



A comparison of the German and Russian literary intelligentsia in Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art*

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Published online: 27 May 2019
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Abstract

To date, critical engagement with Arnold Hauser's sociology of art has been confined to the field of art history. This perspective has ignored Hauser's interest in literary history, which I argue is essential to his project. Hauser's dialectical model, composed of conflicting realist and formalist tendencies, extends to the literary sphere. In *The Social History of Art*, these two traditions are epitomised by the Russian social novel and German idealism. Anti-enlightenment tendencies in German intellectual culture provide Hauser with evidence of idealism's propensity for escapism and reaction. Conversely, he extols the Russian social novel as the naturalistic art form par excellence. Because the intelligentsia is central to Hauser's understanding of the formation of literary culture, this paper provides an outline of his sociology of intellectuals. Through a comparison of the German and Russian literary intelligentsia, this paper shows that Hauser's analysis of literature is often more complex than his sociological interpretations of the visual arts.

Keywords Arnold Hauser · The Social History of Art · Intelligentsia · Enlightenment · Idealism · Naturalism · Russian social novel

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Introduction

Arnold Hauser is best remembered for his contribution to the social history of art, a Marxist-inspired project that uses historical materialism to analyse the social and economic conditions of artistic production. Hauser's reputation as an art historian is largely based on the critical legacy of his magnum opus, *The Social History of Art*, a monumental work first published in two volumes in 1951.¹ Although published in post-war Britain, Hauser, a Hungarian émigré intellectual, had written his manuscript in German. *The Social History of Art* had an immediate impact on the discipline of art history. With his compatriot Frederick Antal, Hauser would be recognised as an important pioneer of the sociology of art (Orwicz 1985; Roberts 2006; Gelfert 2012). However, it is not widely known that Hauser had originally named his book, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur* (Congdon 2004: 46). The publisher's decision to omit the word 'literature' from the title would have a profound impact on the book's reception and legacy.

To date, critical engagement with Hauser's sociology of art has been almost exclusively confined to the field of art history. For this reason, analysis of Hauser's class-based account of cultural production has tended to focus on painting and sculpture (Burgum 1968; Harap 1985). Thanks largely to E.H. Gombrich's negative appraisal of Hauser's 'dialectical materialism,' his name is now almost synonymous with the Marxist school of art history (Gombrich 1953; Berryman 2017). This one-sided interpretation of Hauser's oeuvre has effectively ignored his broader interests in the history of culture, especially the significance of literature and cinema, as well as his contribution to intellectual history (Zuh 2015). Indeed, readers of Hauser's book will notice that he devoted a great deal of attention to literature and philosophy, the importance of which grew in prominence as *The Social History of Art* progressed. Later chapters reveal Hauser's enthusiasm for the 'naturalistic novel,' a uniquely modern genre that he described as "the most original creation" and "the most important art form of the nineteenth century" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 3–4).

This paper is based on two key chapters in *The Social History of Art*, in which Hauser uses literary culture to expound his core arguments concerning the relationship between art and society. In the first of these chapters, 'Germany and the Enlightenment', Hauser investigates the social and intellectual contexts of eighteenth-century German idealism. Anti-enlightenment tendencies in German intellectual culture provide Hauser with evidence of idealism's propensity for escapism and reaction. In this case study, he shows how the German literary intelligentsia renounces world affairs and embraces a peculiar form of romantic irrationalism. In a following chapter, called 'The Social Novel in England and Russia', Hauser describes the social novel as the naturalistic art form par excellence.

¹ The first edition of *The Social History of Art* was published in two volumes. A second edition, which appeared in 1962, was published in four volumes. References in this paper are based on the four-volume third edition published in 1999, edited by Jonathan Harris.

In this case study, Hauser extols the nineteenth-century Russian social novel as the consummation of the naturalistic tradition.

The miracle of the Russian novel consists in the fact that, in spite of its youth, it not only reaches the heights of the French and English novel, but takes over the lead from them and represents the most progressive and most vigorous literary form of the age. Compared with the works of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, the whole of Western literature in the second half of the century seems weary and stagnant (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 135).

Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art* (and literature) was an ambitious and complicated project. Exceeding 500,000 words, the book's historical coverage ranged in scope from the art of the Stone Age to the art of the twentieth-century, or the so-called Film Age. Despite its universal coverage, *The Social History of Art* was not a standard narrative history of art. First, and most importantly, Hauser's classification of art was not confined to the visual and plastic arts. Secondly, Hauser's study was unapologetically didactic. From the outset, he sought to prove that naturalism and realism were the most progressive tendencies of the Western artistic canon.

Hauser's historical account of art and literature is based on a central and recurring theme: the perennial struggle between naturalism and formalism. These dialectical elements are as old as civilisation itself: "However much these opposing factors may displace each other from time to time, the tension between them is felt in every period of Western art" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], I: 12). These orientations have sociological implications. Hauser argues that mobile social classes, at first the bourgeoisie and later the proletariat, preferred naturalistic modes of representation. Whereas naturalistic art possesses a material referent, and is grounded in real-life phenomena, formalist art invokes an idealised realm, or a transcendental reality.

Needless to say, Hauser's political outlook displays a strong preference for naturalism. His dialectical model, composed of conflicting realist and formalist tendencies, extends to the literary sphere. These two traditions were epitomised by the realist Russian social novel of the nineteenth-century and German idealism and romanticism. German idealism was the culmination of an aesthetic tendency dating back to Plato:

Plato's theory of ideals fulfils the same social function for Athens in the fourth century as 'German Idealism' did in the nineteenth century; it furnishes the privileged minority with arguments against realism and relativism. Plato's political conservatism largely accounts for his archaizing theory of art—his rejection of the new illusionist tendencies, his preference for the classical style of the Periclean age, and his admiration for the highly formalised art of the Egyptians which seemed to be governed by immutable laws. He opposed everything new in art, as to innovation in general, scenting in novelty symptoms of disorder and decadence. (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], I: 89)

As will be seen, Hauser's analysis of literature is often more nuanced and complex than his sociological interpretations of the visual arts. Furthermore, the

study of literature enabled Hauser to apply his theories to countries other than Italy and France, which had overwhelmingly dominated his social–historical analysis of the visual arts. While Hauser had looked at Cervantes and Shakespeare in earlier chapters of *The Social History of Art*, he had chosen to frame English and Spanish literary culture in relation to Western Renaissance traditions. Hauser’s account of the literary culture of Germany and Russia is therefore a departure from a history which otherwise is highly Western-centric in scope. The impact of the enlightenment on Central and Eastern Europe was problematic for Hauser and his progressive narrative. Russia would present Hauser with his most challenging case study. Although praising the Russian social novel as the highest achievement of naturalism, it had developed in a social setting which, based on Hauser’s own theory, was uncondusive to the rise of naturalism.

The literary intelligentsia: a brief outline of Hauser’s sociology of the intellectual class

The intelligentsia is central to Hauser’s understanding of the formation of literary culture in modern society. Thus, before examining his account of German and Russian literary culture, it is necessary to commence this discussion with an outline of Hauser’s sociological theory of the intellectual class. Before the intelligentsia became an autonomous social element in the mid-nineteenth century, it was a stratum of the greater bourgeoisie. The history of the intelligentsia is therefore closely aligned with the history of the middle class. France was Hauser’s model bourgeois society, upon which he based his sociological model of the progressive-minded intelligentsia. The economic emancipation of the middle class, from pre-capitalist modes of production, was a prerequisite for the political liberation of the middle class and the overthrow of feudalism.

Economic freedom had the same historical roots as political liberalism; both were among the achievements of the enlightenment and were logically inseparable. The moment one adopted the standpoint of personal freedom and individualism, one had to allow the validity of free competition as an integral component of human rights (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 100).

Material and social progress was a pre-condition for the rise of rationalism in the intellectual sphere. The enlightenment was therefore assigned a position of primary importance in Hauser’s account of social and cultural modernisation. He wrote, “we may call the enlightenment the political elementary school of the modern middle class, without which the part it played in the cultural history of the last two centuries would be inconceivable” (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 94). Thus, just as the bourgeois economy was liberated from outmoded forms of medieval economy, the intellect was liberated from the fetters of ecclesiastical dogma and superstition. The rational enlightened mind was now free to consider the workings of the empirical, natural world.

The intelligentsia makes an appearance relatively late in *The Social History of Art*. It is therefore a distinctly modern social entity. Hauser describes literary

intellectuals as the pioneers of political and social reform. In its pamphlets and philosophical tracts, the cultural elite had not only articulated the ideals of middle-class ideology, but, via the new literary medium of the novel, writers had also promulgated bourgeois class-consciousness. The modern social novel fulfilled the function of contemplative thinking, of introversion and sublimation, thereby enabling middle-class readers to temporarily escape from the world of business and practical affairs.

The intelligentsia's identity was tied to the bourgeoisie for most of the nineteenth-century. At first too socially diverse to identify itself as a separate class structure, this stratum acted as the mouthpiece of the bourgeoisie, advocating for progress and political emancipation from the rule of the *ancien régime*. The literate element of the middle-class was originally composed of minor aristocratic and professional elements, unified by their intellectual and educational capital. The intellectual elite's social heterogeneity would therefore strengthen its feeling of standing above class differences, and of representing the conscience of society (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 127). The intelligentsia's political ideals paved the way for the French Revolution. Hauser describes these ideals as "enlightened and liberal, humanistic, and based on the concept of the free, progressive personality unrestrained by convention and tradition" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 125).

As is the case with many of Hauser's sociological theories, his understanding of the intelligentsia is derived from Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. Mannheim, Hauser's friend and compatriot, described the intelligentsia as 'unanchored' and a 'relatively classless stratum', a 'heterogeneous social cross-section' (Mannheim 1936: 137). The intelligentsia is characterised by its labour, which is intellectual, and the medium through which it communicates its labour, which is literary. This alliance, between the literary elite and the broader middleclass elements, ends acrimoniously when the bourgeoisie attains its position as the dominant social and economic class. With the consolidation of bourgeois authority, following the failed revolutions of 1848, the cultural elite now finds itself cut-off from the social group it had earlier served. As Hauser explains, after its victory "the bourgeoisie felt so safely entrenched that it no longer had any qualms and twinges of conscience and imagined that it was no longer in any need of criticism" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 125).

Thereafter, social estrangement and resentment would come to characterise the intelligentsia's collective identity. As a group dedicated to the production of culture and ideas, it was now socially isolated between the uneducated underclasses and the economically dominant middleclass. On the one hand, Hauser viewed the intelligentsia's emancipation from the bourgeoisie as a phase of the universal process of specialisation, which since the Industrial Revolution had abolished the organic relationship between the various social strata as well as the organic unity of culture (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 126). And yet, upon being granted autonomy, the intelligentsia became confused about its role in society.

Having ceded its political authority to the wealthy and powerful bourgeoisie, and isolated from practical affairs, the intelligentsia's influence was confined to the realm of theory and literature. The intelligentsia reacted against its political impotence by attempting to reconcile the forces of culture and society, which had become separated under the material conditions of industrial capitalism. It would therefore

use culture as a means of restoring organic unity to a fragmented social body. The intelligentsia's political project was frequently defined in utopian and revolutionary terms, as an "attempt to realize the ideal of the total, all-round human being in whom the values of culture are combined in an integrated whole" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 126).

Before 1848, the intelligentsia was still at the intellectual vanguard of the bourgeoisie. But after the so-called Year of Revolutions, it changed its loyalty, and would henceforth become the champion of the working class, the new class of progress. With the severing of ties between the intelligentsia and the middleclass, the intelligentsia became an agent of revolt and an enemy of its former ally. Because of the precariousness of its existence in capitalist society, the intelligentsia felt an affinity with the proletariat. The feeling of solidarity, with the working class, would yet again place the intelligentsia at the vanguard of revolution.

Despite describing the enlightenment as a crucial step in the process of modernisation, Hauser recognised that the enlightenment was not a consistent, or indeed a contemporaneous, historical development. Advanced bourgeois societies, like France and England, had experienced the effects of the enlightenment before the other European societies. The nascent middleclass elements of Germany and Russia also possessed intellectual elites. However, owing to different social circumstances in Central and Eastern Europe, the effects of the enlightenment, and the role of the intelligentsia, would vary greatly in these countries.

The German literary intelligentsia and the retreat from reality

With the publication of *The Social History of Art* in 1951, Hauser would introduce themes and ideas from Central European critical theory to an English readership. Hauser's critique of the German literary intelligentsia, especially his critical appraisal of its romantic and irrational tendencies, recalls the work of his Hungarian contemporaries, Mannheim and Georg Lukács. Mannheim's *Das konservative Denken*, first published in 1927, and Lukács' *Fortschritt und Reaktion in der deutschen Literatur*, published in 1947, were especially influential in shaping Hauser's thinking on this subject. Both books are cited in *The Social History of Art*. However, unlike Horkheimer and Adorno (2002), whose famous thesis problematised the enlightenment project, Hauser remained committed to the emancipatory potential of reason and rationality. He would therefore defend the enlightenment enterprise as fundamental to the cause of modernity and progress.

The German middleclass, wrote Hauser, "came under the sway of romantic irrationalism before it had passed through the school of rationalism" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 93). Despite their national differences, the French and English bourgeoisie conformed to Hauser's sociological theory of social modernisation: these social groups remained conscious of their class interests and never entirely abandoned the achievements of the enlightenment. Germany, however, presented a challenge to Hauser's narrative. Far from being a force for political freedom and progress, the German middleclass abnegated its social responsibility. Instead of promoting the practical and material interests of the bourgeoisie,

it turned its attention towards intellectualism and abstract theory. The political immaturity of the German intelligentsia was blamed for the backwardness of German society, which had failed to assimilate the benefits of the enlightenment into public life. Hauser's social–historical analysis of the German intelligentsia should be viewed in the context of contemporary historical events. The political naivety of the German intellectual class had calamitous consequences and a far-reaching legacy. For Hauser, who had fled from Austria to Britain after the Anschluss in 1938, it would lead in the end to the Third Reich and “the final German tragedy” (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 94).

How did Hauser explain the anti-rational and politically retrograde German intelligentsia, without compromising his progressive sociology of the intellectual class? German particularism enabled Hauser to interpret the limitations and prejudices of the German intellectual movement in terms specific to Central European history. Unlike the French and English monarchs, the German territorial princes showed negligible interest in the prosperity of the bourgeoisie and the welfare of the peasantry. According to Hauser, an anachronistic form of feudalism, unique to the German principalities, had stymied bourgeois advancement (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 95). The Thirty Years' War had destroyed German commerce, and with it the political and economic power of the cities. Afterwards, the Peace of Westphalia established the sovereignty of the territorial princes, thereby reaffirming their feudal interests. Westphalia, says Hauser, set the seal on German particularism. He compared this situation unfavourably to the West, where monarchs represented the unity of the nation and in certain circumstances defended its interests, even against the recalcitrant nobility. In these instances, the bourgeoisie would usually benefit from tensions between the monarchy and the nobility. But in Germany, the princes and the nobility stood together, especially when it concerned depriving the other classes of their rights. Unlike the West, where the middleclass had established itself within the administrative apparatus of the state, in Germany, “the loyalty of the army and the bureaucracy was the basis of the new feudalism; here, “government posts were reserved, except for subordinated offices, for the nobility and the junkers” (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 95).

Thus, because of Germany's social and historical circumstances, enlightenment thinking would only marginally influence the nascent bourgeoisie. The powerlessness of the middleclass, and their exclusion from government and political activity, would induce a passive mentality that would affect the development of German literary culture throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries. The German intelligentsia, which Hauser describes as consisting of subordinate government officials, schoolmasters and poets, accustomed itself to political irrelevance by drawing a line of demarcation between its private life and the external world of politics (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 98). The estrangement of the German intelligentsia from social life would compel this stratum to pursue its class interests outside of public affairs. As compensation for its lack of social influence, this intellectual element found solace in idealism, by which Hauser meant the absolute disinterestedness of its ideas. Kant, Fichte and Hegel exemplified the German tendency for abstract thought. Their renunciation, says Hauser,

Was the expression of not only a complete indifference towards apparently unalterable social conditions but also of a definite contempt for professional politics. In this way, the middle-class intelligentsia lost all contact with social reality and become more and more isolated, eccentric and crack-brained. Its thinking became purely contemplative and speculative, unreal and irrational, its mode of expression self-willed, high-flown, incommunicable, incapable of taking others into consideration and always resisting any correction from outside (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 98–99).

This passage reflects Hauser's tendency to pathologise German idealism and romanticism, as symptoms of political impotence. Retiring to a spiritual level above the social classes, the German literary intelligentsia therefore

Made a virtue of their lack of practical-mindedness and called it 'idealism', 'inwardness', triumph over the limitations of time and space. Out of their involuntary passivity, they developed an ideal of the idyllic private life, and out of their lack of external freedom, the idea of inward freedom and of the sovereignty of the spirit over common empirical reality (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 99).

The result of this development was the complete divorce of literature from politics. The proto-romantic Sturm und Drang movement would therefore pursue a hostile attitude towards French neoclassicism and the enlightenment. Whereas enlightenment thinking sought rational explanations and was intolerant of religion and the powers of irrational history, Herder, Goethe and Hamann invented a philosophical outlook that promoted the abstract, the visionary and the spiritual (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 105). In his writings on art and culture, Hauser displayed an attitude of ambivalence towards romanticism. Although the Western romantic movements had radical potential, inspired by the revolutionary energy of the middleclass, German romanticism was remote from progressive bourgeois thought. Hauser's critical interpretation of the reactionary tendencies of German romanticism precedes Isaiah Berlin's counter-enlightenment thesis (Berlin 1980). However, for Hauser, the history of ideas has a sociological basis and is not composed of autonomous intellectual movements or styles. He would therefore interpret German romanticism and idealism as an apolitical sublimation of the middleclass urge for freedom. Under the influence of this opiate, the German intelligentsia replaced its natural inclination for positive and rational knowledge for intuition and metaphysical obfuscation. But in doing so, he argued,

They merely conformed to the wishes of the ruling class, who were endeavouring to divert attention from the reality of which they had made themselves masters. They encouraged any idea representing the purpose of the world as inexplicable and incalculable, and promoted the spiritualizing of the problems, hoping thereby to deflect the revolutionary tendency of developments in the intellectual sphere and to induce the middle class to content itself with an ideological instead of a practical solution (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 105).

The influence of the idealist philosophers and the romantic writers was not insignificant in Germany. This stratum was just as important in the development of the German cultured class as were the litterateurs of the enlightenment in France (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 106). And yet, despite German particularism, French thinking exerted a profound influence on the German cultured class. Voltaire and Rousseau were household names within German intellectual circles. However, Hauser describes the influence of Rousseau as being incomparably deeper and wider than that of Voltaire, the doyen of enlightenment thought. Even in France, says Hauser, Rousseau did not find so many and such enthusiastic supporters as he did in Germany. Indeed, “the whole ‘Storm and Stress’ movement, Lessing, Kant, Herder, Goethe and Schiller were dependent on him and acknowledged their indebtedness to him” (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], III: 109).

The Russian literary intelligentsia and the activism of the social novel

The German experience stood in stark contrast to the situation in Russia. Although Russia experienced the effects of the enlightenment a century later than the West, its effects on Russian culture and literature were closer to France and England than that of Germany. Russia, says Hauser, experienced the enlightenment in the nineteenth-century, at a time when the optimism of the enlightenment had started to sour in the West. The age of enlightenment in Russia would coincide with the rise and maturity of the social novel. Thus, the Russian social novel would preserve the enthusiasm and optimism of the enlightenment long after the Western intelligentsia had succumbed to alienation and defeatism.

Russia did not experience the disillusionment of the treacherously defeated and adulterated European revolutions; there is no trace of the fatigue by which France and England are overcome after 1848. It is due to the youthful inexperience of the nation and its undefeated social idealism that, at a time when in France and England naturalism begins to develop into a passive impressionism, the naturalistic novel remains fresh and full of promise in Russia (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 134).

Hauser described the modern Russian novel as the creation of the Russian intelligentsia. In Russia, he wrote, “the novel as mere entertainment or pure analysis of character, with no claim to social significance and usefulness,” is unknown until the late nineteenth-century. Because of social ferment and the political and social consciousness of the reading public, it was impossible for a principle like ‘art for art’s sake’ to arise in Russia (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 128). The Russian concept of the intelligentsia was closely related to Western conceptions of democratic activism and freedom. Following his standard method deployed throughout *The Social History of Art*, Hauser provides a social context for the Russian social novel and its adherence to naturalism. Yet, as he had experienced previously in the case of German idealism and romanticism, literary culture proved to be problematic and plagued by contradictions. Unlike the visual arts, literature was not clearly reducible to stylistic characteristics. Hauser was therefore compelled to

qualify and modify his sociological theory of the intellectual class, but this time to accommodate Russian culture and its peculiar social history. He conceded that even the greatest masters of the Russian social novel, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, had only belonged to the intelligentsia to a limited extent, despite their critical attitude towards society.

Hauser commences his account of modern Russian literature with an historical outline of the intellectual class and its progressive inclinations. At first, historical circumstances accord with his general theory of the literary vanguard and its pro-liberal agenda. In Russia, the enlightenment acts as a catalyst for change and is a positive force for modernisation. Moreover, unlike its German counterpart, the Russian nobility is at the forefront of social reform. As Hauser sees it,

The whole of modern Russian literature arises from the spirit of opposition and owes its first golden age to the literary activities of the progressive, cosmopolitan gentry who strive to obtain recognition for the ideas of the enlightenment and democracy as against the despotism of the czars. In the age of Pushkin the liberal nobility, with its tendency to Western ideas, is the only cultured stratum of society in Russia (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 129).

After the defeat of the Decembrist Revolt in 1825, however, the Russian nobility is no longer at the political and literary vanguard. The death of Pushkin, in 1837, marks the close of the first stage of modern Russian literature. Thereafter, “intellectual leadership passes into the hands of the intelligentsia and remains there until the Bolshevik revolution” (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 129). Hauser describes the new cultural elite as a mixed social group, consisting of noble and plebeian elements. Its membership is drawn from ‘conscious-stricken noblemen,’ whose outlook was akin to that of the Decembrists, as well as the sons of small shopkeepers, subordinate civil servants, urban clergymen and emancipated serfs, all of which lead the uncertain life of ‘free artists’, students, private tutors and journalists (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 129–130). The most important part of the new cultural elite, says Hauser, is that played by clergymen’s sons, who, “owing to the natural antagonism between father and son, give the most pointed expression to the anti-religious and anti-traditionalist convictions of the intelligentsia.” They would therefore fulfil

The same function as the pastors’ sons in eighteenth-century Europe, where during the enlightenment the situation was similar to that prevailing in pre-revolutionary Russia. It is therefore no accident that two of the most important pioneers of Russian rationalism, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, are the sons of priests and emerge from the middle-class populations of the great commercial cities (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 130).

After the emancipation of the peasants in 1861, the intelligentsia’s membership expands to accommodate the ranks of the lower nobility, but this does not alter the basic structure of the group. By the 1860s, the intelligentsia had consolidated its position as the new cultural elite of Russia.

However, the ascendancy of the Russian intelligentsia is not without its problems. The conflicting Westernising and Slavophile orientations, endemic to

Russian intellectual society and culture, would complicate Hauser's straightforward progressive narrative. While the Westernisers had generally supported liberal and secular values, Slavophilia was an oppositional movement, one largely hostile to foreign intellectual imports. Slavophile thinkers shunned foreign influences, including ideas derived from the enlightenment, in favour of local and nativist traditions. Hauser was therefore forced to concede that Slavophilia was partly a nationalist reaction to cosmopolitan and Westernising developments. Indeed, just as the Westernisers were the disciples of Voltaire, the Encyclopaedists, German idealists, and later the socialists and materialists, Slavophile writers were the "indirect and mostly unconscious intellectual heirs" of Burke, de Bonald, de Maistre, Herder, Hamann, and Adam Müller. They stress,

In opposition to the cosmopolitan and atheistic free thought of the Westernisers, the value of the national and religious traditions, and proclaim their mystical belief in the Russian peasant and their fidelity to the orthodox Church. As opposed to rationalism and positivism, they declare themselves believers in the irrational idea of 'organic' historical growth, and they represent the old Russia, with its 'genuine Christianity' and its freedom from Western individualism, as the ideal and the salvation of Europe, just as the Westernisers, for their part, see the ideal and salvation for Russia in Europe (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 131).

To achieve his ultimate aim of confirming the supremacy of the Russian social novel, as exemplified by its master practitioners, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Hauser would need to reconcile the competing outlooks of the conservative Slavophiles and the progressive Westernisers. Just as the Westernisers had evolved over two generations, from reformists to materialists and later to socialists, Slavophilia had also undergone a process of evolution, from a movement of feudal landowners into one that advocated for pan-Slavism and populism. Slavophilia's modern democratic phase, as represented by Danilevsky, Apollon Grigoriev and Dostoevsky, was sharply at odds with its former feudalistic interests (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 131). The liberation of the peasants would further dissolve these differences, as many older writers turned away from the Westernised intellectuals and joined the nationalists. In so doing, writes Hauser, "it is hardly any longer possible to assert that conservative literature is notably weaker than progressive literature, both quantitatively and qualitatively" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 132). Hauser's interpretation of Russian cultural and literary history drew heavily on his account of Russian social history. He claimed that a strong national and collectivist identity in Russian society had made it possible for the differences between democrats and nationalists to become blurred. The Slavophile inclinations of certain radical thinkers could therefore be explained, says Hauser, "by the fact that the Russians, still in the very earliest stages of capitalism, are much more homogeneous as a nation [and] much less divided by class differences, than the peoples of the West". Thus, he concludes, "the Slavophiles and the Westernisers now differ more in their fighting methods than their aims" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 132).

Tolstoy and Dostoevsky

Hauser described the Russian social novel as more tendentious than contemporaneous French and English novels. Compared to Western literature, social problems not only occupied much more space in Russian novels, social themes also maintained their predominance for a longer time (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 134). Hauser uses social history to justify his claim that the connection between literature and society was stronger in Russia than in the West. Because of political censorship, and the absolute authority of the tsars, Russian writers and readers were forced to express their social and political aspirations via the literary medium. Hence, the Russian social novel,

As the form of social criticism par excellence, acquires an activist, pedagogical and, indeed, prophetic character, such as it never possessed in the West, and the Russian writers still remain the teachers and prophets of their people, when the literati in Western Europe are already declining into absolute passivity and isolation (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 134).

The problem of social isolation was the overarching theme of the Russian social novel of the nineteenth-century. This preoccupation would help to explain the spectre of anarchy, as well as the fear of crime and madness, which Hauser identifies as the recurring subjects of the greatest Russian novels of this period. However, the estrangement of the individual from society was not simply an existential problem of freedom. The loneliness and isolation of modern existence could also be explained in sociological terms, as negative consequences of Western liberalism and the deleterious effects of romantic individualism. In Hauser's words, "nowhere has this problem been lived through more deeply, more intensively and more disturbingly than in Russia, and no one felt the responsibility involved in the attempt to solve it with greater anguish than Tolstoy and Dostoevsky" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 133).

On the one hand, the problem of individualism and freedom was a unifying theme in the work of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. On social estrangement, "both regard the emancipation of the individual from society, his loneliness and isolation, as the greatest possible evil" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 147). And yet, on the other hand, their respective attitudes to anti-individualism would also highlight essential differences in their thought. Hauser describes Dostoyevsky's objections to individualism as more irrational and mystic in nature; "[Dostoyevsky] interprets the 'principium individuationis' as a defection from the world-spirit, from the prime original, from the divine idea, which make themselves known in a concrete historical form in the common people, the nation and the social community" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 148–149). Whereas Dostoyevsky rejected individualism on holistic grounds, Tolstoy, Hauser argues, rejected it on rational and eudemonistic grounds. For Tolstoy, "personal detachment from society can bring man no happiness and no satisfaction; he can find comfort and contentment only in self-denial and in devotion to others" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 149).

Despite their different philosophical outlooks, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy's shared abhorrence of social alienation acted as a bulwark against the influence of

Western nihilism in Russian literature. The Russian social novel therefore resisted the unchecked freedoms that led inevitably to the pessimism and nihilism of Flaubert:

Dostoevsky's rejection of individualism, his criticism of rationalistic and materialistic Europe, his apotheosis of human solidarity and love, have no other purpose than to impede a development which must lead inevitably to Flaubert's nihilism. The Western novel ends with the description of the individual estranged from society and collapsing under the burden of his loneliness; the Russian novel depicts, from beginning to end, the fight against the demons which induce the individual to revolt against the world and the community of his fellow-men (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 133).

Hauser argues that Tolstoy viewed the conflict between the individual and society as a failure of the Western Enlightenment: "not as an unavoidable tragedy, but as a calamity which he attributes, following the eighteenth-century view, to a lack of insight, understanding and moral seriousness." But this did not equate to a failure of the Enlightenment project on the whole. Tolstoy, says Hauser, "still lives in the age of the Russian enlightenment, in an intellectual atmosphere of faith in the future" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 155). Thus, according to Hauser, the Russian social novel preserved the best and most positive characteristics of the Enlightenment ethos at a time when the culture of the West had declined into nihilism and aestheticism.

Conclusion

Arnold Hauser's epic work, *The Social History of Art*, described the perennial struggle of two conflicting artistic tendencies: idealism and naturalism. Whereas the idealist tendency replaced representations of reality with abstract forms and concepts, the naturalist orientation maintained a fidelity to temporal life experience. In the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, these orientations found their greatest expression in the literary realm: in the form of German idealism and romanticism, and in the naturalism of the Russian social novel. These orientations had sociological implications, which were discernible in terms of historical materialism. Hauser argued against the interpretation of German literary culture as an immanent or innate expression of national character. Rather, the German philosophical worldview arose from a set of social and historical circumstances, in which a definite social stratum, the middleclass intelligentsia, was excluded from government and public life.

Hauser's outlook was generally hostile towards idealism. He viewed this mode of thinking as fundamentally irrational and elitist. Idealism signified a retreat from life into a realm of pure contemplation and timeless forms. "Such an attitude," he argued, "always works out ultimately in favour of the dominating minorities, who rightly see in realism an approach to reality that might be dangerous to them, whereas the dominant majority has nothing to fear from realism" (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], I: 89). In contrast to idealism, naturalism was concerned with representing the experiences of everyday existence. For Hauser, the Russian social novel was the consummation of this progressive tendency: "Dostoyevsky represents, as far

as sharpness of psychological observation is concerned, the most highly developed form of the naturalistic novel” (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 146).

While the German intelligentsia’s rejection of enlightenment principles led to its social disengagement, the Russian intelligentsia followed a course of development that was generally comparable with that of the West before 1848. In Russia, says Hauser, the concept of the intelligentsia was always related to freedom and with popular resistance to social oppression. And yet, despite his unqualified admiration of the Russian social novel, Hauser was forced to adjust his sociological model to fit historical circumstances. He acknowledged that the conservative Slavophile elements could not be regarded as belonging to this liberalising class, and that even the greatest masters of the Russian social novel, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, had only belonged to the intelligentsia to a limited extent. However, even though Dostoevsky did not identify with the intelligentsia, Hauser was determined to place him in the camp of progress. As Hauser has noted, Dostoevsky based his analysis of Russian society on the intelligentsia’s point of view; many of his most memorable protagonists, including Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov, Shatov, Kirilov, and Stepan Verkhovensky, were bourgeois intellectuals.

Despite the contradictions of the Russian social novel, the intelligentsia was a progressive force that served the greater good of society. Dostoyevsky saw the social problems of his time, the atomisation of society and the deepening gulf between the classes, from the standpoint of the intelligentsia. Tolstoy viewed the same problems, but from the standpoint of an understanding between landowners and the peasants (Hauser 1951a, b, c [1999], IV: 140). Russian writers did not succumb to resentment and nihilism, as did French intellectuals after the failed revolutions of 1848. Nor did they neglect their social responsibilities, like the German intelligentsia, whose aloof idealism and romantic individualism eschewed the world of practical affairs. The Russian social novel did not only demonstrate major points of difference between German and Russian literary culture. More importantly for Hauser, and his social history project, the social novel pointed towards the reconciliation of the intelligentsia and the society from which it had become estranged.

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