Nietzsche's Early Reception in Hungary

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"The history of the Nietzsche reception is also the history of Hungarian intellectual life during the quarter century preceding the World War," was the concluding sentence of the first study on Friedrich Nietzsche's influence in Hungary by Bela Lengyel in 1938.[1] The only other study of early Hungarian modernism used this quote as its starting point. Endre Kiss warned, however, that while it is possible to sketch the history of the intellectual and artistic currents of those years in the light of Nietzsche's influence, it alone could not serve as an exhaustive explanation.[2] While Nietzsche's name was associated with cultural revival, Nietzsche was not the only thinker to whom reformers, and revolutionaries, looked for inspiration. In hindsight, there seem to be profound differences between the views, say, of Marx, Wagner, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche. But to their contemporaries all these individuals seemed, in one way or another, the conveyors of new values, new ways of living.

Nietzsche's odd mix of antinationalism, admiration for paganism, and fascination with orientalism must have seemed very congenial to Hungarians, who were themselves trying to come to terms with the social and political contradictions inherent in the 1867 Compromise with Austria. Nietzsche's impatience with the resentment of the losers of 1848 allowed Hungarian intellectuals to liberate themselves from the intransigent position of the famed leaders of the 1848 revolution. The cult of a mythical, oriental/ pagan past had permeated Hungarian cultural politics at the time of the 1896 Millennium exhibition, when Hungary displayed its historic grandeur against the threat of Germanic cultural and political dominance, and asserted its historic right to rule the kingdom of St. Stephen, against the increasingly strident demands of the national minorities within Hungary's borders for their own autonomy.

However nationalistic the mood at the end of the century, Nietzsche found ready access to Hungary's largely bilingual reader-

ship. A number of young poets were greatly influenced by his style and way of thinking. Nietzsche's bias toward music and poetry and his low opinion of ponderous theoretical works found resonance in Hungary, where the reading public, used to seeing philosophical ideas expressed in poetic language, could see a kindred spirit in Nietzsche. Hungarian philosophical culture lagged behind Western Europe's, but its poetic creativity had reached unprecedented heights. At mid-century Hungary had produced two of its greatest poets: Janos Arany and Sandor Pet6fi. The latter was celebrated not only by Hungarians but by Heinrich Heine as the revolutionary poet of 1848, and Petofi inspired the young Nietzsche to set a number of his poems to music.[3] Nietzsche's admiration for Petofi and his friendly correspondence with Franz Liszt would not go unnoticed in Hungary.

During the first phase of the Nietzsche reception one finds, typically, three main attitudes toward him that will recur, in different forms, in the century to follow. First, Nietzsche is seen as the tragic prophet whose insights ought to be expressed in poetry—or at the very least in poetico-religious philosophies—by individuals who are themselves prophet-poets of a new age. Second, he is seen as an exalted, but rootless, cultural critic, whose diagnoses, tempered by a more patient analysis of history, could be of great value in the struggle for a better future. Third, he is seen as an insane decadent whose ideas in the hands of a younger generation of hotheads represents the greatest danger for the future of humanity. This last attitude is expressed by those whom Nietzsche might have called "the delayers," those who recognize the dangers of modernity but can offer as a solution only a return to some nostalgic image of the past. Among Hungarians the last attitude was most common at the end of World War I, when all change seemed to have been a change only for the worst.

The Emergence of a Nietzsche Cult

The first essay on Nietzsche in Hungarian was a review of *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1872 written by the music critic J6zsef Har-rach.[4] The reviewer's main interest was that Nietzsche's work con-

tinued the Schopenhauerian project in the spirit of Wagner's music; the review did not leave a deep impression on Hungarian readers. Jend Peterfy, a classicist, anticipated Nietzsche's subsequent critique of Wagner when he pointed to the "pathological affect" exemplified in Wagner's music. In a reference to *The Birth of Tragedy,* he suggested that with the hero of tragedy "we break out of the bounds of our individuality, and in our sentiments, in our fantasies, arises an image, a sense, of the feeling of infinitude."[5] But he was critical of Nietzsche's attempts to associate Wagner's music with Greek art. "The hubris of passion flutters about in this music, and it seldom allows for a pure aesthetic enjoyment free from pathological effects. For this reason," he wrote, "the parallel which has been drawn between Greek drama and Wagner's oeuvre is not without humor; for, basically, we can hardly imagine a greater opposition than the one between the Greek artistic ideal and Wagner's works."[6]

This passing contemporary interest faded quickly. "Until 1891 acquaintance with Nietzsche in our country was sporadic, accidental, and isolated," Lengyel wrote. "Only by a whim of chance did one or another of his works fall into the hands of a Hungarian reader. Not until two or three of his enthusiastic followers had come along, creating a community through the intellectual ties of a journal, could a Nietzsche cult take shape.. . . Precisely for this reason, the founding of *Az Elet* (Life) was a decisive turning point."[7] The Nietzsche "cult" first came to life in the journal *Az Elet* and the writings of its most "visible" member, Jozsef Diner-Denes. *Az Elet's* editorial board included a cross section of Hungary's progressive intelligentsia, individuals who were sympathetic to such causes as the equality of women and the rights of ethnic minorities. The journal took up several ideological tendencies: anti-positivism, revolutionary socialism, Ibsenian individualism, and Tolstoyan Christian anarchism.

Among the many essays published by Diner-Denes, there were three which dealt directly with the question of how Nietzschean insights might play a role in the political and cultural revival of Hungarian society. The first, "Against Idealism," did not mention Nietzsche by name, but employed the vitalist-activist interpretation frequently associated with Nietzsche. By "idealism" Diner-Denes meant "the longing towards unattainable superlatives." Idealism was not, therefore, "the natural functioning of a healthy spirit [for] . . .

the child, the youth, the young nation are not idealists. They are vigorous, wishing to act."[8]

In the second essay, "Ancient Art and Modernity," Nietzsche was singled out as the "deepest and greatest spirit of modernity, who brought to light original Greekness in its entirety, and put it in its rightful place."[9] "Greekness" was defined by Diner-Denes somewhat contentiously as "the farthest reaching differentiation of individuals, and the finest display of their capacities."[10] "Even social democracy is Greek," he added, "where it is not Utopian, because it means the extension of freedom to slaves and to women." His "only" qualm about Nietzsche's conception of Greekness was that it "can only serve as nourishment for the strong and the healthy."[11] The Nietzschean-ism of Diner-Denes was an amalgam of radicalism, naturalism, and individualism.

Diner-Denes' third and longest article, "Past and Future,"[12] began with a critique of evolutionism and historical determinism.^ Here, as elsewhere, the essay's main merit lay not in its intellectual rigor, nor in the profundity of its Nietzsche interpretation, but rather its merit lay in the optimism it inspired in a large number of Diner-Denes's contemporaries: ". . . the future is: the victory of the free spirited, whole, human being over the great masses; the development of each individual talent against the general mass-leveling; the reminting of hitherto existing values in accordance with the living currency of natural humanity; the eradication of asceticism; the victory of the joy of life, of the laugh of joy; the courage and playfulness which has conquered resignation-filled hypochondria; the judging of each thing in terms of its own measure instead of tailoring it to traditional prejudices; the greatest embodiment of human forces, and for that precise reason the highest culture."[14] The messianic tone of this statement was no stranger to the epoch in which it was written. But far from taking the next step made by a number of his contemporaries, that of embracing Lev Tolstoy's fundamentalist-Christian humanism, Diner-Denes showed considerable hostility toward its "altruism" and "spiritualism."

Jeno Henrik Schmitt, another frequent contributor to *Az tlet,* did take that next step, exchanging ideas in regular correspondence with Tolstoy. Schmitt began his career as an academic philosopher in Berlin, distinguishing himself as a Hegel scholar. By the mid-

nineties Schmitt had acquired fame as a leader of the Hungarian radical agrarian movement and a near legendary status as a Nietzschean anarcho-Gnostic. His most famous young admirers included Ervin Szabo, the leader of the Social Democratic Party, and Gyula Juhasz, the poet. In a lecture series on Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen, and Nietzsche, Schmitt seemed to have no difficulty blending the three thinkers' ideas and reconciling Gnosticism with anarchism. In Nietzsche's superman Schmitt saw the gnostic *God-Man,* and he understood Nietzsche simply to be unmasking the hidden animality within Christian culture. Schmitt found a Gnostic motif even in Ibsen's individualism: "Ibsen in his own way is also promoting Nietzsche's ideas, that man must be annihilated in order to make room for the Godly figure."[15] Schmitt wrote: "We can only love that ideal figure which glitters, in its infinite richness and harmony, with the light of eternity, in the entire glow of heaven. This inner heaven is hiding in each human being. Our task, therefore, is to dispel the darkness, to bring to light, with Nietzsche's help, the intellectual background, in its utmost clearness, in its own universality. Thus will the Superman step forward in its Godly majesty, and only such a man will be able to shake off all the chains of the earth. . . . Thus, the real revolution, the fundamental transformation, can only begin from within, and not, primarily in an external form. If the old form of humanity remains it will, of necessity, receive the government that it deserves."[16] For him life was, as it was for Nietzsche, simply the process of self-overcoming. And for him art plays, as it did for Nietzsche, a crucial role in that process: "Art today functions merely as an opiate, in order to free humanity from the knowledge of its inner contradiction, inner misery. We, on the other hand, want to create holiness from art."[17] Schmitt maintained his more poetically inclined followers, but those like Ervin Szabo, who were driven by social questions, could not follow him into his Tolstoyan mysticism.

The most problematic figure among Nietzsche's early Hungarian interpreters was Ottok&r Prohaszka, the Catholic bishop. Prohaszka remained a force in Hungary's political and intellectual life for almost thirty years, praised by some as a great Christian reformer, damned by others as a reactionary anti-Semite. Prohaszka was a violent anti-Nietzschean, who by his very violence betrayed the attraction of Nietzsche to his thought. ProMszka's opposition to

Nietzsche is not unconditional. In a manner similar to Schmitt's, Prohaszka endeavored to use Nietzsche's ideas to formulate a new vision of Christianity.

Prohaszka had great admiration for, and a thorough knowledge of, Henri Bergson's teaching. He was an enthusiastic champion of individualism and vitalism, and was a relentless opponent of scientism. In fact, it is on these issues that he confronts Nietzsche. Speaking in the name of Christ, he said,"… the world takes form in the individual, . . . and everything out there is for the inner. Everything out there stands at the gate of life, it knocks, it rattles,—asks to be let in, begs for life. . . . And, life is again me, only I am life."[18] A few pages later he added: "Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are free individuals, but they listen to the voice of hate."[19] He reproached them, perhaps unjustly, for "driving a wedge between mind and heart, heaven and earth, man and society."[20] He preferred Tolstoy for whom "the value of life is the shaping of man's inner being."[21]

Prohaszka's main goal, consequently, was not so much to destroy Nietzsche's ideas as to co-opt them. He wanted merely to undermine Nietzsche's attacks on Christianity. The extent of Prohaszka's preoccupation with Nietzsche at the turn of the century is illustrated by the following anecdote: The story is told that a simple peasant from Prohaszka's church wanted to baptize his newborn son, Nietzsche. When he was asked why he wanted to give that name to his son the peasant replied: "The new bishop speaks a lot about this saint."

Comments made by those who lived through this period all point in the same direction: Nietzsche's overwhelming presence in the cultural life of the country was becoming an issue in itself. One progressive noted that "Without a doubt Nietzsche became the noisiest inspirator of the turn of the century. The Nietzsche cult culminated in Hungary at the beginning of the century."[22] Another critic amplified on the problem of Nietzsche's ubiquitousness: "He practically becomes a mass commodity, to mention him is almost commonplace. Thus, it is evident that those for whom he was a symbol of the aristocratic conception of art take their distance from the Nietzsche who has become a commonplace. The aristocratism that they inherited from him closes itself off from the Nietzsche worship

that is generated by mediocre writers of plays and newspaper articles."[23]

Writers, especially poets, played a paramount role in creating and then dampening enthusiasm about Nietzsche. The correspondence between Mihaly Babits, Dezso Kosztolanyi, and Gyula Juhasz revealed a keen interest in Nietzsche's writings. While Kosztolanyi and Babits represented the more urbane, austere, one could say Apollonian, aspect, Juhasz, the elder of the three, was attracted to Nietzsche's Dionysian paganism. During his student years Juhasz came under the spell of Schmitt's "wild" Nietzscheanism. A fellow classmate gave the following account of the young Juhasz: "He was an agitated young man with blazing eyes. . . going on and on about Nietzsche, speaking excitedly, an ardent glow in his eyes, in near physical fever. I was moved, and shocked too, as I observed him: his facial traits melding in me with Nietzsche's. I felt, we all felt, that this man was hurling himself against the Hungarian barrens with the sublime madness and sacred happiness of the Superman."[24]

In addition to his Nietzsche-influenced poetry,[25] Juhasz wrote a number of essays on Nietzsche, emphasizing the philosopher's prophetic heroism and his "sublime" style: "Nietzsche, the artist. After Goethe, and besides Heine and Schopenhauer, the greatest master of German prose. If anyone reached the grand style among the moderns it was Nietzsche. He cast eternal thoughts in eternal forms. There is in this style something of Aeschylus's steep majesty, the Bible's marvelous simplicity and Life's magnificence."[26]

But amidst the political crisis of 1905, Juhasz wrote with reservation about the philosophical and political value of Nietzsche's superman: "The Superman: Nietzsche. The manner in which he sketched out his own image. It is an ideal self-portrait, but madness wrenched the brush from the hands of the painter before he could become what he painted himself to be. … Nietzsche's Superman has no reality whatsoever. It is merely a philosophical phantom, and a social nightmare, but without doubt a splendid poetic creation."[27]

Juhasz remained a faithful admirer of Nietzsche after the war, unlike his fellow poets Kosztolanyi and Babits. Kosztolanyi was ambivalent from the outset. In 1904 he wrote, "Ibsen and Nietzsche, to whom I was fanatically clinging lately, lost their halo for me in five hours (during the time it took the train to reach Vienna from

Budapest), and Tolstoy, in whom I believe today, cannot give direction to my life."[28] Yet only a few months later, in an attempt to help Babits overcome his writer's block, he made the following suggestion: "For my part, under the influence of reading Nietzsche, I was able to chase away such moments when they came. I considered it a weakness to hold onto them; in all probability, you would too."[29]

Of the three poet-friends, Babits was the least enthusiastic about Nietzsche, and there are no indications that Nietzsche influenced his poetry. Second only to Endre Ady as a poet, Babits was also editor of the influential literary journal *Nyugat* (West), founded at the turn of the century by Pal Ignotus. pis essay "Nietzsche as Philologist" (1911) underscored the importance of philology in Nietzsche's intellectual development by arguing that there was a close connection between Nietzsche's poetic approach to philology and his philological approach to philosophy. Babits praised Nietzsche for "settling his account with the superstition of progress," and for "openly taking a stand against the moderns on the side of the ancients."[30] Babits considered one of Nietzsche's great virtues to be that he was able to intuit poetically what the ancients wanted to express, even if it meant departing from the written text. In the course of the essay Babits traced Nietzsche's path from philology, through poetry, to philosophy showing how each phase leaves its mark on the next: "... whoever is acquainted with Nietzsche's philosophy will know what I mean when I say that his thinking had always kept this philological base: in contrast to other philosophers he always grounds his judgments, and inferences, on the spiritual works, and spiritual history of humanity (which, taken in the widest sense, is the subject matter of philology). The almost exclusively moral character of his philosophy is a response to this."[31]

Aesthetic theory stands out as the most significant achievement of Hungarian philosophy. (To this day the strongest component of the philosophy faculty is its department of aesthetics.) It was the aestheticism of the young Nietzsche that had paved the interest of Hungarians of Nietzsche's generation. Bernat Alexander, the founder of Hungarian aesthetic theory and a generational contemporary of Nietzsche, employed the imagery of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* in a letter of 1872: "It is to be feared, that the epigoni lose the autonomy of speculation, and a dead Alexandrian scientificity

will take the place of scientific creation."[32] Alexander became a major figure in Hungarian philosophy for nearly five decades. His views on aesthetics influenced a whole generation of young writers, including Georg (Gyorgy) Lukacs and Lajos Fiilep, the author of one of the best Nietzsche commentaries written in Hungarian. Alexander's conception of "life" had nothing to do with Bergsonian vitalism. In fact, the vitalist interpretation of Nietzsche, current at the time, may have been one reason for Alexander's reticence about the German philosopher. In Fiilep's Nietzsche study, commissioned by Alexander in 1909, Fiilep reproached Nietzsche for putting art in the service of life.

Alexander was sympathetic to Nietzsche's ideas, but could not follow his emotionally charged language. Although Alexander gave a number of lectures on Nietzsche in 1904, he never published his views on Nietzsche.[33] Alexander was a Kantian, who did not think very highly of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy. Alexander expressed his conception of the relation between art, life, and philosophy in the following passage: "Art: life, but life also in its own completeness, purity, I would almost say: in its abstraction. Art is not real life, not even an appearance of life. It is rather, the presentation of life's value, significance, and richness . . . for this reason it makes a greater, that is, different impact than life itself."[34]

As Istv3n Hermann points out, Alexander sought to develop a philosophical aesthetic which would serve as a means for introducing a philosophical culture in a country where, until that time, philosophical ideas could gain expression only through aesthetic means. In this environment Hungarian folk art received as much attention as the classics of world literature, and purveyors of a new philosophical aesthetic required a certain amount of intellectual flexibility. Reflecting on his career, Alexander made the following "confession": "I wanted to disseminate philosophical thought, but with a Hungarian feeling, for the benefit of Hungarians. My idea here is that, one should not want to repair the Hungarian spirit from the outside, with foreign imports, rather, one should enter its inner depths, in order to nourish it from its own strength."[35]

Alexander's influence focused the Hungarian Nietzsche discussion before 1914 on aesthetics, and therefore on the early and the poetic writings. Odon Wildner's *Nietzsche's Romantic Period*

(1906) was the first book-length study to appear on the philosopher in Hungarian.[36] Dedicated to Jaszi, "To Oscar, the seeker of light," the first chapter of the book appeared in the journal *Huszadik Szdzad,* the same year. *Huszadik Szdzad,* edited by Jaszi, was a forum for sociologists and one of the two very influential journals that made their appearance at the turn of the century. (The other was *Nyugat,* edited by Ignotus, and more a vehicle for poetry and literary criticism.) Articles on Nietzsche were welcome in both, and Wildner was a frequent contributor to *Huszadik Szdzad.* Wildner proved ambivalent toward Nietzsche, a fairly widely shared attitude on the Left, since Nietzsche had failed to spell out a concrete political or even a social program. Wildner like Jaszi, or Szabo, could not follow Nietzsche's cavalier treatment of, or indifference toward serious economic and social issues. What progressive thinkers like Wildner remained attracted to was Nietzsche's radicalism. Wildner's attempts to reconcile Nietzsche with socialism may have been one factor in J6szi's overcoming his hostility to Nietzsche. In 1903 Jaszi had written, "I am reading Nietzsche with considerable hostility. The philologists' most conceited and most narrow minded impertinence runs through this *Birth of Tragedy,* and it is seldom colored by real depth. I do not know Nietzsche, but after this volume of his I am preparing to look for his philosophical place in the parochialism of ancient linguistics."[37] Yet, fifteen years later, Jaszi recalled "a gradual sobering up from positivism under the guidance of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—to this day I often look up these two great minds."[38]

Wildner also expressed reservations about Nietzsche's episte-mology and ethics. "The young Nietzsche made Kant's philosophy his own," he wrote, but Nietzsche's doubts about the "thing-in-itself' brought him, in the final analysis, closer to David Hume's skepticism than to Immanuel Kant.[39] Wildner tried to reconcile his admiration for Nietzsche the individual and his distaste for the ideas of the individual by making a sharp distinction between Nietzsche's theories and his practice. Wildner believed Nietzsche blurred the distinction between *Schein* (illusion) and *Erscheinung* (appearance), and he criticized Nietzsche's ethics for being driven by voluntarism and the cult of heroism.[40] "Life, life-force, will to life were the basic values, and general standards of value in Nietzsche's conception of

ethics."[41] He admitted that these might heighten human culture, but since for Nietzsche the sole instrument for advancing culture was the genius, the philosopher-artist, his ethics could not have value in social struggle.

While Nietzsche's writings provided moral support for strong individuals, their implications for collective political action were debilitating, if not disastrous. The problem facing many European revolutionaries at the turn of the century was that, like Nietzsche, they believed a successful revolutionary movement ought to be led by strong individuals, but again like Nietzsche, they did not realize that in a politically complex world leadership demanded not strength in the traditional heroic sense but an ability to manipulate public opinion. Progressives saw in Nietzsche a revolutionary who wanted to change the world by restoring dignity to the life of culture, and by raising humanity to a higher level. It was in their emphasis on Nietzsche's revolutionary stance that progressives differed most clearly from their conservative opponents, although the latter, too, were ambivalent about the German philosopher. Kiss suggests that 1911 marked a turning point in the Nietzsche reception in Hungary, with the articulation of a Rightist response to the progressive's embrace of Nietzsche's radicalism; although this divide was demarcated, reservations amongst Nietzsche's followers had been festering for some time. What is more important is that the ambivalence of both the progressive and the conservative reading of Nietzsche's writings points to deep tension within the Nietzsche legacy in Hungary.

A debate between Wildner and the classical scholar Gyula Hornyanszki over Fiilep's introduction to and translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* marked for Kiss the end of the progressive Nietzsche experience in Hungary and the articulation of a Rightist counter-position.[42] In a review of Fiilep's *The Birth of Tragedy,* the classicist Hornyanszki asked whether it was "necessary to translate this book into Hungarian."[43] Although in an earlier study Gyula Hornyanszki spoke favorably of Nietzsche's philology, he now reproached Nietzsche for his individualism and wondered whether "Wildner wanted to change socialists into anarchists through the teachings of Nietzsche's individualism." Fiilep's translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* has been praised for its literary merits. His long

introductory essay on Nietzsche's philosophy was highly original. It is the first Hungarian work which reached the highest European standards in Nietzsche scholarship of its day. It represented an important step in the development of Hungarian aesthetic theory, and it provided Lukacs with his first opportunity to express himself in print about Nietzsche.

In 1911 Fulep and Lukacs launched the first Hungarian journal of aesthetics with the title *Szellem* (Mind). Although this project was short-lived, both would play a major role in the shaping of Hungary's intellectual life for the next half-century. Ftilep's evaluation of Nietzsche's work was informed by a classicist conception of art and a fundamentalist conception of Christianity. Since there was a fairly close relationship between Alexander and Fiilep at the time, one can assume they discussed such questions as the nature of aesthetics and its role in culture. Also, it may be assumed that Fiilep was also certainly aware of Schmitt's parallels between Gnosticism and Nietzsche's philosophy.

Fiilep criticized Nietzsche's aesthetic theory of *The Birth of Tragedy,* reproaching Nietzsche for taking as his starting point the artist rather than art, "which has more permanent laws."[44] By putting art at the service of life Nietzsche was "an artistic utilitarian in the interest of life."[45] Also, insofar as he considered man the first and foremost work of art, Nietzsche was aiming at an "aesthetics of God, because one can speak of man as a work of art only on the assumption of a God-artist."[46] In sharp contrast to Diner-Denes and Wildner, Fiilep attached importance to the role "great men" could play in determining the fate of culture.[47] He saw Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal return as the corner stone of a new religion, based on the principle of selection.[48] Nietzsche, he suggested, lacked compassion only for man as he is presently constructed, but he was full of compassion for the exceptional individual, one who was capable of great suffering. While all other religions seek to redeem from either pain or guilt, "compassion toward the *great man* is at the basis of the doctrine of the Superman," Fiilep claimed. "It does not want to liberate from pain or from guilt, instead it wants to *increase* its pain and its "evil," in order to *give meaning* to its suffering, to its dis-tinctiveness in order to make it an instrument of progress.[49]

With the introduction of the superman, Fulep's account of Nietzsche's philosophy comes to a full circle: art is at the service of life, life is at the service of the Superman who is, in turn, the "most secret essence of the Universe." Does this also mean that, in the end, Fulep came to endorse Nietzsche's "aesthetic of God"? I do not think so. He may have had deep admiration for Nietzsche as the "mysta-gogue" of a new religion without also endorsing his aesthetic theory. Even though Fulep was a theorist with classicist leanings, he seems, in Nietzsche's case, to have wanted to insist on a sharp distinction between aesthetics and metaphysics: "To implicate metaphysics in the aesthetics of human art this way [i.e., Nietzsche's] . . . is a fatal confusion of concepts."[50]

Lukacs's 1910 review of Fulep's book was full of respect, even deference for his friend's understanding of the German philosopher.[51] Although, from the disappointed tone of the review one gathers that Lukacs had hoped for a tougher settling of accounts. The review began: "If this book, because the introduction has become a little book, had not been written by Fulep, we would have put it down with great joy and satisfaction . . . And still, if only for a moment, this book is a disappointment, . . . because it was written by Lajos Fulep, because there are a few of us whose . . . hopes are attached to him. . . . We are disappointed because we expected more." However, by the end of the review Lukacs seemed to have found an explanation for the absence of polemics against Nietzsche: "what we felt as a lack of strength, a courage to get to the bottom, was simply resignation, a concession to style. . .. [The book] is full of the greatest beauty of inner understanding: it wants only to be a mirror in which Nietzsche's—all of Nietzsche's—image could be mirrored purely."

Even backhanded compliments for a book that praised Nietzsche's mysticism and echoed his hostility to socialism and democracy are striking coming from someone who will become one of Nietzsche's most virulent critics. Lukacs was not atypical of Hungarian turn-of-the-century intellectuals who admired, and to a large measure adopted Nietzsche's individualism, but as time went on became more and more pessimistic about the prospects of translating Nietzsche's psychological insights into a workable political program. Many gave up on Nietzsche, shifting their interest to Ady.

Fiilep's book was reviewed by another friend who would also, like Lukacs, become a leading philosopher of the Communist Party of Hungary, Bela Fogarassi. He, too, expressed disappointment, but praised the book for dispelling the "widespread" misrepresentation of Nietzsche as a "dangerous priest of individualism." He dismissed Fiilep's notion that the time had not yet come for a Nietzsche critique, by suggesting that in that case Fiilep's book was five years too late. "Lajos Fiilep was afraid that Nietzsche is yet too much for us. I say that he is already not enough."[52]

Fiilep's book did not generate a flurry of Nietzsche books in Hungarian. The only book on Nietzsche to appear during the next quarter century was written by Istvdn Bibo, an inspired amateur, a civil servant interested in education. In 1916 when the Hungarian state was in its crisis. Bibo was sympathetic to Nietzsche. He tried to explain away what he took to be problematic "lapses of a great man." He complained about the readiness with which "a portion of the great masses" tended to adopt Nietzsche's "most extreme thoughts."[53] Fogarassi reviewed this book as well. This time his criticisms were devastating: "The author's only instrument of analysis is the shallow, meaningless psychology of common sense. He wants to approach Nietzsche's spiritual world with that method!"[54] That same year, Gyula Kornis, a member of the Hungarian philosophical establishment, published an article on the question of the German philosopher's influence on militarism, "Militaristic Philosophy." He took on the English and French war propaganda that branded Nietzsche's philosophy as the "mirror image of the German spirit."[55] "It is not the Nietzsche cult which gave rise to the war, rather," he argued, "it is the war that gave actuality to Nietzsche's thoughts."[56] He highlighted Nietzsche's anti-German opinions and his admiration for France and Italy, and denied any direct connection between Nietzsche's philosophy and militarism. "To accuse Nietzsche of influencing the outbreak of the war is completely unfounded," he wrote. "Nietzsche's fashionable influence during the nineties of the last century was observable primarily among young poets, artists, and aesthetes, individuals who are forever bubbling with enthusiasm about some grand individualism, and who by nature are most susceptible to style, . . . In the last decade even this cult of Nietzsche has seriously declined."[57] Despite its hysterical anti-

English and anti-French tone, it is not absolutely clear whether Kornis is opposed to Nietzsche, to militarism, or to both, but in 1942 he showed his cards by writing a study on the relation between Pet6fi and Nietzsche.[58]

In the last year of the war Babits published an article on the same topic entitled, "Dangerous World View." In this case one is in no doubt about the author's disgust with the war that devastated Europe. According to Babits the "dangerous world view" was not militarism but rather a "fatalistic cynicism," whose real name was "anti-intellectualism" or "antirationalism."[59] While it was not a direct cause of the war, it was what made it possible for people to tolerate it. This "disenchantment with reason," wrote Babits, was a reaction to eighteenth-century rationalism: starting with Kant's critique of reason, through Hegel's "granting civil rights to logical contradiction," to Schopenhauer for whom "reason is only a small lantern which the Will lights for itself," ending with Nietzsche's "will to power." Anticipating Lukdcs's criticism of Nietzsche and German Idealism Babits noted: "These great philosophers themselves felt the danger of their own teachings. Nietzsche objects explicitly against the militarist and 'Pan-German' implication of his work. 'For this reason I even thought of writing my book in French,' he [Nietzschel says somewhere. Still, for obvious reasons, he could not prevent his teachings becoming the banner of warmongers."™

By the end of the essay it becomes evident that Babits is still groping for an answer to the question posed by modernity: "Are not the poets right to think that lived experience is the depth of the world, the depth from which blossoms forth art and life? Should we produce intellectual art? Should we bring back into philosophy the flat rationalism of the eighteenth century? . . . we cannot lose what we have gained since then. . . . all is only a question of emphasis."[61] "A question of emphasis"! In hindsight, there is something tragic about this phrase, about the stubborn hope implicit in it, that by putting the emphasis on the right place a new balance could be struck between reason and passion.

Nietzsche and Ady

The early Nietzsche reception culminated in, and was largely absorbed by, Endre Ady, generally acknowledged as the greatest Hungarian poet of the twentieth century. There is little doubt that from his student days on Ady knew and admired Nietzsche. In 1908 Ady wrote a review of the first Hungarian translation of *Zarathustra.* "If he [Nietzsche] had not been," he wrote, "perhaps many of us could not have been, but even so, we would be only cast away crutches, not even good enough to be thrown into the fire. He was the first great creator who, with his destruction, created our courage. Oh! If only his true disciples would come, with their categorical Yes and Amen, men who would make us into laughing lions, only by dipping their little fingers into our hearts."[62] Although Ady had been lavish in his praise of Nietzsche, it is not clear how much of an influence Nietzsche actually had on him, and how much of his poetry is inspired by Nietzsche.

Ady, who saw himself as a "conscious shadow" of a Nietzsche who could denounce Germany as "Europe's flatland," compared Hungary, in turn, to a "dark prison" in the midst of civilized culture. What Nietzsche and Ady shared was a devastating indictment of their own nations. In 1905 Ady took an uncompromisingly principled, but at the time unpopular, position in the conflict over minority rights and democratization. According to his brother Lajos, Ady felt until his dying day that if in 1905 a compromise on the national question had been reached with the emperor effecting Magyars as well as the minorities, the war could have been avoided.[63] One difference between Nietzsche and Ady is that the latter was much more cautious in his public statements about democracy, socialism, and women. But a careful reading of both reveals greater similarities than differences on all of these issues. No doubt Ady's nationality and his formative years as a radical journalist explain the difference in tone. This made it possible for Lukacs and other Communists to pay homage to him even during the darkest days of Stalinism. During the crisis of World War I, Ady became a determining influence precisely because he had never reconciled himself to Hungarian reality. Ady asked whether Hungary deserved to have a future and predicted that unless the Magyars keep pace with modernism

Hungary will perish. Like Nietzsche, Ady's messianism could be turned into two strands, one of social prophecies aimed at the proletariat and the other as the founder of a new national religion. Both Nietzsche and Ady left their heirs to struggle with the meaning of their condemnations.

After the war, Ady became a cult figure for all fronts: Bolsheviks, pro-Westerners, and nationalists. Ady died of syphilis in the first weeks of 1919, thus no one can say for certain how he would have reacted to the Bolshevik putsch lead by Bela Kun, to Versailles, or to the Miklos Horthy regime. Between 1916 and 1936 there was a great silence in Hungary about Nietzsche. The war had compromised Nietzsche's reputation. As Juhasz ruefully wrote, "Superman! So many say it and so few understand it. During the war every German general, every soldier from sergeant up, considered himself to be one."[64] Nietzsche's role as the intellectual point of reference for contending factions of Hungarian intellectuals was subsumed in the discussion of Ady. Lukacs was simply one of the more prominent who turned Ady into a depository for the hopes that had once been placed in Nietzsche. The populist-nationalist writers such as Laszlo Nemeth and Dezs6 Szabo were unequivocal in their praise. The Ady cult enabled Germanophobes to praise in Ady what they would have been reluctant to do in Nietzsche. The cosmopolitan classicists like Babits and Kosztolanyi were a little more moderate in their evaluation of Ady, and it was only the most traditionalist conservatives like Ferenc Herceg who rejected Ady's writings completely.

The irredentist Right struggled to fit Ady-Nietzsche into the victimology of interwar Hungarian nationalism. A Calvinist bishop, S£ndor Makkai, addressed the Calvinist Student Association of Kolozsvar (Cluj) in 1927.[65] The lecture, "The Fate of the Hungarian Tree: the Accused Ady's Poetry," sought to convey a sense of hope and direction to Hungarian youth living in Transylvania, a region recently annexed to Romania. Makkai denied the accusations against Ady, himself of Transylvanian origins, put forward by the irredentist Right. He used textual analysis to argue that Ady was not a "traitor" to his country, but that he simply warned against the futility of sentimental nationalism. Further, he argued that Ady was not a romantic immoralist, nor a nihilist who glorified death. Finally,

Makkai concluded that Ady was not deliberately esoteric, his poems had as much clarity and intelligibility as any work of art can be expected to have.

The parallels between Ady and Nietzsche were source of continued interest into the Second World War. Eldd Haldsz's book *Ady and Nietzsche* (1941) discussed the affinities between a number of key images and themes in the writings of Ady and Nietzsche.[66] Halasz was not particularly interested in the question of influence, he wanted simply to show that the same fundamental existential concerns had motivated the poetry of Ady and the lyrical prose of Nietzsche. He argued for the convergence between the two writers on several crucial points: ambivalence toward life and death, recognition that a loss of self—be it through music or intoxication—is the only way of finding the self, admiration for pagan heroism, a love-hate relation with the Christian God, and the cult of a mythical ancestry rooted in the East.[67] Halasz touched on several issues that he assumed would resonate with Hungarian readers and call forth an immediate identification with Ady, for example, Nietzsche's "cult of ancestors," "striv[ing] to recreate the past from his own strength,"[68] and tormented patriotism: "His own kind . . . was throughout his whole life a problem, a question of vital importance."[69]

However, Halasz reserved the poetic high ground to Ady. While for Nietzsche "The philosophical, dialectical, inclination came into conflict with the yearning for creative artistic forms,"[70] "in Ady's case images are not associated with thoughts, he does not seek to throw light on previously obtained abstractions, instead he thinks actually in pictures."[71] This aesthetic relation between Nietzsche and Ady is pursued in Kiss's work. Kiss is the first to argue that between the appearance of Ady's first collection of poems *(Versek,* 1903) and his second collection three years later *(Uj versek,* 1906), (which established his fame), Nietzsche's writings, especially *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* had a decisive influence on Ady's poetry.[72] There are, however, unresolved questions connected with this thesis: Ady's Paris experience, especially his encounter with the poetry of Paul Verlaine, must certainly have also had their effect, and Ady's imperfect German probably diminished the impact of Nietzsche's language. Nevertheless, Ady's own admission in his review of *Zarathustra,* that "without him [i.e., Nietzsche] we would have been nothing" seems to

provide powerful support for Kiss's hypothesis. Also, it is certain that Ady, like nearly all educated Hungarians at the time, knew some German. Furthermore, it is almost certain that Ady had seen translations of Nietzsche not yet in print before 1906.[73] While Nietzsche's influence on Ady is undeniable, he was in no way the German philosopher's thematic or stylistic imitator. He may have "worked himself into" Nietzsche's mythical imagery, he may even have felt Nietzsche's distinctive rhythm, but his own imagery and rhythm are uniquely Hungarian and uniquely poetic. In short, Nietzsche may have been a greater philosopher but Ady was a greater poet and was more credibly at home in his own world of mythic imagery than Nietzsche was in his. By absorbing the Hungarian Nietzsche reception into his own aura, the Ady reception and the Nietzsche reception had become so entangled in Hungary that they became very often one and the same. This made it possible for Lukacs to be simultaneously the most violent critic of Nietzsche, while remaining a champion of Ady - allowing him, so to speak, to have it both ways.

Notes

1. Bela Lcngyel, *Nietzsche magyar utdkora* (Nietzsche's Hungarian poster ity) (Budapest: Minerva, 1938), 75. In this essay I make use of Lengyel's findings and those of Endre Kiss. All translations of Hungarian texts cited in this essay arc my own.

2. Endre Kiss, *A Vildgnezet Kora* (The age of world views) (Budapest: Akadcmia, 1982).

3. Lengyel, as well as Gyula Kornis, *Nietzsche und Petofi* (Budapest: Minerva, 1942), give a detailed account of Nietzsche's Pet6fi experience.

4. Jozsef Harrach, *Figyello* (Budapest, 1872), 473-75.

5. Quoted in Lengyel, 14.

6. Quoted in Lengyel, 15.

7. Lengyel, 22. *Az Elet* started as a monthly publication in 1891. Between 1892 and 1894 it appeared twice a month. In the fall of 1894 it became a weekly, but ceased publication after a few months. Its first editor was Lajos Katona, who was succeeded by Bela Vikar.

8. "Az idealizmus ellcn" (Against idealism), *Az Elet* 1, no. 3 (1891): 222.

9. "Az antik muveszet es a modernseg" (Ancient art and modernity), Az *Elet* 1, no.4(1891): 389.

10. "Az antik muveszet e"s a modernseg," 392.

11. "Mult es jovo"' (Past and future), part no. *3,AzElet* 1, no. 9 (1891): 108.
12. "Mult es jovo," part no. 3, *Az Elel* 1, no. 9 (1891): 108.
13. "Mult *es* jovo," part no. 1, *Az Elel* 1, no. 7 (1891): 32-39.
14. "Mult *es* jovo v.1, part no. 3, *Az Elet* 1, no. 9 (1891): 108.
15. *Schmitt Jeno-Henrik harom eloadasa: Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Ibsen* (Jeno Henrik Schmitt's Three Lectures: Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Ibsen) (Budapest: Atheneum, 1911), 50.
16. Schmitt, 36-37.
17. Schmitt, 41.
18. Ottokar Prohaszka, "Az elet e*s* egyeniseg" (Life and individuality) (1902), reprinted in *A diadalmas vilag nezet* (The triumphant world view) (Budapest: Korvina, 1905), 133.
19. Prohdszka, 136.
20. Prohaszka, 136.
21. Prohaszka, 139.
22. Bela Zolnai, quoted by Kiss, 253.
23. Gabor Tolnai, "Uj verseskonyvek" (New books of poems), *Nyugat* (1935). Quoted in B61a Zolnai, "Kosztolanyi, Nietzsche, Juhasz," *Irodalom tdrltnetiszemle,* (1958), 396-97.
24. Arpad Toth, "Jutasz Gyula jubileumara," *Nyugat* (1923), 879.
25. A few examples of Juhasz's "Nietzsche" poems are: "Ode to Diony sus," "Nietzsche in Naumburg," and "Pagan Joys."
26. Juhasz, "Nietzsche" (1905), reprinted in *Juhasz Gyula prozai irdsok,* (Gyula Juhasz: Prose Writings) (Budapest: Magvetd, 1974), 5: 45.
27. Juhasz, *Prozai irasok,* 5: 45.
28. Letter to Babits, 4 November 1904, quoted in Lengycl, 62.
29. Letter to Babits, 18 February 1905, quoted in Lcngyel, 63.
30. *Babits Mihaly muvei* (Works of Mihaly Babits) (Budapest: Szepiro-dalmi konyvkiad6,1970), 258. Reprinted from *Nyugat* (1911).
31. *Babits muvei,* 268.
32. Quoted in Lengyel, 13.
33. Lengyel refers to these lectures on page 38, but says that there is no record of them.
34. Lengyel, 50.
35. *Vallomas,* quoted in Istvan Hermann, "Alexander Bernat, az eszteta es filozofus" (Bernat Alexander: The aesthetician and philosopher) in I. Hermann, cd., *A magyar filozdfiai gondolkodds a szazad elon* (Hungarian philosophical thought at the beginning of the century) (Budapest: Kossuth, 1977), 44.
36. Odon Wildner, *Nietzsche romantikus kora* (Budapest: Grill Karoly, 1906).
37. Kiss, 65, fn. 6.
38. Quoted in Bela Kohalmi, *A konyvek konyve* (The book of books) (Budapest: Lantos A, 1918). This is a collection of answers, by about eighty intel lectuals, to the question which books left the greatest impression on them.
39. Wildner, 237.

40. Wildner, 177.
41. Wildncr,243.
42. Kiss, 132.
43. Quoted in Kiss, 135. The review is what really provokes the debate.
44. Fulep, *A tragedia eredete* (The Birth of tragedy) in *Filozofiai Irok Tara* (Budapest, 1910), 13: 18.
45. FUlcp, 19.
46. FUlep, 20.
47. Fulep, 56.
48. FUlep, 123.
49. FUlep, 82-101.
50. FUlep, 20.
51. "FUlep Lajos Nietzscherol," *Nyugat* 3, no. 14 (16 July 1910): 1014-15.

We have some indication of what Fulep might have thought, thirty-five years later, about Lukacs's Nietzsche essays written in Russia. In a letter, May 10, 1946, to Karoly Tolnai, he writes the following:

> Our common friends and acquaintances have arrived from Moscow. The University of [Buda]Pest offered Lukacs the chair of aesthetics - perhaps I need not say - more for political reasons than in recognition of Lukacs' scientific merits. . . . As a matter of fact, Lukacs was here at my place two weeks ago. Since he came back a whole pile of his smaller books and conferences have appeared in print. For the most part transplants of his Moscow works; everything cast in the most orthodox form of Marxism. Hopeless simplifications and straight-jacketing - with his splendid mind and talent! (I was shown this letter by Dora Csanak, the curator of the FUlep archive.)

52. Bela Fogarassi, *Kelel Nepe* (People of the East) (Budapest, 1910), 610-11.
53. Istvan Bibo, *Nietzsche* (1916; reprint, Budapest: Hat£gu sfp alapftvany, 1992), 87.
54. Atheneum (1911), 105.
55. *Atheneum* (1916), 134-
56. A//iene«/« (1916), 136.
57. *Atheneum (19\6),* 135.
58. GyulaKornis, *Nietzsche 4s PetSfi,* (Budapest Minerva, 1942).
59. "Veszedelmes Vildgnez.et," in *Esszek es Tanulmanyok,* vol. 1 (Budapest: Szepirodalmi konyvkiado, 1978), reprinted from *Nyugat* (1918), 512.
60. "Veszedelmes Vilagnezet," 513.
61. "Vcs/edelmes Vildgnezet," 516.
62. *Budapesti Naplo* (Budapest journal), 5 March 1908.
63."... especially since we have been afflicted by the world war [Endre] has argued with great vehemence and conviction, several times even in my presence, that 1905-6 was decisive for the future of Hungary." Lajos Ady, quoted in Jozscf Varga, *Ady es Kora* (Ady and his times) (Budapest: Kossuth Konyvkiad6, 1977), 145.

64. Juhasz continues, "Nietzsche's notion starts from the history of evolu tion, but out of restricted natural scientific laws it develops into a far-reaching reli gious idea. Man is only a transition from animality to Godliness. Man is twilight. Man is something to be conquered, something to be overcome. *Also sprach Zaraihustra.* Man has not been, but will be the Superman! This is that deep, exalted word which makes Friedrich Nietzsche into a founder of a religion, and his life into a martyrdom." (1925), reprinted in Juhasz, *Prozai irdsok,* 7: 25.

65. Sandor Makkai, "Magyar fa sorsa: A vadlott Ady kolteszete," (Kolozs-var, 1927), reprinted in Sandor Makkai, *Egyeuil* (Alone) (Kolozsvar: Erdelyi szgp-mivescdh, 1934).

66. Elod Haldsz, *Ady es Nietzsche* (Ady and Nietzsche) (Budapest: Miner va, 1941).

67. One of Halasz's chapters is entitled "The East." A striking example in Ady's poetry is the poem "I am the son of Gog and Magog."

68. Haldsz, 9.

69. Halasz, 11.

70. Haliisz, 21.

71.Hali$S7.,41.

72. "... besides Paris, French poetry, and other precedents, *Zarathuslra's* linguistic style provided the determining impetus for Ady's poetic maturation." Kiss, 165.

73. Babils and Juhasz were already in 1904 translating passages from Nietzsche. No doubt there were others, including Ady's Nagyvarad mentors and friends, doing the same thing.