

59, route de Mategnin

Meyrin

Geneve

6th April, 1965

Dear Comrade Lukacs,

I must write to offer you my thanks and my congratulations on the occasion of your eightieth birthday.

This is an occasion for talking about you rather than myself. But it would be a silly form of pride not to introduce myself - for surely you do not know me.

I am an English writer. Once an art critic, now, mostly, a novelist. I am a close friend of Ernst Fischer's, and during the last years of his life in London I learned much from Frederick Antal. In the last number of Tagebuch our messages to Bruno Frei appear on the same page. My wife has recently been translating some of your articles for an American anthology of Marxist theory on the arts. In short, I feel that I have almost met you.

What I want to say is very simple. (I am 38 years of age.) The influence of your writing and thought on my work is now indelible. So much of what I now take for granted is in fact the result of your original thought. The distinction between naturalism and realism as you explained it. The significance of the concept of Harmonious Man. The different levels of "spontaneity" for an artist living today in a bourgeois society. The idea of the Archimedean point from which the artist by conscious self-development can lift up the world to show it as it really is. All this - and much more - I owe to you.

But perhaps even more important than this is your example of single-mindedness, the tone of your voice as you write, the odd and true mixture of humility and arrogance, the awareness that the reader has of a disciplined intelligence whose breadth of intelligence is constantly checking the discipline.

For all that you have shown me and shown many others, I want to thank you. You have always known what you could do and been content with the limits of that. Please know now how much that represented.

With profound respect - from one of your pupils -

MTA FIL. INT.
Lukács Arch.

John Berger

John Berger