousness educated through its dialectical evolution in the social are given the right teleological direction devoid of the religiously-colored justifications. In essence, Marxism pushes forward the idea about the allegedly non-religious subterfuge found in the two legacies. Only Max Horkheimer's statement (1935) representing the views of the Frankfurt School is out of step with the above Soviet examples thanks to his idea that the dialectic may take on a "transfiguring function" by the direct inclusion of Hegel's dialectics in the aesthetic regions of the Marxist superstructure: "In Hegel, as in Goethe, the progressive impulses enter secretly into the viewpoint which ostensibly comprehends and harmonizes everything real impartially" (Horkheimer 2002, 416–19).

Against this backdrop of theoretical agitation, the absence of Goethe and Hegel from the authoritative party-led discourses and decisions *during* the formation of proletarian-socialist culture and its administration is striking. As per Louis Althusser's clarification, Lenin was a significant late-comer to the study of Hegel (1914). It was not Hegelian dialectics that he had first soaked up, but Marxian, and once he had read Hegel proper, certain ideas excited him strongly, especially the possibility of conversion of The Absolute Idea into the Absolute Method "based on a proletarian position" (Althusser 2001, 71, 82). It is from Lenin that we can trace the tendency of understanding Hegel and transforming his philosophical world through *Capital* (p. 83). But there are reasons other than those mentioned by Althusser as to why Hegelian aesthetics enjoyed such a belated and partial inclusion in the Marxist–Leninist canon.

In 1922, Plekhanov's ideas, although quite unsuitable for the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, still remained the accepted standard of explanation regarding the relationship of art to reality, and the dependence between art and social life, despite Plekhanov's obvious variance from Lenin and Bolshevik power.⁵ In these interim years after he had assumed the post at the head of the Commissariat, Lunačarskij did not participate in the theoretical work that Lenin drafted for periodicals of Red Philosophical Academy such as *Pod znamenem marksizma* (the journal "against philosophy" created in 1922), which was supposed to found a society of materialist friends of Hegel's dialectics. Theory-making was not believed to be Lunačarskij's strength.

In its earlier stages, the Deborin-led *Pod znamenem marksizma* codified a few moments of Hegelian aesthetics, especially in the issues commemorating Plekhanov (issues 5–6 of 1922) and through tertiary discussions of Feuerbach, Černyševskij, Belinskij, Gercen and even Shelley. But Deborin's essays on Hegel and Marxist

⁵ There were other points of variance. It should be remembered that the disagreements between Lenin and Gorky had been ongoing since 1908 and that it was in the aftermath of these disagreements that Gorky consolidated his God-builders group and the authors of *Vpered* on Capri and then in Bologna, in which Lunačarskij and his brother-in-law, Alexander Bogdanov, both were key participants. Bogdanov announced to Lunačarskij in November of 1917 that the atmosphere of military communism was not right for culture and that he was opposing Lenin's and Lunačarskij's "maximalism" (Jagodinskij 2006, 13).

theories of art published in Otto Schmidt's *Great Soviet encyclopedia* at the end of the 1920s were criticized severely for separating "Leninism" from Marxism and Hegel. After the departure of sociological Marxist critics like V.M. Friče (who died in 1929), Soviet Marxism still stood in need of the materialist and class-centered corrective of Hegelian philosophy in its relation to art, work which had not been completed by Hegel's centenary in 1931. Friče and Lunačarskij were both on the editorial board of the new *Literary encyclopedia*, which was initiated in 1929, with an open declaration that there was a grave shortage of Marxist–Leninist specialists—or even sociologists—working in Literary Criticism and Aesthetics (Lebedev-Polianskij *Literaturnaja enciklopedija* 1929, vol. 1, i–v). The entry on Hegel, which was supposed to be included in the entry on aesthetics, was never published because the edition of the encyclopedia was suspended.

In his capacity of Director of the Institute of Literature and Language at Communist Academy, Lunačarskij supported and supervised a young debating group (he was especially backing Mikhail Lifšic), with the goal of tugging Hegel into line with Marxism–Leninism. As Lifšic put it in his entry "Marx," "historical materialism has returned to the category *Verjüngung* [rejuvenation] the kind of meaning that Hegel had deprived it of" (Lebedev-Polianskij *Literaturnaja enciklopedija* 1932, vol. 6, 907). It appears that Lunačarskij intervened in the process of Hegelian retooling from around 1924, gradually building momentum and, despite his support of Lifšic, always making a point of undermining Schillerian-style enthusiasm in favor of what he understood to be Goethe's and Hegel's realism, closer to Marxism in spirit. Lunačarskij's adjustments of Goethe and Hegel after Lenin's death and during his increasing unhappiness in Stalin's administration should be placed on the continuum of Lenin's condemnation of his old empiriocritical felony, the "dragging in of their little deity" [božen'ka] under the guise of scientific and social explorations (Lenin to Gorky 15 (25) February 1913; Lenin 1960–65, vol. 48, 160–63). Hegel's dialectics is summoned by Lunačarskij, in following Lenin, to "rescue the substance" from maieutic evasiveness, claiming that the true dialectics should develop "in the whole collective" [vo vsem kollektive] in which "errors" are the necessary ingredient of progress (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 1, 123–24). By all accounts, Lunačarskij was in agreement with the most considered of Lenin's pronouncements on Hegel, namely, that dialectics is "the theory of knowledge of Hegel and of Marxism" (Lenin 1960–65, vol. 29, 316–22). But by 1930, he expands, saying that Hegel was calling for actively engaging with reality "within the forward-moving social framework... where the young and powerful element is victorious. A Hegelian is a revolutionary, but a revolutionary not for the sake of his passions, not for the sake of his personal aspirations, but for the sake of the objectively understood social contradictions and the objectively foretold courses of their development" (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 1, 133–4).

During the separation of Russian philosophy from legal Marxism and of Marxism from neo-Kantianism, when Lunačarskij first met Lenin in 1904, Lunačarskij also embraced Hegel's revolutionary spirit, deciding simultaneously that Lenin's person was the closest human incarnation of Goethe's Mephistopheles. In the first minutes of their acquaintance in Paris, they walked into the studio of sculptor Aronson, who

was struck by Lenin's demonic mien. Lunačarskij later repeated in prominent venues that Aronson's Lenin in red marble, when it was brought to Soviet Russia in 1927, looked revolutionary precisely because it was very Mephistophelean (Lunačarskij 1968, 84–88). Love for Goethe's Mephistopheles may have started with Plekhanov. The anecdote became public in 1922 when Ljubov Akselrod-Ortodoks published her memoir on Plekhanov, in which she credited Hegel, "the great German Idealist," with helping Plekhanov to arrive at his interpretation of *Faust* as the epochal struggle for the future of man and humanity (Aksel'rod 1922, 18). The party lore aside, Deborin formulated the Marxist version of the uses of Hegelianism in the late 1920s as follows. It could be useful for dialectical and historical materialism, only provided that its failing, treacherous essence as a false friend is recognized, namely its belief in "ultimate intuition" confirming its idealistic core (Deborin 1929, 744, 780, 807–808).

Learning from these inspirations, Lunačarskij was intent on retrofitting Hegel to his own revolutionary standard saying it was time to choose properly, where the theory of literature and criticism are concerned, what could be considered the dialectical and revolutionary worldview prompted by Hegel rather than the theistic and compliant view. In 1931, he wrote in volume 5 of *Literary encyclopedia* that the whole of reality and the history of mankind are perceived by Hegel as one "uninterrupted revolutionary movement," and that this is how Hegel looked at the history of art (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 8, 365–66). Throughout his mature career, Lunačarskij combined his rethinking of Goethe's *Faust* and Hegelian dialectics with Lenin's political Mephistopheles. This process begins in the year of his meeting with Lenin, when he also publishes *Osnovy pozitivnoj estetiki* (Foundations of positive aesthetics) (1904; reissued 1923) elaborating elements of positive aesthetics from the point of view of Hegelian objectivism, rather than resting his case with Mill and Spencer: "Man steps onto the arena of history with some instincts that surpass the individual. ...This individual reason should be overcome, or else the route towards the ideal would be blocked forever" (Lunačarskij 2011, 2). Lunačarskij's interest in drama and dramatic art as a gathering place for the lyrical and the epic is evident from the start of these engagements of art in the minutiae of political strife in which the relationship between tragic action, historical dialectics, and theater becomes direct. In his ecstatic view of 1921, the Marxist teatron Hegelianized Aristotelean tragedy: "Why tragedies? Because the proletariat did not attain victories in the past" (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 2, 233). The new plays should feature the kind of action that comes into its own from the religious-magical to political and class art. In 1908, the year of his Bolshevik reawakening, Lunačarskij saw the promise for the realization of his didactic Enlightenment dream in a stripped down, almost barbaric form of plainly spoken theater. It is then that Goethe's closet drama attracted him with a new force.

Already in 1904, the year of his discovery that Lenin was a revolutionary Mephistopheles, he had published his thoughts on *Faust* in which the play appeared to him as an organic and harmonious whole; instead of bearing the holy dread of *Faust I*, the drama bears a "presentiment" of the striving soul's future "true greatness, its real task and finally finds its place in the universe" (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 5, 12). In Lunačarskij's interpretation, Goethe imbued his *Faust* with

humanistic ambitions and with a joyous and optimistic faith in materialistic, earthly happiness, which makes it easy for him to decide that Faust should be the new tragic revolutionary leader (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 5, 70–71). In the year of Lenin's death (1924), Lunačarskij decides that the new revolutionary should be a social engineer patterned on the character of Faust in Part II, coming to the proletarian masses with a blueprint of work to transform life (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 5, 463). This Hegelian emphasis on productive dialectics is especially visible in Lunačarskij's later drama criticism and his own playwriting career, specifically his Goethe-inspired play, "Faust and the City" [Faust i gorod (1906–1918)].

The play was started when Lenin's militancy peaked against the "agnostics and the metaphysicians," and against Lunačarskij's "deification of human potencies." During his crusade against Lunačarskij's "little deity" [božen'ka] Lenin often free-associated with the help of satanic metaphors (such as "the devil take them") on the threats posed by the bogs and marshes of idealism (Lenin 1960–65, vol. 47, 141–3). Lunačarskij's Faust also builds his city on the marshes, with a defiantly emblematic name—Trotzburg [The City-Despite]—but his *Faust* favors visionary builders, astrologers, and mariners, who test human capacity to conquer nature and lead the struggle between enlightened absolutism and democracy, in an attempt to build a republic, the Free City. During the writing of the play, Lunačarskij speaks with horror of the cruelty and the suddenness of the Bolshevik coup [perevorot] while relating to his wife Anna that he would stick to his role as a democratic tribune who would be pushing off the "military baboons" (Antonova and Rogovaja 2005, 234, 286–7). Mephisto, Faust's most wicked and treacherous courtier in the play, demands that the peaceful uprising of townsfolk be subdued by excessive force exercised by Landsknechts led by Faust's unworthy, equally treacherous, and debauched son, Faustul. But Faust resigns and retreats into the countryside where he lives as a commoner. It is there that he completes his last miracle, the construction of Ironman (a robotic rethink of the Goethean homunculus that does not suggest any of the darker undercurrents of modernist dystopias, but rather recalls the luminous being as Hegel understood it), destined to assist Trotzburg in its daring plans for peaceful expansion and for winning control over nature. With his grandchild born of the loving union between Faustina and Gabriel (the latter is strongly patterned on Bogdanov), and the work of his life completed, he walks back to Trotzburg in plain dress finding himself in the middle of a pandemonium during which Mephisto plots to seize power in a coup, placing his stake on the treachery of one of the tribunes. But this is all to no avail: Ironman is greeted by the democratic assembly of townsfolk, and Gabriel calls for the election of new tribunes. Mephisto, in his greed for violence, manipulation, and power, has lost this battle.

Lunačarskij explained the play's peaceful leanings while denying that the events in the play comment on the revolution in Russia. And yet in signing his preface in the Kremlin, in December 1920 (Lunačarskij 1921, 3–6), and by indicating the place of the signing in his opening words, Lunačarskij was not too honest. Petrograd was a stage of a social experiment, but, unlike his Trotzburg, it did *not overcome* the temptation of cruelty against the rebellion. In this paean to the city-ruler [gorod-vlastelin], for whom Faust is but the bellwether [sredi ravnykh vpered], the absolute sense of Hegelian irony dissolves and totalitarian humorlessness of the brusque

carnavalesque moves in. The “popular genius” [narodnyi genii] of the masses tames the restlessness of a “mad and arrogant...demigod,” the Old Rebellion [Bunt] and his seditious querulous wife, Envy (Lunačarskij 1923, vol. 1, 226). The principle of sublimation is hijacked with the artificial annulment of the conflict in the “noisy delight” [shumnyi vostorg] of the crowd as Faust “wins-loses” the pact with Mephisto by first claiming that there is no death, only life (1923, vol. 1, 229) and then, bending under Mephistophelean temptation, begs for the moment of happiness to *linger on* (1923, vol. 1, 230). In conclusion, Lunačarskij’s Faust is laid to rest in state—like a high-ranking Bolshevik: “Faust is alive in all of us! He is living with us! He is forever alive! (Hats go off. The banners are lowered).” The bells toll while the Free City is singing its anthem: “The Giant City Has Risen” (1923, vol. 1, 230).

And yet, the debt to Hegel, although garbled in these confusions, remains active and productive. Especially significant is Lunačarskij’s sharing of Hegel’s view that to restore the value and spiritual potency of the tragic an inordinate amount of good works would be required. Because tragic action is associated with inner conflict, it is not enough that a character should remain beholden to the scope of his duties, fulfilling them in correspondence to his station (Hegel 1998, vol. 2, 1158–1237). The latter situation belongs in the realm of the ordinary, but the hero should rise to the resolution of dire social conflicts, and thus engage in the battle for the restoration of higher justice even at the cost of his life or the life of others. Lunačarskij comes close to the possibility that through revolutionary struggle one may subdue cardinal political evil. But what would explain the persistence of radical evil and the necessity to sacrifice charity, kindness, and good faith? As Lunačarskij argued his theodicy in one of the popular anti-religious lectures, “When we are asking the believers: this dark power—Satan—is it equal to God or not? If it is approximately equal in the ratio of Denikin to Red Army then we should fight against him, and then it means that God is not all powerful; if He were, he could destroy all evil in 1 minute. If Satan is dark power and evil, then why does God permit the existence of Satan, if owing to the existence of Satan man, or parts of human souls, would burn in hell’s undying fire!” (Lunačarskij 1965, 176). This communist theodicy helps Lunačarskij create his version of “optimistic” tragedies of proletarian and socialist theater patterned on the two giants, Goethe and Hegel, by whom freedom is taken seriously, and therefore evil is necessary, but god is not, and struggle is personified in concrete conflicts (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 3, 88).

And this is how, theatrically speaking, Lunačarskij succeeded in switching foundations [podstanovka osnovy], “What is individual freedom? We adopt in this regard the Hegelian point of view transferred unaltered onto the foundations of materialist dialectics. We call that man free whose actions stem from his essence. ...Free is that action which corresponds to my conviction and feelings” (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 6, 127). And what about the Hegelian reworking of the notion of hubris in application to Faust and his followers? “The guilt of these people,” Lunačarskij says, consists in that they *did not* compromise with reality, but desired to break through, “but in this also is their heroism” (p. 162). This thought, notably, is contained in Lunačarskij’s Jubilee Introduction to the Works of Goethe that he supervised in 1931–1932. In these years, Lunačarskij merges Goethe and Hegel in one triumphalist sweep. The general architecture of *Faust* is optimistic and

triumphant, according to Lunačarskij. “The death rattle sounding in the speech of the old Faust forecasts that the struggle will continue,” it will be endless, until one day it will be the struggle of a social fighter, working in “his friendly family,” according to the state plan [v planovom poriadke], and through this struggle we achieve what Lunačarskij understands to be communism, “a forecast of the democratic, as it were, even into the socialist period in the life of humanity” (p. 172). In the Introduction, Lunačarskij contributed to the creation of the purely acceptable Soviet-Socialist Goethe: “Goethe was really a dialectical materialist” (p. 179), if not an atheist, then an irreligious pantheist, a dynamic materialist and a lucid realist for whom the concrete was a part of the whole as it reflected the necessity of the laws [zakonomernost’]. Only Hegel could stand next to him and “Goethe followed Hegel’s philosophical activity with the greatest sympathy” (p. 180). In his campaign to recruit Goethe for the purposes of Socialist Realist plan, Lunačarskij relied on select elements of Hegel’s criticism of Goethe that he integrated into some negative reviews of Western attempts to stage Goethe. For example, in “Faust in Hamlet’s cape” [Faust v poze Gamleta], he disagreed with Alexander Moissi’s Volksbühne version featuring a passive and indecisive, Hamlet-like, Faust (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 8, 498). Similarly, Lunačarskij commented negatively on the picaresque and almost clownish presentations of Goethe’s *Götz von Berlichingen* in the public square of Frankfurt (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 6, 500–18).

The centennials of Hegel’s and Goethe’s deaths held in 1931 and 1932 respectively are regarded as milestones in the completion of the Sovietization of Goethe and Hegel and of Marxism as such. The Goethe celebration in the Soviet Union took place on March 22, 1932, in a very formal and festive atmosphere, with a grandiose gala at The House of the Soviets, which was widely covered in the central press. Not so with Hegel, who was shown to his proper place in the modest philosophical corner of the Communist Academy. As Lukács put it, “the question about Hegel is relatively clearer than the question on Goethe” because philosophical matters were much better explained by Marx, Engels, and Lenin and because Hegel was much clearer in the expression of his opinions on historical and class struggle than Goethe (Lukács 1932, 130). Hegelian philosophy and aesthetics was, in the revised party view, significantly defeated in its revolutionary potential. Now it was said to lead astray, to fail to enlighten class-political contexts. Stalin’s Academy assembled a volume to counterattack the 2nd international Hegelian Congress that took place in Berlin on October 18–21, 1931 (*Philosophical review*, 410–14). The Soviet “counter-volume” offered a frontal assault against Hegel’s dominion over Marxism. In the editorial opening, V. V. Adoratskij nailed down the difference: “The dialectics of Hegel is revolutionary in its tenor, but it is still idealism. ...After the necessary transformation... into materialist dialectics it became a theoretical weapon of the proletariat...and the real-time course of history confirms [its] correctness ...by the experience of struggle and construction in the USSR” (Kovalev *Gegel*’ 1932, 3, 22).

During the Goethe celebrations, many ominous notes were sounded too. Consider Lukács’ appraisal: “[Goethe’s] activity in the bourgeois camp is connected with the feebly-willed, philistine and compromising side of his conflicted nature, and, at best,

with the confusion of philistine and lofty elements” (Lukács 1932, 137). Lunačarskij did not protest against the view that Goethe was the great genius and a narrow philistine, the point made in *Pravda* 1932, March 23 by Leopold Averbakh (Averbakh 1932, 21–38). He agreed with Walter Benjamin’s interpretation of Goethe’s *Faust* as a testing ground of personal fitness for historical struggle (Benjamin 1929, 548). Yet his editorial preface to the Goethe volume of *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* well displays his split personality when he implores Goethe in the intimate second person on behalf of the proletariat: “Leave behind what has been imposed upon you by the wretchedness of your time... Walk out into the eternal future with those who have facilitated the real rise of human society” (*Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 1932, 4–20). Although he conceded that Goethe and Hegel had both contemptuously swept aside the anarchist and erratic renegades causing obstruction to the course of the historical Idea, Lunačarskij claimed it would be a “counterrevolutionary” distortion to impute to either thinker the justification of the allegedly reasonable bourgeois order (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 6, 186 and vol. 7, 562). In the thickening political climate, Lunačarskij chose to assume a more combative stance against Hegel. His pose in the cause of separating Marx from Hegel’s claim that there is no returning to art if the Spirit had exhibited itself *ad finitum* in the Prussian State was much less lyrically intimate and genuflecting than was his proletarian confession-warning to Goethe from the previous year: “And so this gibberish that ratifies Hegel’s collapse, his bourgeois captivity, his cowardice, his greatest infamy, they are trying to impose obliquely on Marx: it is alleged that Marx spoke about art like an obscurantist, and that he foresaw no forward movement in these developments at all” (Lunačarskij 1970, 126). Not merely the modus, but the very phrasing of this conversational outburst accords fully with the newly standard party language worked out by Communist Academy. Consider the nameless editorial preface to two volumes of Hegel’s Aesthetics, which was signed by “The Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR” that would be released with a delay of several years in the 1930s: “capitalist production is alien to some branches of spiritual production, which are art and poetry. On the basis of this problematic Hegel arrives at the conclusion that the “Spirit” has passed the aesthetic stage, and this means that the true flowering of art will never again be. But to Marx it is clear, on the contrary, that the overthrow of capitalism brings forth the new and heretofore unseen rise of the entire human culture and thus of art as well” (Gegel’ 1938, vol. 12, v–vii; xviii–xx).

But towards Goethe Lunačarskij was more loyal. In an unidentified letter that he intended to send—possibly to Otto Schmidt, editor-in-chief of the *Great Soviet encyclopedia*—he reacts approvingly to the critical coverage of Plekhanov’s excessively subjectivist view on beauty, but asks that the section be shortened. At the same time, he does not object to Vladimir Asmus’ outrageous claim that Hegel aggravates Kant’s idealism by building his dialectics on the struggle between spirit and flesh, and he applauds the summary points in the section on Marxist–Leninist aesthetics which, “as is known, does not yet exist in a systematic shape,” but he is appalled at there being not a word on Goethe’s aesthetics (*Bol’shaja sovetskaja enciklopedija* 1933, 651–83 and Lunačarskij 1970, 540). In a sense, his loyalty to Goethe changed little since 1927 when he exclaimed: “What would you say about a

person who said twaddle!' upon reading the first five pages of Marx's *Das Kapital* or Goethe's *Faust* and would shut the volume? What would you say if he were to justify his behavior by appealing to this point of proof: But I don't get it!" (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 3, 362).

The use of the Hegelian–Goethean platform in a bid to pit the optimistic and absolutist German aesthetics and humanism against Nazism and Stalinism in his last years amounts to Lunačarskij's attempt to conquer death by life. Despite his avowed atheism, he continued to be a believer in immortality. In the first days of the Red October he was saying to his wife: "I can't say that I believe in immortality, but I hope for it. I feel it terribly that true love should be accounted for beyond the plain materiality of life" (Antonova and Rogovaja 2005, 291). And 16 years later, after being officially corrected by the consolidated effort of Communist Academy, Hegelian Irony still plays its ultimate victory in Lunačarskij's longings for an afterlife. As Kojève explained well, Hegelian dialectics was not merely a "method" that could be wielded every each way in an open-ended historical experiment based on a secret belief in "eternal life or ...resurrection." (Kojève 1980, 252–3). Not even a Bolshevik, who defers the moment of communist sublation to the time arriving after the death of his generation can "really live his imaginary afterlife" (Kojève 1980, 252–3). After his many attempts at *Entsagung* from Goethe and Hegel's legacies, all that Lunačarskij and his circle really achieved was their faith in Schelling's and Hegel's *Versöhnung*, not a retreat, but a reconciliation with one's finite humanity (Schelling 1985, 255), a reconciliation process through which heroes and tribunes overcome their personal strivings by actualizing their bondage and finitude in something imperishable and enduring, for example, in the entire historical life of humanity (Hegel 1975, 38–39). And therefore the party call for reducing the stately totality of Goethe and Hegel down to a serviceable doctrine of mimesis for the portrayal of class-conscious political action did not quite work out.

At the Oxford Congress on Aesthetics (1930), Lunačarskij promoted Hegel's corrections of Kant's purely formalist aesthetics, unsuitable for socialism because it was devoid of historical sensitivity other than in a "philistine," religious-moral sense (Lunačarskij 1963–67, vol. 8, 360–7). All these shortcomings Lunačarskij addresses in his theory of the peacock elaborated in a lecture on art and religion to workers of Krasnaja Presnja in 1930. Presnja was the site of bloody fighting during the revolution of 1905 that had caused his and Bogdanov's and Gorky's slippage into the bogs of idealism. Attempting to Hegelianize Kant, Lunačarskij speaks of the savage's education through history thanks to his rising social awareness. The peacock's tail attracts his attention and, instead of exciting his unconscious class fury, it calls the savage's mind to aesthetically vivid moments of dialectics. The red finery of Indian peacocks allows Lunačarskij to conduct a leap from Darwin's natural selection to Marx's class struggle, highlighting to workers and peasants the aesthetic appeal of color red. Lunačarskij reminds his listeners that in Russian the word "red" is a synonym of "beautiful" and that peacocks have been traditionally associated with immortality (Lunačarskij 1985, 470–93).

In his embrace of idealistic symbols Lunačarskij displays the symptomatic anxiety of the transition from Romanticism to Realism. He did discover that Romanticism was not "binding enough" for socialism (Tertz 1960, 90–91) and yet,

after 1929 he could not stand with Gorky and other imposers of false solemnity over what used to be the enthusiasm of dialectical negating. When the stately totality of Goethe and Hegel became the fodder of “icy classicism” around 1934 (Tertz 1960, 82), with the teleology of rationalism in place, Lunačarskij was already gone.

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