

Tom Rockmore · Norman Levine
Editors

**The Palgrave
Handbook of Leninist
Political Philosophy**

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1

Introduction

Tom Rockmore

Everyone knows that after—and as a result of—the Second World War, Germany was divided into two parts that were later reunified in 1990. The film *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003) is a German tragicomedy about the ambivalent attitude of East Germans to the political *coup d'état* that overtook their country, its hopes and dreams for socialism of a different kind, and even its past, which began to disappear following reunification with, and absorption into, the Federal Republic of Germany. The destruction and then removal of the statue of Lenin in Berlin in 1992 symbolize the passing of Lenin's heritage in this part of the Soviet empire he did so much to create. The film suggests that nothing has really changed despite so much apparently having changed. It points to the continuing influence of Lenin, who, as much as if not more than Marx, contributed in practice to realizing a version of Marx's theoretical vision of a possible future.

Lenin, who was a many-sided figure, larger than life, a world-historical individual in the Hegelian sense of the term, made contributions of the most varied kinds. This book—the joint work of many hands—offers an encyclopedic grasp of Lenin's political philosophy understood in the widest possible sense of the term. It is difficult to define and even more difficult to quantify the amorphous concept of influence. Yet suffice it to say that Lenin

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Lenin's Philosophy in Intellectual Context

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In analyzing Lenin's attitude toward theoretical issues, one should first of all abandon two opposite prejudices: on the one hand, the idea that Lenin's thought should be considered the cornerstone of Marxist philosophy, which has been dominant in the Soviet Union for decades; on the other hand, the idea, quite popular in the West, that Lenin was an opportunist, keen to bend his theory to the superior tasks of political praxis.¹ Nowadays, "a serious intellectual biography of Lenin", as Alex Callinicos pointed out, would reveal "less his casual attitude to theory than the systematic manner in which every significant turn in events drove him to reconsider how best the situation was to be understood from a theoretical perspective".² The constant connections between theory and praxis in Lenin's actions and thought seem to characterize him more as "a political thinker, a philosopher of politics, and only subsequently as a philosopher *ex professo*."³ However, Lenin's interest in philosophy as such is supported by reliable evidence throughout his whole life.⁴ Nikolaj Valentinov, a philosophical adversary who described him without any leniency, disclosed that young Lenin had arrived in Siberia with a few books, but had left with many trunks, since his sister Anna had procured him volumes by Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, d'Holbach and Helvétius.⁵

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Among Lenin's first published works are a number of philosophical essays, where he developed his ideas on historical materialism against both "subjectivism" and "objectivism." In 1894-1895, at the peak of the debate between Marxism and Populism, Lenin dealt with the problem of determinism in history. N.K. Mikhajlovsky's subjectivist sociology notoriously insisted on the individual's creative role within history, while the Marxists claimed a scientific interpretation of historical reality that was soundly founded on principles as certain as the laws of natural sciences. And it would be exactly knowledge of the historical laws that would be required to guarantee the success of Marxist praxis. Lenin summarized: "The idea of determinism, which postulates that human acts are necessitated and rejects the absurd tale about free will, in no way destroys man's reason or conscience, or appraisal of his actions. Quite the contrary, only the determinist view makes a strict and correct appraisal possible instead of attributing everything you please to free will. Similarly, the idea of historical necessity does not in the least undermine the role of the individual in history: all history is made up of the actions of individuals, who are undoubtedly active figures. The real question that arises in appraising the social activity of an individual is: what conditions ensure the success of his actions, what guarantee is there that these actions will not remain an isolated act lost in a welter of contrary acts?"⁶

The success of praxis depends on the correct knowledge of historical forces and dynamics. Lenin emphasized it clearly while polemicizing on the opposite front against the "objectivists," who were dominated by the pure necessity of historical process, which they interpreted from a positivist standpoint as a strict series of facts. Lenin wrote: "when demonstrating the necessity for a given series of facts, the objectivist always runs the risk of becoming an apologist for these facts," while "the materialist discloses the class contradictions and in so doing defines his standpoint." The historical materialist "does not limit himself to speaking of the necessity of a process, but ascertains exactly what social-economic formation gives the process its content, *exactly what class* determines this necessity. [...] [M]aterialism includes partisanship, so to speak, and enjoins the direct and open adoption of the standpoint of a definite social group in any assessment of events."⁷ According to Lenin, Marxism therefore guaranteed correct answers to both theoretical and practical problems and, however complex a situation might be, Marxist analysis would lead to the most consistent and effective strategy.⁸ Since his encounter with Marx and Engels, whom he had been studying with commitment and devotion from the end of the 1880s onwards, Lenin convinced himself of what he maintained in 1913: "The Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true."⁹

Plekhanov, the so-called "father of Russian Marxism"¹⁰ had the same deep conviction: a sound philosophical basis, a comprehensive worldview that accounted consistently for both nature and history were to him the only certain guarantee of the success of any possible human action. Lenin acknowledged Plekhanov's philosophical authority even when, in politics, he was the farthest from his master. In 1921, Lenin still maintained "for the benefit of young party members that you *cannot* hope to become a *real*, intelligent Communist without making a study—and I mean *study*—of all of Plekhanov's philosophical writings, because nothing better has been written on Marxism anywhere in the world."¹¹ Plekhanov surely influenced Lenin's philosophical instruction. In June 1899, complaining about his own "lack of philosophical education," Lenin confessed to Potresov: "I do not intend to write on these subjects until I have learned more. That is just what I am doing—I have started with Holbach and Helvétius, and am now taking up Kant."¹² The French materialists were among Plekhanov's most authoritative sources, and the discussion about Kant was at the time the center of his polemics against German and Russian revisionism.¹³ In order to improve his own philosophical education, Lenin took Plekhanov's path.

The idea that a socialist consciousness could develop "only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge" was actually quite widespread among the Second International Marxists.¹⁴ For Lenin, at the beginning of the century, that meant the necessity of a strong intellectual leadership within the revolutionary organization. In *What Is To Be Done?*, as is well known, the idea is very clearly expressed: "Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers."¹⁵ "The history of all countries," Lenin noticed, "shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness."¹⁶ The belief that an inspiring leadership should develop the socialist consciousness of the masses and conduct them to success was maintained by Lenin during his whole life,¹⁷ though with different nuances.

While in the programmatic work of 1902 the leading role of a revolutionary *élite* was undoubted, in 1904, in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, within the context of the split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, Lenin insisted that the intellectuals should take lessons from the proletarians: "The proletariat is trained for organization by its whole life, far more radically than many an intellectual prig."¹⁸ Trotsky immediately commented on this presumed turn in Lenin's thought: "The proletariat, the very proletariat you were told yesterday 'spontaneously tends towards trade unionism,' is today invited to give lessons in *political discipline!* And to whom?"

To the same intelligentsia which in yesterday's plan was given the role of bringing proletarian political consciousness to the proletariat from the outside.¹⁹ To Trotsky this was the sign "that Lenin simply used Marxist theory for his own political maneuvering."²⁰ Taking a more favorable attitude, one might say that Lenin was trying to adapt his positions to a different context, and to preserve at the same time the task of a strongly structured revolutionary organization. Rosa Luxemburg participated in the discussion with her *Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*, published in July 1904 simultaneously in Germany, in *Die Neue Zeit*, and in Russia, in *Iskra*. According to Luxemburg, class consciousness emerges from the interaction between the party and the proletarian mass. The working class should "acquire the sense of the new discipline, the freely assumed self-discipline of the Social Democracy, not as a result of the discipline imposed on it by the capitalist state, but by extirpating, to the last root, its old habits of obedience and servility," since "the self-discipline of the Social Democracy is not merely the replacement of the authority of bourgeois rulers with the authority of a socialist central committee."²¹

Quite curiously, the comrade who intervened in Lenin's defense was Alexandr Bogdanov, who was soon to become his main philosophical opponent. In *Rosa Luxemburg contra Karl Marx*, published under the pseudonym "Rjadovoj," Bogdanov (which was itself a *nom de plume*; his actual surname was Malinovsky) relied on Marx's authority, and ascribed to him the idea that the discipline of the working class directly depended on working conditions.²² That is why, according to Bogdanov, the proletarian vanguard was already mature enough to lead the political organization and develop its own new culture. The question whether a new proletarian culture would be produced during the struggle against capitalism, and would then bring the revolution to success, or whether it would be a consequence, and not even an immediate one, of the revolution itself, was soon to set Bogdanov and Lenin against one another for their entire lives. Recently, Craig Brandist maintained that "the notorious conflicts between Lenin and Bogdanov were actually focused more on understandings of how to pursue a hegemonic project in present circumstances than on the philosophical polemics over Bogdanov's 'Empiriomonism.'" While Lenin focused on the directly political dimensions of hegemony, Bogdanov foregrounded the need to develop an elaborated proletarian culture in advance of the seizure of state power.²³

In 1904, their disagreement on this point went almost unnoticed. At that time, the two main Bolshevik leaders exhibited a solid alliance. During the summer, Bogdanov and Lenin met for the first time in Switzerland, in order to discuss common projects and Bolshevik publications. At the time,

Bogdanov was already a well-known revolutionary and a leading thinker. Lenin was well aware of his ideas: in 1897 Bogdanov had published *A Short Course of Economic Science*, which Lenin reviewed with enthusiasm, possibly thinking 'Bogdanov' was a new pseudonym of Plekhanov's.²⁴ A couple of years later, during his stay in Siberia, Lenin had "studied" Bogdanov's "energeticist book, *The Historical View of Nature*"²⁵; in the summer of 1903 in Geneva, he and Plekhanov had discussed "with a delegate from the editors of the symposium" *Studies in the Realistic World-View*,²⁶ a collective book, in which a heterogeneous group of authors, including Bogdanov, took a stand against the influential volume *Problems of Idealism*.²⁷ According to Lenin's later report, both he and Plekhanov agreed to contribute to the common anti-idealist enterprise, he "on the agrarian question, Plekhanov on anti-Machist philosophy."²⁸ Initially the delegate accepted those conditions, but neither Lenin nor Plekhanov finally contributed, which is not surprising, since the volume turned out to be the first collective statement of the group of thinkers who were to become the "enemies" of Orthodox Marxism. In the preface, they stated "a monistic ideal of knowledge,"²⁹ which some of the authors (Suvorov, Lunacharsky, Bazarov, Bogdanov himself) discovered in Richard Avenarius's and Ernst Mach's ideas, where they found a radical rejection of dualism, starting from the fundamental dualism of thinking and being, physical and psychological.³⁰

When Lenin met Bogdanov in person, he knew the latter's philosophical thought, but also his dedication as a revolutionary and his talent as a writer. At that time, Lenin needed reliable support in Russia, and new forces to use in the press against the Mensheviks. Bogdanov and his friends could give him both, and Lenin decided to make a pact with them, "a tacit bloc, which tacitly ruled out philosophy as a neutral field"³¹: the Bolsheviks were not going to discuss philosophy on the party press. All the evidence, however, confirms Lenin's version that privately the conflict had already exploded during his first meeting with Bogdanov, as they "immediately gave each other presents—I [Lenin], my *Steps*, he, one of his *current* philosophical work", probably the first volume of *Empiriomonism*.³² Lenin's reaction was immediate: "I at once (in the spring or the early summer of 1904) wrote to him in Paris from Geneva that his writings strongly convinced me that his views were wrong and as strongly convinced me that those of Plekhanov were correct."³³ Valentinov took note of Bogdanov's comments about his harsh debate with Lenin in the summer of 1904: "We excitedly discussed for two days and almost had a real fight. I heard Lenin's judgments on philosophy for the first time and convinced myself that it was better not to quarrel with him on those subjects. He had a lot of passion in fighting, but little

knowledge.³⁴ The private fights went on for years: when, in the summer of 1906, Lenin and Bogdanov together with their wives shared a country house named "Vasa" in the Finnish village of Kuokkala, close to the border, the philosophical conflict was still on.³⁵ In public, however, in front of the Social Democrats of both factions, Lenin and Bogdanov behaved as good partners: Lenin did not mention his disapproval of his comrade's ideas, Bogdanov intervened on the present-day issues (the polemic against the Mensheviks, the relations with the Liberals, the war against Japan), using his battle-name "Rjadovoj" instead of the pseudonym "Bogdanov," which was his signature on the philosophical works.³⁶

Such an agreement between Bogdanov and Lenin could not but worry Plekhanov and his followers, who started acting as the defenders of Marxist orthodoxy. The first essay that appeared in November 1904 against Bogdanov's "Machism" on the page of *Iskra*, at that time a Menshevik paper, was signed by L.I. Aksel'rod (Ortodoks). She openly wrote to her sister: Lenin "is becoming Bog[danov]'s ally and probably they will edit together their publications. [...] [T]he essay is now necessary from a political standpoint."³⁷ The central idea in her essay was that "empiriomonism" was nothing else than "a new form of revisionism," such as Bernstein's in Germany, and legal Marxism in Russia; some Marxists, lacking theoretical solidity, betrayed their own principles, and yielded to bourgeois philosophers. But the very beginning of the essay clearly showed that, together with the polemic on philosophy, its aim was to cause a disturbance among the Bolsheviks and to undermine their "bloc." Ljubov' Aksel'rod recalled that "about one year and a half ago Lenin suggested to me to intervene against the new 'critic' of the Marxian theory, expressed in comrade Bogdanov's works."³⁸ The intention to put Lenin in a difficult position with his ally was clear.

At that time, the pact between Lenin and Bogdanov was often referred to in the political debates by Plekhanov, who had become more and more averse to "centralism,"³⁹ which, according to him, was turning into open "Blanquism" and "Bonapartism."⁴⁰ Lenin's voluntarism in political strategy seemed to be wholly consistent with the theoretical subjectivism that Plekhanov saw in "Machism."⁴¹ Lenin reacted during the Third Congress of the party (actually a Bolshevik Congress) in 1905 by talking about Plekhanov's polemics against the organ of the faction: "Unable to prove that *Vpered* wants to 'criticize' Marx, Plekhanov drags in Mach and Avenarius by the ears. I cannot for the life of me understand what these writers, for whom I have not the slightest sympathy, have to do with the question of social revolution."⁴² Plekhanov in his turn observed that Mach and Avenarius

as philosophers were actually secondary subjects in a political journal, but the Bolsheviks' interest in their thought turned out to be wholly consistent with their parting from orthodoxy in the direction of subjectivism. Surely, Lenin could not be defined as a Machist, and to him—Plekhanov continued—"Mach and Avenarius are in fact alien 'subjects.' But to him any philosophical 'subject' is alien as well, since he has never cared about anything in philosophy. Therefore, in this respect, he counts for nothing. This is in the first place. And, in the second—who knows?—maybe even Lenin the Marxist started to give into the influence of surrounding Machists. As for myself, I confess that, according to the French saying *ce sont les enfants des autres qui gâtent les nôtres*, I explain the many blunders of the journals *Vpered* and *Proletary* exactly with the harmful influence of the 'critics of Marx' gathering around him [Lenin]."⁴³ Lenin was described as a kind of victim of his own allies, being weak in his philosophical knowledge, and rather disinterested in theoretical integrity, while the Machist "heresy" was taking over the Bolsheviks.⁴⁴ A deep concern with the criticism of experience seemed so widespread among the Russian revolutionaries that it became a good indication of political belonging. In a short novel published in a journal in 1907, a coroner, charged with the examination of the body of a young man who has killed himself, finds something interesting within the victim's papers, and states: "They are translations from German. A book about philosophy. Look at this: 'Mach's followers find that critical monism in this development'... Uhm... yes... 'By abstracting the given tendency from its real essence'... 'Chapter 3: Empiriomonism and orthodoxy'... It makes no difference, it means revolutionary material..."⁴⁵

The so-called "Machists" did not represent a unique or homogeneous school. They only shared an anti-metaphysical attitude against every absolute, including the idea of absolute truth, the attention to genetic analysis and evolutionism, and the belief that any knowledge has practical implications (all themes that they considered typical both of Mach and Avenarius and Marxism), thereby distancing themselves from Plekhanov's and Lenin's "orthodoxy." In July 1907, Bogdanov could reproach "comrade Plekhanov" that he was arguing with his philosophical adversaries "on credit," without really coping with the philosophical questions, but just imposing his more or less grounded reputation of being a sound Marxist thinker.⁴⁶ But in a few months, a real *Machomakia* exploded among Russian Marxists,⁴⁷ and a new front opened among the Bolsheviks, which added itself to the many contrasts that troubled the faction at that time. First of all, Bogdanov and Lenin were on different sides regarding the decision to take part in the election for the State Duma, Lenin being more moderate, approving partici-

parion, and Bogdanov maintaining the opinion that the Social Democrats' priority should be the restart of the revolutionary drive. Second, the clamor provoked by the discovery of direct Bolshevik responsibility for the famous robbery at the Bank of Tbilisi, where the bandit Kamo's group acted with the endorsement of the Bolshevik "Financial Commission", convinced Lenin that it was better to distance himself from the comrades who were personally involved, including Bogdanov. Furthermore, at that moment Lenin could count on other sources of financial support, particularly on a substantial part of the heritage of Nikolaj Schmit, a rich Bolshevik sympathizer who had been arrested for participation in the 1905 riots, and who had killed himself in jail.⁴⁸ The fact that finally persuaded Lenin to openly intervene in the philosophical debates against his own Bolshevik comrades, however, was the circumstance that more and more often Machism was identified as the Bolshevik philosophy *tout court*. As already shown, the Mensheviks' insistence on the idea that Bolshevism and Machism were both expressions of the same "subjective arbitrary will and vulgar empiricism,"⁴⁹ and the Bolsheviks' silence, Lenin's first of all, in the press, made the identification of Bolshevism and Machism a fairly widespread opinion. The journal of the German Social Democratic Party, *Die Neue Zeit*, celebrated the seventieth anniversary of Ernst Mach's birth by publishing the translation of Bogdanov's preface to the Russian edition of Mach's *Analysis of Sensations*,⁵⁰ with a short note by the German translator, where one could read: "Russian Social-Democracy, unfortunately, reveals a strong tendency to making this or that attitude toward Mach a question of factional division within the party. Grave tactical differences of opinion between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks are aggravated by a controversy on a question, which, in our opinion, has no bearing whatever on these differences, namely, whether Marxism, from the point of view of theory, is compatible with the teaching of Spinoza and Holbach, or of Mach and Avenarius."⁵¹ Lenin could not accept that the Menshevik identification of Bolshevism and philosophical revisionism was confirmed and corroborated by such an authoritative source. *Proletary* immediately published a resentful reply: "In this connection the Editorial Board of *Proletary*, as the ideological spokesman of the Bolshevik trend, deems it necessary to state the following. Actually, this philosophical controversy is not a factional one and, in the opinion of the Editorial Board, should not be so; any attempt to represent these differences of opinion as factional is radically erroneous. Both factions contain adherents of the two philosophical trends."⁵²

On February 24, 1908, during the meeting when the reply to *Die Neue Zeit* was discussed, the editorial board of *Proletary*, at that time composed

of Lenin, Bogdanov and Dubrovinsky, also debated the publication of an essay by Gorky.⁵³ Lenin himself had invited the latter to write some notes on modern literature for the journal,⁵⁴ but when he received an essay close to Bogdanov's and Lunacharsky's ideas, which expressed an almost religious enthusiasm for the overcoming of the single personality within the collective, Lenin declared that its publication would break the "neutrality" of the newspaper. According to Lenin, it was better to be protected from Mensheviks' attacks on the philosophical front, where the Bolsheviks seemed to be weak. Lenin wrote a few days later to Gorky that the Mensheviks "will gain if the Bolshevik faction does not dissociate itself from the philosophy of the three Bolsheviks [Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and Bazarov]. In that case, they will definitely win. But if the philosophical fight goes on outside the faction, the Mensheviks will be definitely reduced to a political line and that will be the death of them."⁵⁵ It was certainly a tactical decision, which seems to contradict Lenin's deep belief that philosophy mattered as such within the revolutionary party. Lenin himself confessed that it was a temporary solution: "Can, and should, philosophy be linked with the trend of Party work? With Bolshevism? I think this should not be done at the present time."⁵⁶ For this reason, Lenin stood against the publication of Gorky's essay, though he knew that his censure would raise endless debates: "I know I am being abused for this: he wants to stop other people's mouths, while he has not yet opened his own!"⁵⁷ Within the editorial board, Bogdanov brought up the question of how to understand the philosophical "neutrality" of *Proletary* as it was claimed in the answer to *Die Neue Zeit*. Bogdanov told Gorky that he put the problem in these terms: "if the board understands this 'neutrality' so that it will find and eradicate the 'empirionomist spirit' in essays that don't contradict the principles of revolutionary Marxism, I will not be able to stay within the board, obviously, since I am soaked in that 'spirit' myself."⁵⁸

The intention to keep the polemics about philosophy away from the party press did not mean that Lenin disregarded ideological contrasts. At the beginning of 1908, a new volume came out with several different articles on the same model of the *Studies in the Realistic World-View*. This time it was called *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism*,⁵⁹ and collected essays by Bazarov, Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Suvorov and Berman, the Menshevik P.S. Jushkevich and his friend Iosif Gel'fond. The preface pointed out the common elements among these very different authors: the acknowledgement of a strict bond between their philosophy and socialism, and a deep interest in natural sciences and their methods. According to Lenin, "the book, *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism*, has considerably sharpened the old differences

among the Bolsheviks on questions of philosophy,⁶⁰ and that pushed him to come back to some old notes he had started writing during the summer of 1906, when Bogdanov gave him the third volume of his *Empiricismism*. Then, Lenin told Gorky, "it became clearer to me than ever that he was on an absolutely wrong track, not the Marxist track. I thereupon wrote him a 'declaration of love,' a letter on philosophy taking up three notebooks."⁶¹ He then showed his essay to a few friends, including Lunacharsky, and he thought of publishing it with the title *Notes of an Ordinary Marxist on Philosophy*, thereby emphasizing that, even though he was no "expert," he could still judge which was the correct Marxist path. Lenin's notes were never published, but in February 1908, moved by his irritation with *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism*, Lenin asked his relatives to find the notes and send them back to him, so that he could develop them into a radical critique of the Machists' new ideas. Reading the *Studies*, Lenin persuaded himself that enough was enough: "No, really, it's too much," he wrote to Gorky. "To be sure, we ordinary Marxists are not well up in philosophy, but why insult us by serving this stuff up to us as the philosophy of Marxism!"⁶² Lenin concluded that "some sort of fight among the Bolsheviks on the question of philosophy" was "quite unavoidable. It would be stupid, however, to split on this."⁶³ A few weeks later he insisted: "A fight is *absolutely* inevitable. And party people should devote their efforts not to slurring it over, putting it off or dodging it, but to ensuring that essential party work *does not suffer* in practice."⁶⁴ But the "neutrality" of political work could not be adduced to this aim any more: "there cannot and *will not be* any neutrality on such an issue."⁶⁵ Neutrality could only be relative, and the philosophical discussions should develop with the necessary inflexibility, but in a different field than the everyday political struggle. "Only so will the faction not be committed, not be *involved*, not be compelled tomorrow or the day after to *decide*, to *vote*, i.e., to turn the *fight* into a chronic, protracted, hopeless affair."⁶⁶

At that point, Lenin considered it necessary to intervene publicly, though not on the party press, against what looked to him like a dangerous heresy. On March 24, Lenin wrote to Gorky: "You must understand [...] that once a party man has become convinced that a certain doctrine is grossly fallacious and *harmful*, he is obliged to come out against it. I would not be kicking up a row if I were not absolutely convinced [...] that their book is ridiculous, harmful, philistine, fideist—the whole of it, from beginning to end, from branch to root, to Mach and Avenarius." Plekhanov was right in his attack against the Machists, but in Lenin's opinion "he is unable or unwilling or too lazy to say so *concretely*, in detail, simply, without unne-

essarily frightening his readers with philosophical nuances." It was time to speak out: "at all costs I shall say it *in my own way*."⁶⁷

Right away, Gorky reported to Bogdanov that Lenin "snorts like a boiling *samovar*, puffs in every direction with his polemical steam, and I am afraid somebody might get burnt."⁶⁸ Lenin was irritated not only by the epistemology he had found in the *Studies*, but also by a possible "religious" drift, as he had seen in Lunacharsky's essay, which taught "the workers 'religious atheism' and 'worship' of the higher human potentialities."⁶⁹ In Lunacharsky's opinion, Marxism could not be just a "scientific" worldview, but it should turn to the "emotional" aspects of enthusiasm and passion for the ideals,⁷⁰ to a new "religion of the humankind," to which also Gorky was very attracted. In general, Gorky thought that Bogdanov and Lunacharsky represented: "the beauty and the strength of our party, raise enormous hopes; in a short time the entire European socialist proletariat will listen to their voices, and I am ready to bet on it!"⁷¹ Gorky, however, admired Lenin too, so much so that he was sure that sooner or later Lenin would convert to the new ideology and would find an agreement with his adversaries. Gorky wrote to Bogdanov: "Lunach[arsky] is right when he says that 'Il'ich [Lenin] does not understand Bolshevism,' but I believe so much in the strength of his brain that I am sure he will understand."⁷²

To this aim, Gorky invited to Capri, where he was living, all the leading figures of the philosophical dispute: Bogdanov, Bazarov, Lunacharsky and Lenin. The latter made it immediately clear that he had no intention to speak with them about philosophy. On the eve of his journey to Capri, on April 16, he wrote to Gorky: "It is useless and harmful for me to come: I *cannot* and will not talk to people who are preaching the union of scientific socialism and religion." Then he announced he had already "*sent to be printed* the most formal declaration of war,"⁷³ meaning his essay *Marxism and Revisionism*, which he had written for the volume *Karl Marx, 1818–1883*. There Lenin's attack against the new "revisionists" took the form of an open declaration of support to Plekhanov. Lenin wrote: "the only Marxist in the international Social-Democratic movement to criticize the incredible platitudes of the revisionists from the standpoint of consistent dialectical materialism was Plekhanov. This must be stressed all the more emphatically since profoundly mistaken attempts are being made at the present time to smuggle in old and reactionary philosophical rubbish disguised as a criticism of Plekhanov's tactical opportunism." In order to leave no doubt about his real objective, Lenin declared in a footnote about the *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism* his intention to "prove in a series of articles, or in

a separate pamphlet, that *everything* I have said in the text about neo-Kantian revisionists essentially applies also to these 'new' neo-Humean and neo-Berkeleyan revisionists."⁷⁴

At the same time, he still insisted on the necessity to keep the faction united at all costs, since "on no account is it permissible to mix the disputes of writers about philosophy with a Party (i.e., *factional*) matter."⁷⁵ It was probably with the aim of preserving the Bolsheviks' unity that Lenin agreed to go to Capri in the end. Later, Marija Andreeva, Gorky's partner, remembered that Lenin stopped any diplomatic effort as soon as he set foot on the island: "Aleksij Maksimovich [Gorky] started talking with Vladimir Il'ich [Lenin] about the passionate attachment that Bogdanov felt for him, Lenin, and about Lunacharsky and Bogdanov, marvelously talented, smart people... Vladimir Il'ich cast a glance to Aleksij Maksimovich, rolled his eyes, and said very firmly: 'Don't even try, Aleksij Maksimovich. Nothing will come of it.'"⁷⁶

For a week, Gorky and his guests talked in a more or less friendly manner, went to museums in Naples, to Pompeii, approached Vesuvius, fished and played chess, as is well known from some of the most famous and most counterfeit photographs in history.⁷⁷ Many years later, Bogdanov stated that the meeting in Capri had been organized in order to prepare a volume of Bolshevik essays.⁷⁸ If that was the aim, Lenin certainly had not agreed to participate. At the time, he was already seriously working on his grasp of philosophical themes. In March, he had already written to Gorky: "I am neglecting the newspaper because of my hard bout of philosophy: one day I read one of the empirio-critics and swear like a fishwife, next day I read another and swear still worse."⁷⁹ For about a year, Lenin almost abandoned any party work, and wholly devoted himself to the study and refutation of his adversaries' philosophy.⁸⁰ Soon after the Capri meeting, Lenin went to London, where, in the British Museum Library, he consulted the literature he could not find in Geneva. So he sank into philosophical texts he had mainly neglected until then. When Lenin had just finished writing *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Valentinov tried to convince him to read some of Mach's and Avenarius's works, but Lenin gave all of them back in a couple of days, together with eleven pages of notes with the title *Idealistische Schrullen*, which he had underlined twice. Valentinov "immediately convinced himself that of all the books that had been given to him, Lenin had only leafed through Mach's, and had transformed them into a real gobbledygook, since he did not understand Mach's thoughts at all. Avenarius's books he did not even touch."⁸¹ In London, however, Lenin was not only studying Mach and Avenarius, but also, and mostly, their European followers, in order to be

able to outline a general picture of bourgeois philosophy, and to connect his Russian adversaries to it.

While Lenin was studying in London, in the émigré communities debates and conferences continued to take place, and Bolshevik Machists and orthodox Mensheviks faced one another, according to the usual scheme of the polemics between the two factions, which Lenin wanted to overthrow.⁸² Starting from May 1908, to the great surprise of the Social Democratic activists and the ubiquitous Russian police agents, orthodox Bolsheviks began to intervene against their Machist comrades, and to emphasize that Bogdanov and Lunacharsky did not represent the philosophy of the faction. Particularly momentous was an episode that happened on May 28, 1908: Bogdanov gave a lecture in Geneva about reacting against Plekhanov and his school, which was later published with the title *The Adventures of a Philosophical School*.⁸³

Foreseeing the arguments that Bogdanov was going to use, Lenin sent to Dubrovinsky a list of ten questions as a draft of a polemical speech touching on the main topics covered by the book he was writing at the time. Dialectical materialism was declared to be the philosophy of Marxism, and again and again Engels' authority was restated in regards to the "division of philosophical systems into *idealism* and *materialism*," in order to conclude that Mach could be classified among the idealists, as his follower Petzoldt had himself admitted. Lenin, through Dubrovinsky, provoked Bogdanov by asking: "Does the lecturer acknowledge that recognition of the external world and the reflection of it in the human mind form the basis of the theory of knowledge of dialectical materialism?"⁸⁴

In fact, Lenin's disagreement with Bogdanov was especially serious as regards epistemology. While Lenin advocated the independent existence of social being and its inflexible priority in regard to both single and collective consciousness, Bogdanov deemed that collective consciousness "built," if not created, the social being as its own object. Lenin considered that to be a wholly idealistic position, and, together with Plekhanov, equated it with Berkeley's immaterialism and Hume's agnosticism. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Lenin wrote that Mach's and Avenarius's "claim to have risen above materialism and idealism, to have eliminated the opposition between the point of view that proceeds from the thing to consciousness and the contrary point of view—is but the empty claim of a renovated Fichteanism."⁸⁵ Lenin insisted that one could not base a sound political project on unavoidably subjective knowledge.

The event of May 1908 provoked great bewilderment. Dubrovinsky was known as a "practical man," without any competence in philosophy, but he

was on the editorial board of *Proletary* and was very close to Lenin. The fact that he had openly attacked another member of the same editorial board seemed a break with the declared "neutrality" of the ideological center of the faction. Two leading Bolsheviks, Grigory Aleksinsky and Mikha Ckhakaja, who attended Bogdanov's lecture, immediately protested to Lenin that Bogdanov had "remained in his exposition on a purely theoretical field"; Dubrovinsky (under the pseudonym of Dorov), on the contrary, "in front of a heterogeneous public from different parties, contented himself with suspecting quotations and accusing him of bourgeois revisionism" and so on. Aleksinsky and Ckhakaja remarked: "comrade Dorov's behavior was particularly hard for us, as Bolsheviks: 1) because his speech provoked a clear sympathy and approval from the Menshevik part of the meeting, and 2) because, while he was performing as a 'practical Bolshevik,' like comrade Dorov recommended himself to be, he considered necessary to rely on You in his speech to instill in his listeners the obviously false idea that You personally sympathize with such thoughts, harmful for the interests of our faction, and that You cover them with your great political authority."⁸⁶ Lenin answered Aleksinsky with a curt note ending with a vulgar comment and declared that he wanted to interrupt any personal relationship with him.⁸⁷

Bogdanov protested by giving out a "general point of view", and a little while later he explained it to Gorky: "in public speeches, moves aimed to discredit and compromise the unity of the faction are not allowed", but such a statement was rejected by the two other members of the editorial board: Lenin and Dubrovinsky.⁸⁸ A few weeks later, on June 23, Bogdanov resigned from the editorial board of *Proletary*. The pretext was the difference of opinions about the attitude to be adopted toward the Social Democratic group at the State Duma,⁸⁹ but the quarrel was not merely about a simple tactical disagreement: it actually concerned the "leading role of the political organ of the faction" itself. Bogdanov wrote that his adversaries "expect such a role to lead the faction along a way decided in advance by the editorial board itself, by mechanically removing all the nuances of disagreement."⁹⁰ Once again it was question of a different approach to the relationship between the *elite* and the masses, the ideological leadership and the party. According to Bogdanov, the ideological leadership of the faction had to enable the proletariat to develop its own truth by openly debating different positions; for Lenin, by contrast, only a leadership that firmly possessed the unique authentic truth could lead the masses to victory. With those ideas, as Robert Service wrote, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*—the book where Lenin claimed the possibility of a sure and univocal truth—was consistently "a philosophical counterpart to the politics of *What Is To Be Done?*"⁹¹

Lenin's book is a very complex work, and not just an essay on philosophy, as it is enlivened by wholly political, passionate and vehement polemics, but it is not a pure tactical gesture either, as if Lenin's interest in philosophy could have been completely deceptive. On the contrary, Lenin took the philosophical problems very seriously. First of all is the question of whether reality is knowable or not; however, his reasons were not only theoretical, because, if the reality is knowable and known, then a true theory would exist, which can lead revolutionary praxis to victory with absolute certainty. Therefore, Lenin's momentous work is ambiguous in its contents and its style, and is difficult to categorize. As James White remarked, "at first sight Lenin's book is an impressive work of scholarship and erudition. [...] From the sources Lenin utilized it is clear that he had made an extensive study of the empiriocriticist school," but "despite this expertise, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* is on the whole an uninformative book. [...] The tone is abusive; at every stage words like 'nonsense' and 'gibberish' are used, leaving the reader in no doubt about what conclusions Lenin wishes to be drawn from the material he presents."⁹² Quotations and references to their literature are not there to account for the different authors' thought, but they are shown as evidence of the Russian Machists' subjection to the bourgeois philosophy: "they slavishly follow the lead of the reactionary professorial philosophy."⁹³ By juxtaposing different authors from Berkeley and Hume to Petzoldt and Cornelius, Lenin wanted to show that all the Machists belonged to idealism.

The defining point of materialists and Machists was the acknowledgment of an existing reality, independent from the subject, which orthodox Marxists considered undeniable, since doubting ontological materialism necessarily meant compromising the political meaning of historical materialism. Actually, the Machists did not deny the existence of reality at all; by contrast, in Russia they sided with "realism" against the "idealistic turn" at the beginning of the century.⁹⁴ In their opinion, however, both the object and the subject were constructions starting from the primary data of sensations. Bazarov wrote: "it is not us who know, i.e. 'reflect,' 'describe,' 'symbolize' etc. objects, which are given to us *before* such a description, but it is the objects that 'give themselves,' or, if you like, 'are created' for us (i.e. for our memory) only within the creative act of knowing."⁹⁵ The central theme of Lenin's polemics became epistemology: the "theory of reflection" should guarantee at the same time the independent existence of external reality and the objectivity, and therefore the practical effectiveness, of knowledge, thereby confirming the necessary link between materialism and Marxism. Lenin wrote: "Consciousness in general *reflects* being—that is the general thesis of *all*

materialism. It is impossible not to see its direct and inseparable connection with the thesis of historical materialism: social consciousness reflects social being.⁹⁶

Relating to the nature of "reflection," in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Lenin dissociated himself, within the field of orthodox Marxism, from Plekhanov and his "theory of hieroglyphs", which the Machists often criticized. In Plekhanov's opinion, the material object that exists outside us and independently from our consciousness acts on our sense organs and thereby provokes a sensation, which is obviously subjective, since it is not identifiable with the movement by which it is provoked. In this sense, reality gives itself to us as a kind of "translation," which our physiological sensorial apparatus acquires in its own "language." But we are sure that "not only do the basic forms of our thinking fully correspond to the relations which exist among things by themselves, but also that they cannot fail to correspond to things themselves, otherwise our existence in general would become impossible."⁹⁷ Plekhanov used the term "reflection" only when talking about "concepts," whereas our knowledge accounts for reality in its complexity and in the contradictory possibilities of development. At the level of sensation, where the subject immediately relates with the object as a "thing," which only at a deeper consideration reveals itself also as a "process," Marxist epistemology needed only to guarantee the "correspondence" between subjective sensation and objective phenomenon without implying identity. Plekhanov found support for this point in the theories of I.M. Sechenov, a very well-known Russian physiologist who had been Helmholtz's student and who, like Helmholtz, defended a theory of knowledge according to which sensations are "symbols" rather than "images" of reality. While working in London, with Western sources more easily available than Russian ones, Lenin ascribed Plekhanov's "theory of hieroglyphs" directly to Helmholtz, but he insisted that it was only "an obvious mistake in his exposition of materialism."⁹⁸ Plekhanov wanted to turn left "from the Kantian Helmholtz, just as from Kant himself", in moving toward materialism. The Machists, on the contrary, turned right, in coming back to Hume's and Berkeley's agnosticism.

Ontological materialism seemed to Lenin, as well as to Plekhanov, the only possible philosophical view compatible with natural sciences. In his argument, Lenin simply inverted the statements of recent physics that appeared to contradict the basic principles of materialism into a confirmation: "natural sciences leads to the 'unity of matter' [...]"—such is the real meaning of the statement about the disappearance of matter, its replacement

by electricity, etc., which is leading so many people astray. 'Matter disappears' means that the limit within which we have hitherto known matter disappears and that our knowledge is penetrating deeper; properties of matter are likewise disappearing which formerly seemed absolute, immutable, and primary (impenetrability, inertia, mass, etc.) and which are now revealed to be relative and characteristic only of certain states of matter. For the sole 'property' of matter with whose recognition philosophical materialism is bound up is the property of *being an objective reality*, of existing outside the mind."⁹⁹ To Lenin, the crisis of modern science represented nothing but a stage on its way from "metaphysical" to "dialectical materialism,"¹⁰⁰ which will be able to grasp the processes of natural laws, and not just the images of objects. However, the basis was always to maintain the so-called primary being of nature. To Lenin, as well as to Engels, "the necessity of nature is primary, and human will and mind secondary. The latter must necessarily and inevitably adapt themselves to the former."¹⁰¹ On the basis of such an ontology, Lenin deduced the necessity of social consciousness to adapt to the objective laws of economic development, "objective, not in the sense that a society of conscious beings, of people, could exist and develop independently of the existence of conscious beings [...], but in the sense that social being is *independent of the social consciousness* of people." And he concluded: "The highest task of humanity is to comprehend this objective logic of economic evolution (the evolution of social life) in its general and fundamental features, so that it may be possible to adapt to it one's social consciousness and the consciousness of the advanced classes of all capitalist countries in as definite, clear and critical a fashion as possible."¹⁰² In Lenin's opinion, to reject what he considered a dangerous subjectivist heresy responded to the theoretical demand of affirming the unique authentic truth, and at the same time to the practical necessity of binding political praxis to the objective dynamics of social transformation.

Such a combination of different aspects certainly makes *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* a sort of "dated" work, thoroughly connected with a certain historical and political context. It is not surprising that scholars interested in Lenin's thought concentrate on his *Notes on Hegel* much more than on *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, which functioned as the core of the official Soviet dogma for decades. In the West, the dialectical Lenin of 1914 has been mostly counterposed to the "mechanical materialist" Lenin of 1909.¹⁰³ Louis Althusser pays serious attention to Lenin's first openly philosophical work in his *Lenin and Philosophy*,¹⁰⁴ although he was conditioned by his own anti-Hegelian interpretation of Marxism. In the Soviet Union, Evald Il'enkov undertook an insightful and original analysis of *Materialism*

and *Empirio-criticism* in his *Leninist Dialectics and the Metaphysics of Positivism*.¹⁰⁵ More recently, Slavoj Žižek emphasized one of the deepest problems of the epistemology that Lenin put at the center of his work in 1909: Lenin's "theory of reflection" implies the possibility to know reality as it is, to get to objective truth, but "the partiality (distortion) of 'subjective reflection' occurs precisely because the subject is included in the process it reflects—only a consciousness observing the universe from the outside world would see the whole of reality 'the way it really is,' that is, a totally adequate 'neutral' knowledge of reality would imply our existence, our external status with regard to it, just as a mirror can reflect an object perfectly only if it is external to it." Lenin's philosophy, according to Žižek, ends up showing an idealistic core, since it presumes that an "alien" and independent subject can reach reality, but such a subject cannot actually exist. Žižek concluded: "The point is not that there is an independent reality out there, outside myself; the point is that I myself am 'out here,' part of that reality."¹⁰⁶

In the name of "truth," whose absolute possession Lenin claimed against the Machists' unavoidable relativism, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* presents both philosophical arguments and deliberate insults. Lenin's sister Anna, who handled the difficult search for a publisher, asked him to soften the general tone of the work.¹⁰⁷ At first, Lenin agreed to tone down some passages against his Bolshevik comrades, but a little before the publication he changed his mind: "We have completely broken off relations with them. There is no reason for toning them down, it is not worth the trouble."¹⁰⁸ Anna Il'ichna asked almost everybody to print the book, including Pjatnicky, Gorky's partner in the publishing house "Znanie." Pjatnicky at first seemed favorable¹⁰⁹ but, before he could personally go to Capri to persuade Gorky, the writer firmly rejected the idea: "I am against it because I know the author. He is a great and a smart mind, a wonderful person, but he is a fighter, and a knightly deed will make him laugh. If 'Znanie' will publish *this* book of his, he will say:—what idiots!, and these idiots will be Bogdanov, me, Bazarov, Lunacharsky."¹¹⁰ Bogdanov intervened as well to prevent Lenin's book being published by "Znanie": "there is no room for us, where could we arrange our opponents?"¹¹¹ Lenin himself doubted from the beginning that his book could be published by his adversaries' publishing house. On November 17, he wrote to his mother: "I hope for very little from 'Znanie' itself; the 'boss' there, who gave Anyuta a half promise, is an old fox and will probably go back on it after sniffing at the atmosphere on Capri, where Gorky lives. We shall have to look elsewhere."¹¹² According to another orthodox Marxist, who at that time was also working on a refuta-

tion of the Machists, the difficulty in finding a publisher depended on the publishers' fear of printing books on philosophy, but also on the Machists' fortune, since they "rule everywhere in the publishing houses."¹¹³

Even before it was published, Russian Social Democrats talked about Lenin's book for months,¹¹⁴ and Lenin insisted that it should be published as soon as possible: "it is *hellishly* important to me for the book to appear sooner. I have not only literary but also serious political commitments that are linked up with the publication of the book."¹¹⁵ When the book finally appeared, at the end of April 1909, it provoked a certain clamor, but it did not have the success Lenin hoped for. In the press, a very small number of apolitical journals noticed the book: in *Kriticheskoe obozrenie*, a certain M. Bulgakov reviewed Lenin's book together with his adversaries' most recent publication, the *Studies on the Philosophy of Collectivism*; the journal *Russkie vedomosti* published a review by I.A. Il'in; and in *Vozrozhdenie*, an article by A.I. Abraamov appeared. In general, Lenin's work was disdained as an amateur's effort in philosophy.¹¹⁶

In the Bolshevik press, two quite positive reviews appeared. The first one appeared a few days after the publication of the book in a journal in Baku. Its author was an unknown "T-n," who was later identified as the Georgian Bolshevik Dzhaparidze.¹¹⁷ Vaclav Vorovsky, a faithful supporter of Lenin, while reviewing a translation of a book by the physiologist Max Verworn, promoted *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. He especially appreciated the fact that Lenin enlightened Russian readers, who had been dazed by the Machists.¹¹⁸ Even for the very few enthusiastic reviewers of Lenin's book, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* appeared as a popular work, oriented to the Social Democratic base that had been forced to face philosophy because of the polemics among the party leaders, but still remained ignorant and inexperienced in the field.

In general, Lenin's contemptuous tone irritated some of those who had been looking at the debates from the outside. For instance, Semen Frank, a philosopher himself, condemned Lenin in a few lines by defining *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* as "the [most] extreme degree of intellectual and cultural decline orthodox Marxist dogmatism has ever arrived at."¹¹⁹ Ljubov' Aksel'rod, who shared many of Lenin's ideas, rejected the "rudeness" of Lenin's work, "which insulted the reader's esthetic sense."¹²⁰ Not only the injuries, but also the many quotations thrown together one after the other, were intended to impress an unprepared reader. Bogdanov considered it a deceitful action that would hold back the development of the authentic proletarian culture. He stated that "to fill the reader's brain with

thousands of hurriedly pulled out, badly sorted out, weakly connected, at times even distorted, quotations is actually a bad, anti-social action."¹²¹

The most interesting point for the critics of Lenin's work was of course his theory of reflection. On the side of Plekhanovite orthodoxy, Ljubov' Aksel'rod counterposed to Lenin's epistemology Plekhanov's theory of "correspondence," and deemed that Lenin, who considered sensations as "images or copies of things," opened again "an impassable, dualistic abyss between the object and the subject."¹²² If sensations were just copies of things, then these turned out to be the unknowable things-in-themselves of the Kantian tradition, while Plekhanov's materialism viewed sensation as a medium and a bond between subject and object, for sensation was considered as the subject's reaction to the stimulus coming from the external thing. On the Machists' side, Bazarov intervened on that topic in his preface to a collection of essays published in 1910. First of all, Bazarov denied that "copies" were necessary to justify the external existence of things; on the contrary, the realism that the Machists had supported since the beginning of the century acknowledged the world as something "given" more consistently and drastically than any materialism. Moreover, according to Bazarov, once the existence of "copies" is maintained, the problem of defining their originals comes up, since those originals seem to have disappeared in the indefinite haze of Kant's "things in themselves." Bazarov thought, on the contrary, that a relationship of functional, not causal, dependence between the sensation and the brain process that necessarily goes with it would be enough to establish the "primary" importance of the matter, which was so momentous for Lenin.¹²³ Bogdanov criticized Lenin's work as the result of some sort of "fideism," since he professed a real "faith" in absolute values, first of all in a supposed absolute "truth." Bogdanov wrote: "the 'faith' is one's relationship with an authority recognized by her; not just her trust in it, or her agreement with it, but a relationship founded on *obedience*, on the removal of personal thinking and criticism, on the refusal of research, on the suppression of all the possible doubts, on an act of will, directed toward passivity in knowledge."¹²⁴

A dogmatic attitude and a "mechanist" epistemology are exactly the problems that Lenin himself reconsidered later when he came back to philosophy, in particular to the study of Hegel's thought. Lenin, however, never rejected his first philosophical work; on the contrary he approved a second edition at the beginning of the 1920s. A preface by V.I. Nevsky connected the old polemics with Bogdanov's new ideas, but behind Nevsky clearly stood Lenin's authority: Lenin himself made editorial corrections to

Nevsky's text, and the preface was included in Lenin's *Collected Works*, in 1926.¹²⁵ Bogdanov's leading role within the *Proletkul's* mass organization during the 1920s is clearly enough to explain Lenin's new attack on him, as well as Lenin's disagreements with Bukharin, who somehow seemed to refer to Bogdanov.¹²⁶ Bukharin himself reproached Nevsky because he had not considered 'Tektology', the "universally organized science", which was the last of Bogdanov's proposals, and he had just forced it on the old empirio-monism. Bukharin concluded: "It can be disputed but it is necessary at least to understand it. Nevsky, however, does not have this *minimum* requirement."¹²⁷ Lenin's answer did not allow any doubt: "Bogdanov has fooled you by disguising (*verkleidet*) an old dispute and trying to *shift it onto a different plane*. And you are taken in by it!"¹²⁸ In that context, it seemed wholly justified to come back to the old polemics against Bogdanov, and republish *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. This work, however, was not translated into other languages until 1927, while others of Lenin's works were. At that time, it became a cornerstone of developing the new Stalinist orthodoxy and, as such, it was imposed on international communist parties all over the world¹²⁹. At the end of his life, Bogdanov noticed in bewilderment that professors "quote with reverence a childish book [...] in support of physical and biological theories."¹³⁰ *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* is an unusual book, full of political passion and real philosophical questions. But, as it became the core of Soviet ideology, every actual philosophical reflection was inhibited, suffocated, forgotten.

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Notes

1. Cf. Robert Service, *Lenin: A Biography* (London: Macmillan 2000), pp. 410–411.
2. Alex Callinicos, "Leninism in the Twenty-first Century? Lenin, Weber, and the Politics of Responsibility." In *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*, ed. by Sebastian Budgen et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 24.

3. Igor Pantin, "Lenin kak politicheskij filosof." *Alternativy*, 4 (85) 2014. <http://www.intelros.ru/readroom/alternativi/a4-2014/25959-v-i-lenin-kak-politicheskij-filosof.html>. Accessed January 2, 2017.
4. Nadezhda K. Krupskaya, *O Lenine. Sbornik statej i vystuplenij*, 4-oe dop. izd. (Moskva: Gospolitizdat, 1979), p. 54; Fridrich V. Lengnik, "Pis'ma V.I. Lenina po voprosam filosofii, pisannye mne v 1898-1899 gg." In *Vospominaniya o V.I. Lenine* (Moskva: Gospolitizdat, 1960), t. III, pp. 25-26.
5. Nikolaj Valentinov, *Maloznakomyj Lenin* (Paris: Librairie des cinq continents, 1972), pp. 45-46.
6. Vladimir I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats" (1894). In *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972-1978), vol. 1, p. 159.
7. V.I. Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism and the Criticism of It in Mr. Struve's Book" (1895). In *Collected Works*, vol. 1, pp. 400-401.
8. Cf. R. Service, *Lenin: A Political Life*, vol. 1: *The Strengths of Contradiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 58.
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10. Cf. Samuel H. Baron, *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963).
11. V.I. Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin" (1921). In *Collected Works*, vol. 32, p. 94.
12. V.I. Lenin, "Letter to A.N. Potresov", June 27, 1899. In *Collected Works*, vol. 34, p. 41.
13. Cf. Daniela Steila, *Genesis and Development of Plekhanov's Theory of Knowledge. A Marxist Between Anthropological Materialism and Physiology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991).
14. About this question, Lenin himself quoted Karl Kautsky's new draft program of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (V.I. Lenin, "What Is To Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement" (1902). In *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 383). Cf. Lars T. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? in Context* (Chicago: Haymarket 2005), pp. 96-101.
15. V.I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, p. 422.
16. *Ib.*, p. 375.
17. L.T. Lih, "Lenin and the Great Awakening". In *Lenin Reloaded: Toward a Politics of Truth*, p. 284.
18. V.I. Lenin, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back. The Crisis in Our Party" (1904). In *Collected Works*, vol. 7, p. 387.
19. Lev Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*. 1904. www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1904/tasks/ch04.htm. Accessed January 2, 2017.

20. James D. White, *Lenin: the Practice and Theory of Revolution* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 65.
21. Rosa Luxemburg, *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*. 1904. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd/ch01.htm>. Accessed January 2, 2017. Cf. Rosemary H.T. O'Kane, *Rosa Luxemburg in Action: For Revolution and Democracy* (New York, London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 43-45.
22. Aleksandr A. Bogdanov [Rjadovoj], *Roza Ljuksemburg protiv Karla Marksa*. In M.S. Ol'minskij [Galerka], *Nashi nedorazumenija* (Zheneva: izd. avtorov, 1904), pp. 46-59.
23. Craig Brandist, *The Dimensions of Hegemony: Language, Culture and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Leiden-Boston: Brill 2015), p. 19. Cf. also pp. 25-40.
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25. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky" (1908). In *Collected Works*, vol. 13, p. 448. Cf. A.A. Bogdanov, *Osnovnye elementy istoricheskogo vzgljada na prirodu* (Sankt Peterburg: Izdatel', 1899).
26. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky", p. 449.
27. Cf. *Problemy idealizma* (Moskva: izd. Moskovskogo psikhologicheskogo obshchestva, 1903).
28. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky", p. 449.
29. *Ocherki realistscheskogo mirovozzrenija* (Sankt Peterburg: izd. vo S. Dorovatovskogo i A. Charushnikova, 1904), pp. VI-VII.
30. Cf. D. Steila, *Nauka i revoliucija. Recepcija empiriokriticizma v ruskoj kul'ture (1877-1910 gg.)* (Moskva: Akademicheskij proekt 2013).
31. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky", p. 449.
32. *Ib.*, p. 448. A.A. Bogdanov, *Empiriomonizm. Stat'i po filosofii* (Moskva: izd. vo S. Dorovatovskogo i A. Charushnikova, 1904).
33. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky", pp. 448-449.
34. N. Valentinov, *Vstrechi s Leninyim* (New York: izd. -vo Chekhova 1953), p. 253.
35. J.D. White, *Lenin: the Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 77.
36. A.A. Bogdanov [Rjadovoj], *Roza Ljuksemburg protiv Karla Marksa*; *Id., Iz-za chego vojna i chemu ona uchit?* (Genève: izd. CK RSDRP, 1904); *Id., Liberal'nye programmy* (Genève: izd. RSDRP, 1904); *Id., Liberaly i socialisty* (Genève: izd. RSDRP, 1904); *Id., O socializme* (Genève: izd. Socialdemokraticeskoy partijnaj literatury, 1904).
37. RGASPI, f. 257, op. 1, d. 16, Letter of L.I. Aksel'rod to I.I. Aksel'rod, s. d., ll. 15-16.

38. Ljubov' I. Aksel'rod, *Filosofskie ocherki. Otvet filosofskim kritikam istoricheskogo materializma* (Sankt Peterburg: izd. M.M. Druzhininov i A.N. Maksimovoj, 1906), p. 171.
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40. G.V. Plekhanov, "Centralizm ili bonapartizm?" In *Sochinenija*, vol. XIII, pp. 81-93.
41. G.V. Plekhanov, "Predislovie perevodchika ko vtoromu izdaniju broshjury F. Engelsa: Ljudvig Fejrbach i konec klassicheskoj nemeckoj filosofii" (1905). In *Izbrannye Filosofskie Proizvedenija* (Moskva: Socekgiz, 1956-1958), vol. III, pp. 68-71.
42. V.I. Lenin, "The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.". (1905) In *Collected Works*, vol. 8, p. 389.
43. G.V. Plekhanov, "Vybrannye mesta iz perepiski s družjami. Pis'mo v redakciju gazety 'Proletarij'." (1905) In *Sochinenija*, vol. XIII, p. 275.
44. Ljubov' Aksel'rod wrote to Plekhanov in October 1906: "Empiriomonism is growing not day by day, but hour by hour." *Literaturnoe nasledie G.V. Plekhanova* (Moskva: Socekgiz, 1938), vol. 5, p. 306.
45. Nikolaj F. Oliger, "V chasy otdykha. Rasskaz." In *Obrazovanie*, 1907, 12, p. 3.
46. A.A. Bogdanov, "Otkrytoe pis'mo tov. Plekhanovu". In *Obrazovanie*, 1907, 12, p. 50.
47. Aleksandr S. Izgoev, "Na perevale. III. Makhomakhija v lagere marksistov." In *Russkaja mysl'*, 1910, 2, pp. 106-114.
48. Cf. Viktor Topoljanskij, "V odnoj znakomoj ulice..." In *Kontinent*, 1998, 98 (4), pp. 212-246.
49. L.I. Aksel'rod, *Na rubezhe* (Sankt Peterburg: Nashe vremja, 1909), p. 265.
50. A.A. Bogdanov, "Ernst Mach und die Revolution". In *Die Neue Zeit*, Jhrg. XXVI, Bd. I, pp. 695-700; German translation of "Chego isskat' russkomu chitatelju u Ernsta Makha?" In E. Mach, *Analiz oshchushchenij i otoshnenie fizicheskogo k psichicheskomu* (Moskva: Skirmunt, 1907), pp. III-XII.
51. The text is translated into English in: "Statement of the Editors of *Proletary*." (1908) In V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 13, p. 447.
52. *Ibidem*. The note was soon republished in *Die Neue Zeit* as well ("Notizen: Mach in Russland", Jhrg. XXVI, Bd. I, p. 898).
53. Gorky's essay was published only later, in a modified version, with the title "The Destruction of Personality". Cf. *Ocherki filosofii kollektivizma* (Sankt Peterburg: Znanie 1909), pp. 351-403.
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55. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A. M. Gorky", March 24, 1908. *Ibid.*, vol. 34, p. 388.
56. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A. M. Gorky", February 7, 1908. *Ibid.*, vol. 34, pp. 381-382.
57. V.I. Lenin, Letter to Maxim Gorky, March 24, 1908. *Ibid.*, vol. 34, p. 389.
58. *Neizvestnyj Bogdanov* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1995) vol. 1, pp. 153-154.
59. *Ocherki po filosofii marksizma*. (Sankt Peterburg: Zerno, 1908).
60. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky", p. 448.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 449.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 450.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 453.
64. V.I. Lenin, Letter to Maxim Gorky, March 24, 1908. *Ibid.*, vol. 34, p. 388.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Ibid.*, p. 388.
68. Maxim Gorky, *Neizdannaja perepiska* (Moskva: Nasledie 1998), p. 36.
69. V.I. Lenin, "A Letter to A.M. Gorky", p. 450.
70. Cf. Georgij D. Gloveli, "'Socialism of Science' Versus 'Socialism of Feelings': Bogdanov and Lunacharsky." In *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 1991, 42, pp. 29-55.
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72. M. Gorky, *Neizdannaja perepiska*, p. 36.
73. V.I. Lenin, Letter to Maxim Gorky, April 16, 1908. In *Collected Works*, vol. 34, p. 393.
74. V.I. Lenin, "Marxism and Revisionism" (1908). In *Collected Works*, vol. 15, pp. 33-34.
75. V.I. Lenin, Letter to Maxim Gorky, April 19, 1908. In *Collected Works*, vol. 34, p. 394.
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77. Cf. Alain Jaubert, *Le commissariat aux archives. Les photos qui falsifient l'histoire* (Paris: Barrault, 1992).
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87. Cf. Gorky v zerkale epokhi (Moskva: IMLI RAN, 2010), p. 25.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
89. Cf. A.A. Bogdanov, "Bojkotisty i otzovisty." In *Proletarij*, 31, 1908, p. 2.
90. *Neizvestnyj Bogdanov* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1995) vol. 2, p. 146.
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92. J.D. White, *Lenin: the Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 87.
93. V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, pp. 342-343.
94. Cf. *Očerki realisticheskogo mirovozzrenija*.
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100. *Ibid.*, p. 313.
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123. Vladimir Bazarov, *Na dva fronta* (Sankt Peterburg: Prometej 1910), pp. XXXII-XXXVIII.
124. A.A. Bogdanov, *Padenie velikogo fetishizma. Vera i nauka*, p. 147.
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4

Lenin and Philosophy: On the Philosophical Significance of *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*

Marina F. Bykova

Writing on Lenin and philosophy is not an easy task. The challenges that one encounters by addressing Lenin's philosophical legacy are of both an ideological and a conceptual nature.

Until quite recently, the third largest country in the world lived under the political system that was allegedly initiated by Lenin. The revolution led by Lenin changed the existing social order of the Russian Empire by transforming the working class into a real socio-economic power, the goal for which Marx actively fought in both theory and practice. Yet the disastrous evolution of the Soviet state resulting in a highly authoritarian political regime led to the emergence of the totalitarianism that found its realization in the Gulag and in the severe limitation of civil and political rights and freedoms. This state needed its ideology, the theory that would justify its practice and give approval to its policies. The sought-for ideological support was found in Lenin, who shortly after his death was established as a superior authority to which the Soviet state could appeal to confirm its actions. In the early 1930s, the Bolshevik Party¹—then led by Stalin—was quick to declare Leninism, social and political principles expounded by Lenin, its new ideology. This is how a myth of a special "Leninist stage in Soviet philosophy" was born. Initially formulated in the infamous "article by the three

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