

sensory, emotional, physical, and intellectual capacities, to the thwarting of his productive potentialities. If life's tendency to grow, to be lived, is thwarted, the energy thus blocked undergoes a process of change and is transformed into life-destructive energy. Destructiveness is the outcome of un-lived life. Those individual and social conditions which make for the blocking of life-furthering energy produce destructiveness which in turn is the source from which the various manifestations of evil spring. . . .

Provided we are right in assuming that destructiveness is a secondary potentiality in man which becomes manifest only if he fails to realize his primary potentialities, we have answered one of the objections to humanistic ethics. We have shown that man is not necessarily evil but becomes evil only if the proper conditions for his growth and development are lacking. The evil has no independent existence of its own, it is the absence of the good, the result of the failure to realize life. . . .

Prophecies of doom are heard today with increasing frequency. While they have the important function of drawing attention to the dangerous possibilities in our present situation they fail to take into account the promise which is implied in man's achievement in the natural sciences, in psychology, in medicine and in art. Indeed, these achievements portray the presence of strong productive forces which are not compatible with the picture of a decaying culture. Our period is a period of transition. The Middle Ages did not end in the fifteenth century, and the modern era did not begin immediately afterward. End and beginning imply a process which has lasted over four hundred years—a very short time indeed if we measure it in historical terms and not in terms of our life span. Our period is an end and a beginning, pregnant with possibilities.

If I repeat now the question raised in the beginning of this book, whether we have reason to be proud and to be hopeful, the answer is again in the affirmative, but with the one qualification which follows from what we have discussed throughout; neither the good nor the evil outcome is automatic or preordained. The decision rests with man. It rests upon his ability to take himself, his life and happiness seriously; on his willingness to face his and his society's moral problem. It rests upon his courage to be himself and to be for himself.

6. *New Social Perspectives*

A. COMMUNISM

VLADIMIR LENIN: *What Is to Be Done?* *

In the Pamphlet *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), the future architect of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, discussed the problem of Communist party organization. Among other things, he discussed the question of freedom within the party, answering the demand of revisionists like Bernstein for “freedom of criticism,” as opposed to what they called the “dogmatism” of orthodox Marxism.

“FREEDOM of criticism,” this undoubtedly is the most fashionable slogan at the present time, and the one most frequently employed in the controversies between the Socialists and democrats of all countries. At first sight, nothing would appear to be more strange than the solemn appeals by one of the parties to the dispute for freedom of criticism. Can it be that some of the progressive parties have raised their voices against the constitutional law of the majority of European countries which guarantees freedom to science and scientific investigation? “Something must be wrong here,” an onlooker who has not yet fully appreciated the nature of the disagreements among the controversialists will say, when he hears this fashionable slogan repeated at every cross-road. . . .

“Freedom” is a grand word, but under the banner of Free Trade the most predatory wars were conducted: under the banner of “free labour,” the toilers were robbed. The term “freedom of criticism” contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced that they have advanced science, would demand, not freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the old views by the new views. . . .

Thus we see that high-sounding phrases against the ossification of thought, etc., conceal carelessness and helplessness in the development of theoretical ideas. The case of the Russian Social-Democrats strikingly illustrates the fact observed in the whole of Europe (and long ago observed in German Marxism) that the notorious freedom of criticism implies, not the substitution of one theory by another, but freedom from every complete and thought-out theory; it implies eclecticism and absence of principle. Those who are in the least acquainted with the actual state of our movement cannot but see that the spread of Marxism was accompanied by a certain deterioration of theoretical standards. Quite

* Vladimir Lenin: *What Is to Be Done?* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc.; 1929), pp. 12, 14, 27, 40–1.

a number of people, with very little, and even totally lacking in, theoretical training, joined the movement for the sake of its practical significance and its practical successes. We can judge, therefore, how tactless *Rabocheye Dyelo* is when, with an air of invincibility, it quotes the statement of Marx that: "A single step of the real movement is worth a dozen programmes." To repeat these words in the epoch of theoretical chaos is sheer mockery. Moreover, these words of Marx are taken from his letter on the Gotha Programme, in which he *sharply condemns* eclecticism in the formulation of principles: "If you must combine," Marx wrote to the party leaders, "then enter into agreements to satisfy the practical aims of the movement, but do not haggle over principles, do not make 'concessions' in theory." This was Marx's idea, and yet there are people among us who strive—in his name!—to belittle the significance of theory.

Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. . . .

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers in the process of their movement then *the only choice is*: Either bourgeois, or Socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a "third" ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle Socialist ideology *in any way, to deviate from it in the slightest degree* means strengthening bourgeois ideology. There is a lot of talk about spontaneity, but the *spontaneous* development of the labour movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology, it means developing *according to the programme* of the *Credo*, for the spontaneous labour movement is pure and simple trade unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means the ideological subordination of the workers to the bourgeoisie. Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to *combat spontaneity, to divert* the labour movement, with its spontaneous trade-unionist striving, from under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy.

VLADIMIR LENIN: *State and Revolution* *

In *State and Revolution* (1917) Lenin describes the future—what will happen in Communist society once the "dictatorship of the proletariat" has displaced the bourgeois state by revolution.

THE DICTATORSHIP of the proletariat—*i.e.*, the organisation of the vanguard of the oppressed as the ruling class for the purpose of crushing

* Vladimir Lenin: *State and Revolution* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc.; 1932), pp. 73, 75, 82-5.

the oppressors—cannot produce merely an expansion of democracy. *Together* with an immense expansion of democracy which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people, and not democracy for the rich folk, the dictatorship of the proletariat produces a series of restrictions of liberty in the case of the oppressors, the exploiters, the capitalists. We must crush them in order to free humanity from wage-slavery; their resistance must be broken by force; it is clear that where there is suppression there is also violence, there is no liberty, no democracy.

Engels expressed this splendidly in his letter to Bebel when he said, as the reader will remember, that "as long as the proletariat still *needs* the state, it needs it not in the interests of freedom, but for the purpose of crushing its antagonists; and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom, then the state, as such, ceases to exist". . . .

Only Communism renders the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *no one* to be suppressed—"no one" in the sense of a *class*, in the sense of a systematic struggle with a definite section of the population. We are not Utopians, and we do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, nor the need to suppress *such* excesses. But, in the first place, no special machinery, no special apparatus of repression is needed for this; this will be done by the armed people itself, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilised people, even in modern society, parts a pair of combatants or does not allow a woman to be outraged. And, secondly, we know that the fundamental social cause of excesses which consists in violating the rules of social life is the exploitation of the masses, their want and their poverty. With the removal of this chief cause, excesses will inevitably begin to "*wither away*." We do not know how quickly and in what succession, but we know that they will wither way. With their withering way, the state will also *wither away*. . . .

Democracy is of great importance for the working class in its struggle for freedom against the capitalists. But democracy is by no means a limit one may not overstep; it is only one of the stages in the course of development from feudalism to capitalism, and from capitalism to Communism.

Democracy means equality. The great significance of the struggle of the proletariat for equality, and the significance of equality as a slogan, are apparent, if we correctly interpret it as meaning the abolition of *classes*. But democracy means only *formal* equality. Immediately after the attainment of equality for all members of society *in respect* of the ownership of the means of production, that is, of equality of labour and equality of wages, there will inevitably arise before humanity the question of going further from formal equality to real equality, *i.e.*, to realising the rule, "From each according to his ability; to each according

to his needs." By what stages, by means of what practical measures humanity will proceed to this higher aim—this we do not and cannot know. But it is important to realise how infinitely mendacious is the usual bourgeois presentation of Socialism as something lifeless petrified, fixed once for all, whereas in reality, it is *only* with Socialism that there will commence a rapid, genuine, real mass advance, in which first the *majority* and then the whole of the population will take part—an advance in all domains of social and individual life.

Democracy is a form of the state—one of its varieties. Consequently, like every state, it consists in organised, systematic application of force against human beings. This on the one hand. On the other hand, however, it signifies the formal recognition of the equality of all citizens, the equal right of all to determine the structure and administration of the state. This, in turn, is connected with the fact that, at a certain stage in the development of democracy, it first rallies the proletariat as a revolutionary class against capitalism, and gives it an opportunity to crush, to smash to bits, to wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois state machinery—even its republican variety: the standing army, the police, and bureaucracy; then it substitutes for all this a *more* democratic, but still a state machinery in the shape of armed masses of workers, which becomes transformed into universal participation of the people in the militia. . . .

[Eventually] the whole of society will have become one office and one factory, with equal work and equal pay.

But this "factory" discipline, which the proletariat will extend to the whole of society after the defeat of the capitalists and the overthrow of the exploiters, is by no means our ideal, or our final aim. It is but a *foothold* necessary for the radical cleansing of society of all the hideousness and foulness of capitalist exploitation, *in order to advance further*.

From the moment when all members of society, or even only the overwhelming majority, have learned how to govern the state *themselves*, have taken this business into their own hands, have "established" control over the insignificant minority of capitalists, over the gentry with capitalist leanings, and the workers thoroughly demoralised by capitalism—from this moment the need for any government begins to disappear. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it begins to be unnecessary. The more democratic the "state" consisting of armed workers, which is "no longer a state in the proper sense of the word," the more rapidly does *every* state begin to wither away.

For when *all* have learned to manage, and independently are actually managing by themselves social production, keeping accounts, controlling the idlers, the gentlefolk, the swindlers and similar "guardians of capitalist traditions," then the escape from this national accounting and

control will inevitably become so increasingly difficult, such a rare exception, and will probably be accompanied by such swift and severe punishment (for the armed workers are men of practical life, not sentimental intellectuals, and they will scarcely allow any one to trifle with them), that very soon the *necessity* of observing the simple, fundamental rules of every-day social life in common will have become a *habit*.

The door will then be wide open for the transition from the first phase of Communist society to its higher phase, and along with it to the complete withering away of the state.

VLADIMIR LENIN: *On Socialism and Religion* *

The following selections are from an article written by Lenin in 1905.

RELIGION is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weigh upon the masses who are crushed by continuous toil for others, by poverty and loneliness. The helplessness of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters inevitably generates a belief in a better life after death, even as the helplessness of the savage in his struggle with nature gives rise to a belief in gods, devils, miracles, etc.

Religion teaches those who toil in poverty all their lives to be resigned and patient in this world, and consoles them with the hope of reward in heaven. As for those who live upon the labour of others, religion teaches them to be charitable in earthly life, thus providing a cheap justification for their whole exploiting existence and selling them at a reasonable price tickets to heavenly bliss. "Religion is the opium of the people." Religion is a kind of spiritual intoxicant, in which the slaves of capital drown their humanity and blunt their desires for some sort of decent human existence.

But a slave who has become conscious of his slavery, and who has risen to the height of fighting for his emancipation, has half ceased to be a slave. The class-conscious worker of to-day, brought up in big industry, and enlightened by town life, rejects religious prejudices with contempt. He leaves heaven to the priests and bourgeois hypocrites and fights for a better life for himself, here on earth. The modern proletariat ranges itself on the side of Socialism, which, with the help of science, is dispersing the fog of religion and is liberating the workers from their faith in a life after death, by rallying them to the present-day struggle for a better life here upon earth.

"Religion must be regarded as a private matter"; in these words the attitude of Socialists to religion is usually expressed. But we must define

* Vladimir Lenin: *Religion* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc.; 1933), pp. 7-8, 10.

the meaning of these words precisely so as to avoid misunderstanding. We demand that religion be regarded as a private matter as far as the State is concerned, but under no circumstances can we regard it as a private matter with regard to our own Party.

* * *

Our programme is based entirely on scientific—to be more precise—upon a *materialist* world conception. In explaining our programme therefore we must necessarily explain the actual historical and economic roots of the religious fog. Our programme necessarily includes the propaganda of atheism. The publication of related scientific literature (which up till now has been strictly forbidden and persecuted by the autocratic feudal government) must now form one of the items of our party work. We shall now, probably, have to follow the advice which Engels once gave to the German Socialists—to translate and spread among the masses the enlightening atheist literature of the Eighteenth century.

VLADIMIR LENIN: *On Ethics* *

The following selection is from Lenin's speech to the Third All Russian Congress of the Young Communist League, October 3, 1920.

BUT is there such a thing as Communist ethics? Is there such a thing as Communist morality? Of course there is. It is frequently asserted that we have no ethics, and very frequently the bourgeoisie makes the charge that we Communists deny all morality. That is one of their methods of confusing the issue, of throwing dust into the eyes of the workers and peasants.

In what sense do we deny ethics, morals?

In the sense in which they are preached by the bourgeoisie, a sense which deduces these morals from god's commandments. Of course, we say that we do not believe in god. We know perfectly well that the clergy, the landlords, and the bourgeoisie all claimed to speak in the name of god, in order to protect their own interests as exploiters. Or, instead of deducing their ethics from the commandments of morality, from the commandments of god, they deduced them from idealistic or semi-idealistic phrases which in substance were always very similar to divine commandments.

We deny all morality taken from superhuman or non-class conceptions. We say that this is a deception, a swindle, a befogging of the minds

* Vladimir Lenin: *Religion* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc.; 1933), pp. 47-8.

of the workers and peasants in the interests of the landlords and capitalists.

We say that our morality is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. We deduce our morality from the facts and needs of the class struggle of the proletariat.

The old society was based on the oppression of all the workers and peasants by the landlords and capitalists. We had to destroy this society. We had to overthrow these landowners and capitalists. But to do this, organisation was necessary. God could not create such organisation.

JOSEPH STALIN: *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* *

Embedded in chapter four of the official *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* is a brief essay by Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), Secretary General of the Soviet Communist Party from 1922-1953, Lenin's successor as ruler of Russia. This exposition contains the essence of "diamat" or the Communist theory of dialectical and historical materialism.

DILECTICAL materialism is the world outlook of the Marxist-Leninist party. It is called dialectical materialism because its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them, is *dialectical*, while its interpretation of the phenomena of nature, its conception of these phenomena, its theory, is *materialistic*.

Historical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life, an application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the phenomena of the life of society, to the study of society and its history.

* * *

Dialectics comes from the Greek *dialego*, to discourse, to debate. In ancient times dialectics was the art of arriving at the truth by disclosing the contradictions in the argument of an opponent and overcoming these contradictions. There were philosophers in ancient times who believed that the disclosure of contradictions in thought and the clash of opposite opinions was the best method of arriving at the truth. This dialectical method of thought, later extended to the phenomena of nature, developed into the dialectical method of apprehending nature, which regards the phenomena of nature as being in constant movement and undergoing constant change, and the development of nature as the result of the development of the contradictions in nature, as the result of the interaction of opposed forces in nature.

* Joseph Stalin: *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc.; 1940), pp. 5-9, 11-17, 19-24.