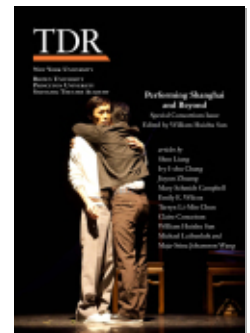


What is to be done

Milo Rau, Nina Wolters

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ly work by Luhmann. Or in other words: if you are determined to have the biggest possible hymn on anything that is normally subsumed as post-politics in your book-case, you should buy this Lenin, this utopia of the future, assembled of cybernetic logics, economics and old-style-humanism. Here, Plato's philosopher-king no longer approaches us as the enraged citizen clucking the Browning, instead he is smiling in the most level-headed manner and wearing an engineer's coat. In the most literal sense of the expression he is working in selfless dedication towards the perfection of what Lenin calls "the free association of producers" – a massive, global hall for production and discussion, in which each worker is on his own and from which the unfortunate awareness is banned. An excessive disappearance has begun: at first, the devices of political representation have disappeared, then the whole state, and in the end the critique, this most likeable of all petit-bourgeois virtues. Because why should circumstances be criticized if they can be changed much more quickly instead?

So, in early autumn of 1917, before the revolution, there already exist two forms of left-wing power-politics: one of the radical political coup and one of entirely apolitical bureaucracy. This binary Lenin is the starting point of the two main schools of contemporary communist thought. But they do not, however, exist dialectically, in mutual dependence, as two sides of a medal, but instead they are in an undeclared rivalry of some sort. *What is to be done?* will from now on be drawn by the terrorist-dissident line of academics, strategists, and creative artists – from the theory

Neostiticismism, the new sobriety and the new involvement. Furthermore, there has been the utilization of local leftist traditions of theory or those overlooked by the existing communism, such as those by Gramsci, Zapata or Simone Weil: all of these made their occurrence and were instantly sold off by the good old cultural industry and its little brother, the middle-class intellectual congress, art- and festival-ocoptism.

In marketing, Hegel's "umso schlimmer für die Tatsachen" ("even worse for the facts") is often translated into: one should not let a good story be destroyed by the truth. The same goes for political thinking. How else could the liberalism have overcome the financial crisis and all of the other crises of the capitalistic systems, how else could populism have endured the barbaric humiliation of all its essential values in the 20th century?

This is exactly where Lenin comes back into play: the voluntaristic Lenin of *What is to be done?* (1902) and *April Thesis* (1917), but also the Lenin of the very contrasting book *State and Revolution*, which he wrote in 1917. The quasi binary Lenin emerged at precisely this moment – directly after Kereński's coup against the czar, when the development of the bourgeois civil society became a current issue.

In *What is to be done?* and *April Thesis*, he praises the elite as it corresponds with the „Weltgeist“ through action-analysis, both books are manifests of the utopian event and the jacobean tactics. Left-wing philosophers such as Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière along with

of permanent revolution to all kinds of Guerilla- and Occupy-methods and academic critics of post-politics. *State and Revolution* is the starting point for the mostly bureaucratic drafts of labour union officials and party politicians, who dream of a sustainable reconstruction of the economic order. Whatever being "leftist" incorporated since Lenin, it always included a secret fundamental decision for one Lenin, or the other. But while until 1989 it was courteous to at least pro forma allow the colleagues of the opposing side to take a dialectic detour, the second postmodern era which was directly preceded by the downfall of actual, existent socialism, permanently dissolved the relationship between *What is to be done?* and *State and Revolution*, between revolt and social justice. The bureaucratic group bid farewell to any utopian hidden agendas and henceforth concentrated on the redemption of the western social welfare state and on dealing with the unerving postmodern fooleries of the populists. The anarchist group, on the other hand, concentrated on a type of theatre of revolution, bare of any power-political intention exceeding the establishment of a new cultural centre or the discovery of some new "minoritary" or "queer" voice of the season in the postmodern choir of opinions.

It does indeed seem as if a secret, anti-dialectic division of labour has been established: the real-political positivity on one side, the anarchist negativity on the other. The craftsmen of wage settlements and inter-cultural discourse on one side, conceiving the capitalist system and the parliamentary democracy as a last rise

our civilisation will collapse in the foreseeable future unless we can find an alternative to the current world order; everybody knows that a considerable part of the world population is living in absolute poverty thanks to globalisation and the free market; everybody has understood a long time ago that a superlatively fairer and consequently more generalized unleashing of funds will simply accelerate this process – but still we keep going, critique included, of course.

The alternative to capitalist realism can therefore not be *no realism* or even *more critique*. No, it must be a better realism. Even if postmodern rationality, in its naïve intention to destroy all "big narratives", has invented post-Forlism, the greatest narrative of all time – we will now have to come up with a new one, whether we like it or not. Because the well-known humanist argument – the things are only worth as much as "the value you give them" – is just untrue. "Giving a value to the things" is no more than an esoterically gilded consolation prize, the mark of Cain for all of capitalism's losers. What has a value and what does not, what deserves approval and what does not, what is seductive and what is not – none of these decisions are made by the tuned-up, pluralistic individualists. Neither are they made by the cool peer-group. They are made by the one who is in charge. The decisions are made by the system.

Therefore, can be stated: the totalitarian, system-oriented Lenin bites the tail of the anarchistic one – and they make the revolution happen together. This is because next to the real-political thesis, which is seen as economically good and justified, there has to exist

of the real, which should be arranged with the highest possible fairness; on the other side the situationist, who perceives real-political integrability and any kind of systemic approaches as a priori uncool, totalitarian and difference-theoretically primitive. In this way the postmodern rationality splits the binary Lenin into two dissimilar twins: the level-headed, slightly humourless brother on one side, who holds a degree in business administration, is versed in the matters of eco-power providers and green politicians and prefers investing his money in sustainable educational trips to North Africa rather than in budget holiday trips. On the other side there is the sometimes slightly panicky brother who is still stuck in his anarchist-crip, chants "El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido" in lame Spanish at demonstrations, plays bass guitar in a band with an ironic name, spends his time fighting basis-democratic word duels and is convinced that the occupation of Hamburg's city park or London's shopping mall will send capitalism into a symbolic legitimization-crisis.

My simple thesis is as follows: leftist theory and Lenin only come in the binary form. Or to say it in Hegel's words: the "positive rationality" of realists and the competing "negative rationality" of anarchists must be joined into a "speculative rationality", a utopian dialectic. The point is no longer about either being realistic or critical, it is about *being realistic in an unrealistic manner*. The so-called *capitalist realism* in fact only works on a speculative basis, under the terms of "I know, but still...". Everybody knows that

the anti-thesis of destruction of its impediment. And who ever will be going through with this equally symbolic and factual revolution: it will only make sense if its background is formed by the utopia of a fundamentally different currency of happiness and approval, a greater seduction, when the deconstruction of "They" is accompanied by a construction of a new "We", the construction of an actual collective capacity. What we need is a realism as radically deconstructive as it is old-fashioned and concrete, as humanistic-totalitarian as Lenin's utopia in *State and Revolution* and as enraged and hysterical as his *April Thesis*. Because one without the other cannot form resistance, not even analysis for that matter, instead it could only be another local anaesthesia against the immense utopian phantom pain of our time. Just another discussion about the end of the world or simply a smiling emoticon at the end of a cruel text message which informs us about the past 50 years, its final statement being: the story of mankind is over.

Epilogue of "What is to be done. Critique of the Postmodern Reason" by Milo Rau, first read in public on November 8th 2015 at the Sublimeatic Berlin, as part of the show "Manic to Summit" (together with Florian Matzchen, Rabih Mroué and Dinytzy Vilenky):

What is to be done?

Milo Rau
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