Lenin, Religion, and Theology

Contents

Preface ix

Introduction 1

1 Spiritual Booze and Freedom of Religion 9

2 Gospels and Parables 31

3 Christian Revolutionaries and God-Builders 59

4 Returning to Hegel: Revolution, Idealism, and God 103

5 Miracles Can Happen 135

6 Venerating Lenin 175

Conclusion 207

Notes 213

Bibliography 271

Index 331

Preface

Apart from the collected works of Marx and Engels, reading my way through the entire works of Lenin has been one of the extraordinary experiences of my life. Alongside appreciating him as a revolutionary politician, as a lover of fresh air, an avid cyclist, and mountain-hiker, I have come to know him rather well as a writer and editor. When he was asked to fill in his profession, in those preparatory documents for congress delegates, he would simply write, "literator [litterateur]" (1920n, 445/465; 1920o, 449/280).[1] A brilliant student, denied any formal university career due to his politics, prison, and exile, he managed to forge a life as a writer all the same. The writing, translating, editing, and publishing of books, pamphlets, journals, and newspapers, would take place in whatever exilic place he and Krupskaya found themselves—Siberia, Germany, Switzerland, England, Poland, and so on. Occasionally, he would comment on the act of writing itself, all done by hand: "12.IV.1902—I am writing in the train: I apologise for the scribble. If I have time, I shall write again more clearly" (Lenin 1902e, 71/253). Throughout it all, they lived simply indeed, in small quarters, relying on dribbles of money from family, publishing, newspaper subscriptions, or even the infamous "expropriations."

The collected works have their own narrative that escapes even the hands of the editors and their extraordinary introductions, full as the latter are of Soviet orthodoxy and not a little twisting as the more intriguing texts by Lenin were brought into line. They begin with the earliest writings from the 1890s by a young man in his early twenties. Full of contest with others on the Left or even the Liberals; partaking in the small, energetic, and somewhat idealist revolutionary groups; the productive and not unenjoyable exile to Shushenskoe in Siberia; the long periods of exile to Western Europe; the shuffle from place to place, writing, editing, giving lectures; and organizing, organizing, organizing. All the while the much-needed intellectual input to the movement is coupled with the slow spread of the party, its congresses and splits and struggles, the waxing and waning of revolutionary activity, until the crescendos of 1905 and 1917. During these times, the writing peaks to an intense production, ideas are reformulated, experiences are assessed, and new plans developed. And then, after the October Revolution, the longer texts become rare, while the speeches, telegrams, memos, and telephone conversations overflow the long volumes. The desperateness of

the multiple postrevolutionary crises shows forth, with hastily written pieces on transport problems, fuel and food shortages, disease, and the ever-present threats on four fronts from "civil" war—at least until the strokes begin and Lenin takes, under doctor's orders, more and more time away from the pressures. With his death by the thirty-third volume, the supplementary volumes begin, with less coherent collections of political correspondence spread out over the years, supplementary documents and newspaper reports, as well as some volumes of notes on agriculture, imperialism, and philosophy. By the thirty-seventh volume, a different and very personal correspondence emerges, now with Lenin's family, especially his mother and sisters, and a good number written by Krupskaya herself. We cover the same ground again, from the earliest years through to his death, but now with comments on different places, hiking, cycling, health, plans, personal thoughts, and greetings. But even here, the habit of using coded texts and code names shows forth (as with the other pre-October correspondence), as does the extensive involvement of women in the party. In these last volumes, a noticeable change of editorial direction also appears. Up until the thirty-third volume and Lenin's death, the texts were interspersed with occasional letters and telegrams to Stalin, attempting to indicate how much Stalin was Lenin's natural successor. Yet, in the thirty-sixth volume, Lenin's "Testament" appears, really a collection of letters and notes that were first made public at the famous closed meeting chaired by Khrushchev in 1956. Here are the warnings against the negative sides of Stalin, but also against Trotsky and the possibilities of a split between them (Bukharin and Pyatakov are also assessed rather astutely). By the end of the last volume, more letters critical of Stalin appear, including the famous reprimand for the latter's rudeness to Krupskaya when Lenin was already very ill, while the closer agreements with Trotsky are far more frequent. The open-ended nature of the collection, coupled with Lenin's own concerns about the future of the government, leave a curiously unfinished feel, much as Ernst Bloch pointed out regarding any life that ends with so much left undone.

My focus in reading all this material concerns the theological resonances, engagements, and reformulations that appear in Lenin's texts. They emerge in unexpected places, arresting moments of discovery and in the contradictory (dialectical) positions he took and then reworked. It may be his love of Gospel parables and sayings, his engagements with marginal Christian socialist groups and with God-builders, the encounters with Hegel, the suggestions that a revolution is like a miracle, and even in the veneration that emerged after his death. In each case, they have provided much food for thought and careful analysis of his texts. My approach is to deploy the venerable but neglected tradition of biblical commentary, in which one seeks to perpetuate the interpreter's "fiction" of exegesis, of allowing the key ideas to be "led out" of the text, rather than seeking a solution to tensions by recourse to an external and contextual thought, practice, or development. As the reader will find out, this has led to far more than I first expected, especially in light of comments from others—when I had opportunity to discuss the project with them—that Lenin has little of interest to say concerning religion, or surprised and quizzical looks when I have mentioned "Lenin and theology" as my passion.

However, I have also read with an eye for the quirky texts and unexpected moments, the discoveries that make you lift your eyes from the page for a laugh and quick note. Let me cite a few of the more intriguing examples. The first concerns Lenin's almost irrepressible optimism, even in the depths of the multiple crises concerning food, fuel, transport, disease, and the "civil" war: "There is no such thing as an absolutely hopeless situation" (Lenin 1920p, 227/228). Another comes from 1922, when the inveterate nondrinker and nonsmoker had had enough: "Warn smokers. No smoking. Strictly. Tea and smoking during the break (in the adjoining room)" (Lenin 1922t, 568/286). Yet another is a quotation from the irrepressible Engels: " 'Each word is like a chamber-pot, and not an empty one at that' (*Jedes Wort—ein Nachttopf und kein leerer)*" (Lenin 1905w[3], 156/144). And, to shift focus slightly, we also stumble across a reference to anal sex. Let me set the scene: In the midst of a detailed demolition of Sismondi, the French economist, Lenin notes Sismondi's argument that the church is failing in its task of condemning impudent and lusty marriages. According to Sismondi: "Religious morality should teach people that having produced a family, it is their duty to live no less chastely with their wives than celibates with women who do not belong to them" (Lenin 1895a, 183/176). Three children and then no more sex, according to Sismondi. Well, says Lenin, we all know how successful the French peasant is at such "chastity," let alone priests in the church. In fact, as Proudhon argued, "chastity," or indeed Malthus's "birth control," is really "the preaching of the connubial practice of . . . a certain unnatural vice" (Lenin 1895a, 184/ 177). In this light, it makes one wonder what a "fist from below" may mean (Lenin 1905i[2], 37/92). As a final example, reading some of Lenin's sharper letters is a distinct pleasure, so much so that I have compiled what may be called the Lenin letter template, using phrases from such correspondence:

> Dear . . . ,
>
> I am writing under the fresh impression of your letter, which I have just read. Although you have resented my previous missives, I shall try to be mild and kind.
>
> I know of no task more fatiguing, more thankless and more disgusting than to have to wade through this filth. Yet your senseless twaddle is so exasperating that I am unable to suppress the desire to state my opinion frankly.
>
> You propose that we should collaborate with magniloquent liberal windbags, that we should philander with reaction. Strictly speaking, this proposal is too ludicrous to merit serious consideration, the product of either a charlatan or an absolute blockhead. The only answer can be a bitter laugh. You may couch it in pompous, high-blown phrases, but it is really befouled and spattered with shit. All your talk about freedom and democracy is sheer claptrap, parrot phrases, the product of mean-spirited boors, and your education, culture, and enlightenment are only a species of thoroughgoing prostitution. It is a ridiculous and puerile attempt to be clever.
>
> You either cannot think logically, or you are a liberal hypocrite, wriggling like the devil at mass. May I make one suggestion, as difficult as it may seem: scrape off all this green mold of intellectualist opportunism.
>
> Yours,
> V. Ulianov.

> P.S. I cannot share your regret at not having met. After your tricks and your conniving attitude, I do not wish to have anything to do with you except in a purely official way, and only in writing.

To resume: I feel little need to justify an interest in the conjunction of both Lenin and theology, for this book is justification enough, let alone that he—with all his insights and flaws—and the revolution with which he is associated together constituted the defining historical moment of at least the twentieth century. But I do wish to thank those who have been involved in one way or another in the development of my arguments. Zhang Shuangli, of Fudan University, has engaged in extended discussions, not merely on Lenin but on Chinese communism, Marxism, and religion more generally, especially when I had the opportunity spend a month at Fudan in 2011 (to teach a postgraduate class on Marx, Engels, and religion). Yang Huilin, of Renmin University in Beijing, gave me an invaluable opportunity to engage with scholars from across China at the Renmin Summer Institute on Christianity and Culture in 2011 and 2012. Tamara Prosic, of Monash University and no great lover of Lenin, has questioned me every step of way, as I have her, since she is working on a project on Orthodoxy and communism. Artemy Magun and Oleg Khardhorkin, of the European University of St. Petersburg, provided valuable input when I had the opportunity to visit and speak on Lenin and miracles in early 2012. Zhang Hua, of Beijing Languages and Cultures University, would not (thankfully) take no for an answer and invited me to present further research on Lenin and religion in October 2012. And a special event at Wuhan University, China, enabled me to engage with a range and breadth of Lenin scholarship—the conference "Lenin's Thought in the 21st Century." Above all, Sergey Kozin from St. Petersburg has been a constant conversation partner, for he is as passionate as I am about communism and theology, especially the God-builders and God-seekers. To Sergey, I also owe inestimable thanks for assistance with the Russian of Lenin's texts, in all its rich complexity. Finally, a word of thanks, as always, to Christina, who shared the experience of a week-long journey on the Trans-Siberian train, which enabled us to identify many of the places mentioned in Lenin's texts. But she also put up with me pausing while reading one of those weighty tomes of Lenin's works to mention what I at least thought was either interesting or funny or both. More often, however, she was willing to engage in exploring the implications of what Lenin had to say, asking questions, pushing matters further than I had pondered. For that I wish to thank her.

October 2012
On the ship MV Finntrader,
somewhere between Leningrad and Lübeck
on the old Hansa League trade route

Introduction

Lenin and theology—this is not a conjunction that immediately comes to mind.[1] Apart from a few short essays on religion, Lenin did not write a full work on the Bible or theology, unlike Friedrich Engels, Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno, Antonio Negri, Terry Eagleton, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, or even E. P. Thompson. In this respect, he is more like Marx in the popular scholarly imagination, who wrote some brief reflections on religion, coined a well-known slogan or two, but was otherwise not overly interested. Enough work has been undertaken on the question of "Marxism and religion" to indicate, in Marx's case at least, that this is a superficial perception.[2] In this book, I set out to undertake a similar exercise in relation to Lenin.

Two initial openings suggest far more to the question of Lenin and theology. The first is less well known: Lenin was not averse to attending church. When he and Krupskaya were living in London in the early years of the twentieth century, they would attend socialist Christian churches. On one occasion at least Trotsky joined them (Trotsky 1976, 50), although Krupskaya provides the fullest picture:

> He visited eating houses and churches. In English churches the service is usually followed by a short lecture and a debate. Ilyich was particularly fond of those debates, because ordinary workers took part in them . . . Once we wandered into a socialist church. There are such churches in England. The socialist in charge was droning through the Bible, and then delivered a sermon to the effect that the exodus of the Jews from Egypt symbolized the exodus of the workers from the kingdom of capitalism to the kingdom of socialism. Everyone stood up and sang from a socialist hymn-book: "Lead us, O Lord, from the Kingdom of Capitalism to the Kingdom of Socialism." We went to that church again afterwards—it was the Seven Sisters Church. (Krupskaya 1930, 72–73)

Not unexpectedly, the motivations cited are appropriate for a future leader of the first successful communist revolution: They seek to improve their English (which they thought was passable after their earlier translation work while in Siberia, but turned out to be hopelessly inadequate in London), to meet workers, to engage in debate. Apart from speculating on other possible motivations—an interest in the workings of the long tradition of Christian socialism perhaps—it is worth remembering that the reasons people attend church are as diverse as the number of people

in the congregation. Not all present believe, not all are orthodox in any sense, not all are ardent. Yet, the fact that Lenin attended church despite, or perhaps even because of, his implacable opposition to official religion, may act as an opening to a much wider consideration of Lenin and theology. Indeed, the relationship with these radical churches was not a passing affair, for when the fifth congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) was seeking a safe exilic venue to meet in 1907, they were able to secure the Brotherhood Church in Southgate Road, Hackney, in London. That church, originating in 1887 under the influence of various streams such as Christian socialism, anarchism, pacifism, Quakers, and Tolstoy, continues to exist today.[3]

A more recent and probably better-known opening for this study comes from a passing comment by Alain Badiou. In the preface to his book on the apostle Paul, he writes of the need to find a new militant figure with the perceived demise of the Leninist–Bolshevik model. So he seeks the assistance of a great step back in order to move forward: "Whence this reactivation of Paul. I am not the first to risk the comparison that makes of him a Lenin for whom Christ will have been the equivocal Marx" (Badiou 2003, 2; 1997, 3).[4] Mediated by Slavoj Žižek, this passing comment became far more than it might have been.[5] However, it does provide an insight into Badiou's reading of Paul, who turns out to be a rather Leninist figure. Witness to the truth of an event, writing missives on the run to a militant, persecuted, and often imprisoned band characterized by fidelity to the event, an anti-philosopher,[6] Paul is for Badiou a Lenin *avant la lettre*.[7] I will voice my misgivings concerning this characterization in chapter 5 (see also Boer 2009a: 174–78), not least because the fabulous resurrection is far from the revolution to come, but here it is worth pointing out that Lenin—if we are to hold to the analogy—comes closer to Christ than Paul. I think not so much of the church's Christ, the one identified as savior and partaker of the Trinity, but the Jesus of the enigmatic sayings and parables as they appear in the Gospels. These are the texts that inspired Lenin, so much that he actively created his own parables (see the discussion in chapter 2). That he also drew heavily on the rich Russian tradition of folklore, especially in the hands of peasants, in no way diminishes this point, for those traditions were creatively infused with precisely those same biblical images, stories, and parables. This creativity would emerge with distinct and surprising force in the veneration of Lenin after his death (see chapter 6).

With that in mind, let me offer a brief outline of the chapters in this book, in order to gain a synoptic view of the whole.[8] I begin with the overt statements by Lenin concerning religion, in which I identify the key dimensions of his positions on religion, albeit with a few significant twists and notable contradictions. Religion may be both the result and cause of oppression, and it may disappear with the revolution and through persuasive education, but Lenin also evinces some profound ambivalences over religion. As a secondary phenomenon, religion must not be the prime focus of communist agitation, for that would split the workers and peasants (as the bourgeoisie already do). And even if the party holds to an atheistic position, the question of belief is not a prerequisite. That is a matter for the individual concerned, even if he is a religious professional such as a priest. All the same, he must not seek to proselytize in the name of his faith. Lenin may

have stated that religion is "spiritual booze" that drowns one's sorrows, but in doing so, he evokes as complex and as contradictory a formulation as the phrase he quotes from Marx on more than one occasion concerning opium. Despite these fascinating tensions, I do find that Lenin falls short on a socialist approach to the question of freedom of conscience, for in the end, he does not allow the full exercise thereof, one that is both the expression of and productive of a deeper collectivity. In order to trace where that may be found (even if intermittently), I explore his analogous reflections on the "national question" and oppressed religious groups, focusing in particular on the Bund (The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia).

The second chapter, "Gospels and Parables," deals in detail with Lenin's love of the parables and sayings from the Gospels. After paying close attention to the structuring role of the parable of the tares and the wheat, from Matthew 13, in *What Is to Be Done?* (*WITBD*) (1902p), I deploy this tares–wheat distinction in order to provide a different angle on Lenin's relations with the many opponents in the communist movement. From here, I explore a multitude of other biblical parables and sayings to be found in Lenin's texts, some drawn upon more extensively and others less so. However, Lenin was also given to writing his own parables, with an overwhelming focus on the earthy, everyday life of peasants and laborers. I am interested how and why he does so. So a consideration of some key parables with a revolutionary focus leads into a discussion of the structuring role of biblical stories in the popular imagination, the tension between sectarianism and ecumenism, and the revolutionary dimension of these stories that Lenin manages to evoke.

"Christian Revolutionaries and God-Builders," the third chapter, begins by considering those who would have felt most at home with these biblical narratives. They are the peasant and Christian socialists, represented both by the peasant representatives in the Dumas (parliaments granted by the tsar but with limited capacity from 1905 to 1917) and by Tolstoy. I devote careful attention to Lenin's criticisms of Tolstoy, for they provide arguably the first example of what would later be called an imaginary resolution of real social and economic conditions (championed by Lévi-Strauss and Jameson, mediated via Althusser). That is, Tolstoy may have voiced extraordinarily incisive critiques of the depredations of the transition between feudalism and capitalism, critiques that communists should use, but his solutions are woefully inadequate. Those solutions come out of the tradition of Christian communism, understood in terms of collective life. Lenin fails, however, to see that Tolstoy's critiques are also inspired by that tradition. One who does identify the revolutionary potential of Christian socialism, Anatoly Lunacharsky, is the topic of the bulk of the chapter. With his God-building project, Lunacharsky sought to draw from this Christian communist tradition in order to develop a "warm stream" of Marxism. He combined that tradition with a desire for enthusiasm, for feeling, for the raising up of human beings as embodying the ideals expressed in the gods, all of which would culminate in the God-building act of revolution. The chapter closes with Lenin's trenchant attack on the God-builders, whom he sought to connect (unsuccessfully) with the empirio-criticism sweeping those Bolsheviks to his left.

Chapter 4, with its focus on Hegel, continues the treatment of the previous chapter. It does so by focusing on Lenin's deep engagement with Hegel's *The Science of Logic* at a period of crisis for international socialism. With the outbreak of the First World War, most of the members of the Second International supported the war efforts of their respective countries. Lenin's response was both profound and unexpected: He spent a few months reading deeply in philosophy, especially in Hegel. However, contrary to two competing narratives—in which Lenin either discovers Hegel properly for the first time or in which he was always deeply aware of the dialectic—I situate this encounter within the full range of his dealings with Hegel. As a result of this examination, it becomes clear that he moves back and forth between vulgar and ruptural approaches to the dialectic—much like Marx. This reality helps to explain the influence of a dialectical approach to revolution in October 1917, as well as Lenin's notable ambivalence after the revolution both in relation to Lunacharsky's God-building (which the latter maintained as Commissar of Enlightenment and which Lenin permitted) and in relation to religion as such: Attacks on the established church took place alongside efforts to foster marginal, proto-communist groups.

In "Miracles Can Happen," the fifth chapter, I shift gear to explore the mutual translation between revolution and miracle in Lenin's texts—understanding miracle as not a suspension of "natural laws" but as an intersection between heaven and earth, or rather a bending of heaven to earth. He was fond of calling revolutionary acts miracles, especially during the immense struggles of the "civil" war and the social and economic reconstruction after October 1917. However, in the process of making that translation, he expands the semantic fields of those two terms to include elements beyond the initial overlap, all of which lead to a redefinition of miracle as an act of stupendous human effort. So I draw into that intersection the tension between spontaneity and organization, with examples from revolutionary moments, the military, and strikes. Miracle is also connected with a closely related term, *kairós*, which enables a discussion of Lenin in relation to a range of more recent kairological thinkers on the Left. Finally, revolution-as-miracle includes the struggles over working within or without the current system (a crucial feature of the theological miracle in its own right). Lenin develops complex arguments concerning reform and revolution, involvement or its lack in parliamentary procedures, and the vital problem of freedom.

In the last chapter, I consider Lenin's veneration, or the Lenin "cult," as it is dismissively called at times. Here I critique those analyses that see it as a form of pseudo or secularized religion, in which Lenin becomes a Soviet saint, martyr, and prophet. Instead, I continue a point made in the previous chapter, in which the interaction of theological and political codes functions to relativize those codes. In this light, the development of revolutionary martyrology and prophetic figures takes place alongside theological forms, interacting with but not necessarily deriving from those forms. I also argue that a hitherto neglected feature of Lenin's own life and texts played a significant role, namely, the tension between a love of vigorous outdoor life for a muscular and fit man (swimming, ice-skating, hiking, and cycling) and an obsession with images of disease, abscesses, decaying alive, and rotting corpses. This tension, which could not avoid being communicated to

his comrades, was a key element that led to the preservation and embalming of his body. After outlining the process of embalmment and the important role of God-builders, such as Lunacharsky and Krasin, I focus on the outburst of popular and creative veneration. This veneration drew upon the wealth of folklore and surprised the leaders of the government, who in response developed more official versions that existed alongside the popular. The reason for such veneration, I argue, is neither a return of the repressed in which the effort to banish religion generates its return in other, ritual forms, nor that religion is innate in human beings (both positions have been propounded), but that in the effort to construct a communist society and economic system, new forms of compulsion are required. The veneration of the revolutionary leader became a major feature of that compulsion.

However, one may wonder, especially if one has never read Lenin carefully: What is it like to read him? Some find the material tiresome, unpersuasive, and largely irrelevant today, given as it is to immediate concerns and polemics (Read 2005, 64), while others suggest that much of it has a freshness that feels as though it was written today (Žižek 2002b, 1). Some of it is indeed heavy with invective and polemic, but that is part of the muscular brusqueness and concrete earthiness of his style, the widely noted ability to speak and write not in the cultured prose of intellectuals but in the blunt language of everyday life.[9] That this requires, especially in the hands of a revolutionary journalist, the repetition of key themes at different times goes without saying. Much too reads with a distinct pertinence to what is happening today in the early twenty-first century, not least in Russia, let alone in terms of rampant capitalism. On that score, I have found that my regular quotations, comments, and reflections on Lenin on my blog, Stalin's Moustache (stalinsmoustache.wordpress.com), have had a wide readership. Tagged as "reading Lenin" and covering the year or more that I have spent reading Lenin with much pleasure, they indicate a continued if not rising interest in Lenin. That I included in my posts some of his more quirky and unexpected texts may of course have helped.

I would like to mention two further matters, one concerning available secondary works and the other the contested terrain of Lenin's political biography. As for the literature, sustained engagements with the complexity of intersections between Lenin and religion are virtually nonexistent.[10] So I have read much that is tangentially relevant, drawing upon it and responding to it where necessary. In this vein, some of the best materials on the Russian Revolution remain the works written at the time, especially those that capture the mood in a way that all-knowing historians pretend to do afterward. The foreign journalist's detective-like access—both in reality and through the impression created by the genre itself—to unfolding events creates vivid impressions of the revolution and its aftermath. John Reed's breathtaking account, dashing to the latest piece of action (and thereby of course missing others), is still very much worth a read (Reed 1919). As are the long work by Walling, *Russia's Message*, and Arthur Ransome's two little books, *Russia in 1919* and *The Crisis in Russia* (Walling 1908; Ransome 1919, 1921). Ransome lived in St. Petersburg from 1903, had access to the inner circles of Bolshevik leadership, attending meetings of the executive committee, interviewing Lenin, Zinoviev, Sverdlov, and so on, and he was part of worker meetings and experienced

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everyday life during the best and worst times, down to food shortages and bitter cold without heating. And yet, Ransome writes:

> There was the feeling, from which we could never escape, of the creative effort of the revolution. There was the thing that distinguishes the creative from other artists, the living, vivifying expression of something hitherto hidden in the consciousness of humanity. If this book were to be an accurate record of my impressions, all the drudgery, gossip, quarrels, arguments, events and experiences it contains would have to be set against a background of that extraordinary vitality which obstinately persists in Moscow in these dark days of discomfort, disillusion, pestilence, starvation and unwanted war. (Ransome 1919, vi–vii)

Other valuable contemporary works that provide a multifaceted feel of the revolution include Kanatchikov's autobiography (1932). A peasant by origin, he moved to the city (Moscow and then St. Petersburg) to take up a trade in a factory, learnt to read and write, became involved in radical circles, was repeatedly sent to prison and exile, joined the Socialist-Revolutionaries (SRs) and then the Social-Democrats, was involved in the revolution, and became a senior party worker afterward. A crucial feature of this story is the loss of religious faith, as part of his move away from the grip of the village and its religiously framed world. Similar to Kanatchikov is the memoir by Pianitsky (1933), who paints a comparable picture of activism, constant moves, false passports, smuggling illegal literature, arrests, prison, exile, poverty, hunger, and hardship—for the sake of the cause. One may also usefully read Zinoviev's *History of the Bolshevik Party* (1973) for a spirited account by a central player in the party, often an opponent of Lenin and Stalin. Another work that breathes the excitement of the time is Olgin's detailed *The Soul of the Russian Revolution* (1917), which provides a vivid picture of the rapid changes taking place with the advance of capitalism, of labor unrest, the deep exploitation of rural life, and widespread repression. He also offers extensive treatments of literary products of the time, a stunning collection of letters from revolutionaries (especially by SRs) on the eve of execution, all of which is interspersed with Olgin's political activism and the familiar spate of arrests and imprisonments. As an example, he writes: "The Russian revolution is the awakening to self-consciousness of a great nation shaken to its very foundations; it is the groping of vast masses towards a new social, political and spiritual freedom far exceeding that contained in revolutionary programs" (Olgin 1917, v). Finally, a wonderful read is Sukhanov's *The Russian Revolution* (1922). An unaligned socialist, Sukhanov was present at the Finland station when Lenin arrived from exile and provides a vivid account of the moment, including the stunning speeches that would form the basis of the April Theses. The famous meeting of October 10, when the decision was made by the Central Committee to move to revolution, actually took place at Sukhanov's home, with the connivance of his wife, who suggested he stay the night at his office.

Finally, an abiding issue is Lenin's biography, both in its intellectual and political dimensions. While his biography is not my primary concern, my approach to it provides a backdrop to some of the discussions in the book. That biography, as is well known, is a site of ideological struggle, so much so that Gerda and

Hermann Weber produced a book-length chronology of his life in order to correct the "myths." Yet, they admit that their selectivity in what to record is itself subjective—obviously (Weber and Weber 1980). We may delineate at least six less and more persuasive approaches to Lenin's intellectual–political biography.

First, Lenin was not really a Marxist at all, deriving all of his thought and political perceptions from Chernyshevsky. This position has been argued by Nikolai Valentinov (1969, 1968, 64–76), who was at one time sympathetic but then broke with Lenin, and in part by Agursky in a curious study (1987, 72–80). The latter stretches the material well out of shape to suggest that Lenin used Marxism as a cover for Russian (revolutionary) nationalism, while Valentinov attempts to stress Lenin's ignorance of Marx and that all of his ideas came from Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done* (1989). This novel, written in prison, tells the story of a small group of men and women that attempts to create new forms of communal living and work in the midst of tsarist Russia, with all the trials and limits posed by that situation. That this novel was massively influential for the Russian Left is well known, that Lenin read it avidly when he was a young man is also clear, that he borrowed the title for a crucial work of his own is obvious, but that he borrowed all of his ideas from it is far-fetched indeed.

Second, a more common position is that Lenin was primarily a practical operator, shunning theory, either leaving it to others (Plekhanov) or happy to remain thoroughly unoriginal. Yet, he was full of political instinct, able to pinpoint crucial political moments (Wilson 1972, 390; Zinoviev 1973, 44–45; Plamenatz 1975, 221, 248; Donald 1993; Williams 2011).[11] The problem with this position is that it makes little sense of the repeated insistence by Lenin on the importance of theory.

So we find the obverse position: Lenin was thoroughly impractical, unable to read a situation properly. Instead, he was theoretical and abstract. Although not a common view, put forward by the unaffiliated socialist Sukhanov, it has a nice twist: Lenin was brilliant, persuasive, and ended up being invariably correct (Sukhanov 1922, 290–92).[12]

A fourth position has been held by a consistent minority including Lenin's wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, none other than Trotsky, Robert Tucker, and the recent work of Lars Lih (Krupskaya 1930; Trotsky 1976, 46–48; Tucker 1987, 39; Lih 2011).[13] This position argues that Lenin was thoroughly consistent and faithful to Marx throughout his life, operating with a grand socialist narrative that moved from the merger of the working class with intellectuals, to the revolution, and then to the glorious construction of communism. The problem with this position is not only that it must end with a narrative of disappointment, for Lenin found after the revolution that events did not turn out as expected, but also that it must smooth over the many times Lenin took an unexpected direction.

So we find a fifth and very common position, namely, that Lenin was an unprincipled opportunist, a politician of compromise, confused even and throwing aside his convictions whenever needed and moving far from Marxism (Plamenatz 1947, 85; Lichtheim 1961, 325–51; Pearson 1975; Service 1985–95, 2000; Lincoln 1986, 426–53; Agursky 1987, 72–80; Read 2005).[14] Although the proponents of this position do recognize the many shifts in Lenin's political–intellectual biography,

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they are usually very unsympathetic, arguing that he merely used Marxism as a convenient tool to achieve power, as an abstract means of legitimating all manner of inconsistent political positions, and was perfectly willing to discard it when needed or alter it beyond recognition.

In light of all these possibilities, along with a careful reading of all his works, the best approach is that Lenin was a principled and theoretically motivated opportunist, or perhaps a creative heretic in Marx's mold. This position recognizes the many shifts in Lenin's political and intellectual development, while also identifying a consistent and constantly revised theoretical core. In this light, Lenin reworked and expanded his (dialectical) Marxist heritage, inheriting its tensions while burrowing ever deeper into its theoretical nature, in order to make sense of and intervene in perpetually changing political conjunctures. As Lenin himself puts it: "Like every sharp turn, it calls for a revision and change of tactics. And as with every revision, we must be extra-cautious not to become unprincipled" (Lenin 1917t[1], 289/119). Those who have taken this position include, among others, Neil Harding in his *Leninism* and *Lenin's Political Thought*, Georg Lukács's brief but excellent *Lenin*, Rabinowitch's *The Bolsheviks Come to Power*, a brilliant study by Kouvelakis, and a work by a person whom will meet again soon, the fellow Bolshevik and Commissar of Enlightenment after the revolution, Anatoly Lunacharsky (Lunacharsky 1967; Lukács 1970; Liebman 1975; Le Blanc 1990; Anderson 1995, 2007; Harding 1996, 5–6; 2009; Cliff 2002, 224–25; Rabinowitch 2004, 168–78; Kouvelakis 2007; Michael-Matsas 2007).

Obviously, the political stakes of such biographical disagreements are high, for they reflect varying perspectives on the Russian Revolution itself (for which "Lenin" then stands as a slogan). Suffice to say here that I understand the Russian Revolution as the first successful communist revolution and that one of its chief architects, Lenin, should be given due credit for it.[15]

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CHAPTER 1

Spiritual Booze and Freedom of Religion

God grant—not God, of course

—Lenin 1920a[1], 431/219

Religion may be an idealist and reactionary curse, a manifestation of and support for oppression, but to oppose it is a red herring; atheism may be a natural position for socialists, but one should embrace a comrade who is also a believer; one may oppose religion on class terms, but atheism should not become a doctrinaire platform, for the party holds to radical freedom of conscience and religion. These are some of the forms in which an intriguing tension manifests itself in Lenin's explicit writings on religion. I have chosen to begin with these texts, not merely because they are the known works in which Lenin directly addresses the question of religion, but also because they open out into the substantial, if occasionally subterranean, engagements with religion that form the subject matter of the chapters to follow.

The structure of the chapter is relatively straightforward: I begin with the content of Lenin's arguments concerning religion, ordering the analysis in a logical fashion. That approach draws upon texts from different times, not because I disregard chronological and contextual concerns, but because Lenin loops back in his work to pick up earlier themes, raises questions later that may be answered in earlier texts, and draws together complex and overlapping positions that often need to be unpicked and assessed. After a detailed treatment of the content of his direct statements on religion, I deal with a couple of case studies that evince the very same logic and tensions of his arguments on religion, one concerning the "national question" and the other dealing with oppressed religious groups, with a particular focus on the Jews and the Bund (The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia).

Grog and Freedom

It is high time, furthermore, to take steps to establish local economic strong points, so to speak, for the workers' Social-Democratic organisations—in the form of

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> restaurants, tea-rooms, beer-halls . . . maintained by Party members. (Lenin 1905i[2], 35/90)

The main texts are relatively few: “Socialism and Religion” (Lenin 1905a[3]); “The Attitude of the Workers’ Party towards Religion” (Lenin 1909a); “Classes and Parties in Their Attitude to Religion and the Church”; (Lenin 1909c)[1]; “On the Significance of Militant Materialism” (Lenin 1922h). I focus mostly on the first two texts, since they provide a wealth of complexity in regard to religion, although the other two also have distinct contributions to make, as do a few other texts that deal with similar issues, often a few pages in a larger discussion.

I begin by focusing on the content of Lenin’s position. There is what may be called a standard Lenin, the well-known “textbook” interpretation.[2] For this Lenin, Marxism “is absolutely atheistic and positively hostile to all religion” (Lenin 1909a, 402/415; see also Lenin 1913r[1], 23/43). Apart from having, like philosophy, no independent existence (Lenin 1894a, 405–6/424, 418/428), offering belief in invented beings outside time and space and spurious accounts of the history of the earth (Lenin 1908a, 186/194), religion is simply a curse, a useless diversion of the working class, offering futile hopes of a life after death. “Religious fog,” “medieval mildew,” “obscurantism,” “humbugging,” “spiritual booze” (Lenin 1905a[3], 83–85/143–44)[3]—these and other terms capture a dismissively simplistic understanding of religion that loses the complexity of the position of Marx and—especially—Engels.

Response and Cause

> Rotten products of a rotten social system. (Lenin 1908a, 185/193)

Yet, this perception of Lenin’s understanding of religion is superficial. A careful reading of even his overt statements on religion reveals a far more complex and even dialectical approach to religion.[4] I do not need to find some hidden document, buried in the archives, which presents a different Lenin, for the texts have always been there, in the standard editions of his works. In those texts, Lenin weaves his approach to religion into a dense cloth that requires some unraveling. So, by means of a patient exegesis, I seek to present his position in a fashion more ordered.

Let me begin on the negative register, for which the initial move is to argue that religion is both the expression of suffering and a mode of its perpetuation. Here Lenin borrows directly from Marx, for whom religion is not immediately the cause of human oppression, but rather the indication of such oppression. More specifically, religion is a response to socioeconomic exploitation, a way of dealing with an intolerable situation that is shown clearly in the upsurge of religious observance during the horror and despair of war (Marx 1844a, 175–76; 1844b, 378–79; 1845a, 4; 1845b, 6; Lenin 1915d, 280/191).[5] For Lenin, the true source of “religious humbugging” is economic slavery. In contrast to bourgeois radicalism, in which religion is the main issue, for a communist, the yoke of religion is but the “product and reflection of the economic yoke within society” (Lenin 1905a[3],

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86/146).[6] Religion is thereby a mark of the futility and impotence of the toiling classes in their struggles against exploitation, a situation that comes to its sharpest expression in the belief in a better life after death, which inevitably arises from the hopeless situation of those exploited.

Now we encounter the first of many dialectical turns, for religion is also a cause of suffering. How? As a system of belief, especially in the hands of religious professionals, religion adds to the oppressive woes of the exploited, "coarsening and darkening . . . the spiritual and moral life of the masses" (Lenin 1905a[3], 83/142).[7] We may believe that a god or the gods will provide us succor under trial; that our prayers for relief will be answered; that we should love our enemies, especially our oppressors; that God will punish them at the Judgment Seat; that we will finally be vindicated; that the grace of God will lead to a life far greater than our present one, which is merely the first stage of eternal life. Yet, we are deluded, for these beliefs serve to make us content with our humble lot, causing us to stay the hand of justice.[8] Have not even the most evil rulers been installed by God (Romans 13:1)? As for those who live on the labor of others, religion teaches them to exercise charity, thereby offering a "cheap way of justifying their entire existence as exploiters" (Lenin 1905a[3], 83/142) and providing a cheap ticket to heaven.

Our own beliefs are but part of the story, for they are perpetrated by clergy and the institutions they serve. These religious professionals, "gendarmes in cassocks" (Lenin 1911g, 142/220; see also Lenin 1902p, 385/40, 414/71; 1902j, 259/42), are hand in glove with state powers, from which they receive their stipends, residences, church buildings, and by which the whole ecclesial system is maintained. And the one who pays the bills expects ideological support of the state apparatus, with blessings, prayers, and sermons for the well-being and longevity of the autocrat (or oligarchy or system of parliamentary democracy). Are not government-derived incomes linked "with the dispensation of this or that dope by the established church" (Lenin 1905a[3], 85/144)? Also expected are the constant messages of subservience directed at the numerous faithful. Respect your rulers, they are told, reverence the church and her ministers, be content with your lot and await your reward in heaven, and redirect your anger at the evil anarchists and communists, not to mention the Germans, French, British, and Japanese. Indeed, the identity of mother Russia (or any other state) is inextricably woven in with the role of the church.[9] In short, the clergy are part of the small ruling class, numbering also landowners and capitalists, as keen to preserve their privileged status as those other members of the same class.[10] In this light, the well-known point is worth repeating: Opposition to religion is a political position. If the ideology of the state is "one God in heaven; one Tsar on earth," then to challenge God is to challenge the state.[11]

In many respects, Lenin regards religion as a feudal hangover, if not a primitive relic. The whole system of the church living in feudal dependence on the state while simultaneously attempting to assert its spiritual control over the state (mostly for its own benefit), of resistance to even the most obvious of scientific knowledge concerning the history of the earth (1908k, 31/17),[12] of people living in feudal dependence on the established church, of laws (still embodied in the criminal code) that violate consciences through prosecution for the wrong belief

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or indeed nonbelief—this whole system belongs to "the shameful and accursed past" (Lenin 1905a^3, 84/144).[13] A little later, during the period of the Dumas (1905–17), he asserts that the priestly bloc in the Duma is inescapably feudal and medieval—he calls them "feudalists in cassocks" (Lenin 1909c, 416/431), who argue for the moral need for the church to be above politics, or rather, that the state should recognize the priority of the church. As for workers who still hold onto religion, who believe in God and go to church, they are "rather backward," "still connected with the countryside and with the peasantry" (Lenin 1909a, 407/420). Indeed, suggests Lenin, this "medieval mildew" is no better than the struggle of primitive savages with nature that produces belief in devils, miracles, and multiple gods.[14] In a moment of his characteristic optimism and confidence, Lenin argues that religious ideas are losing their importance in everyday life, "rapidly being swept out as rubbish by the very course of economic development" (Lenin 1905a^3, 87/146).[15]

Already we have moved onto the appropriate response to religion. Apart from the effect of modernizing and economic development, of which Lenin was fully in favor for the sake of speeding up the socialist revolution, the response takes two forms. First, calm and systematic education will make the workers and peasants see the light. By means of the press, through word of mouth, through republishing the best anticlerical works of the eighteenth century along with new material that challenges efforts to renew religion in a post-Christian fashion (Lenin 1922h, 229–30/25–26; 1902i, 338/265), through "an explanation of the true historical and economic roots of the religious fog" (Lenin 1905a^3, 86/145), in short, through ideological weapons, will the truth of religion be revealed. All the same, to restrict activities to this level would be to engage in abstract ideological preaching, to fall into the bourgeois trap of seeing religion as a purely abstract and idealistic problem. Given that religion is a response to the conditions of endless oppression, one must focus attention on that root cause. Or rather, the working masses will come, through their own struggle, to an awareness of both the nature of that oppression and the role played by religion within it (Lenin 1905a^3, 86–87/145–46).

Thus, the response to religion has two prongs, one educational and the other revolutionary, one limited and the other more powerful, one secondary and the other primary. However, the obvious question is: What happens after the revolution, when you have deployed your most powerful weapon and religion is still to be found? One approach is to assume that the revolution has indeed removed all the causes of alienation, but that religion also has political and cultural dimensions that persist. This approach is taken by Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Commissar of Enlightenment after the October Revolution (Lunacharsky 1985, 277–28). The appropriate answer, he argues, is education. Lunacharsky urges that any violent or crude means are counterproductive, producing martyrs and strengthening church and mosque, but that persistent persuasion, especially through the education system, is the key. Given that everyone is fully entitled to preach and profess any religion, the government too is entitled to express its views, to engage in systematic efforts to reveal the unfounded superstition of much that passes for religion. Indeed, adhering to the conventional separation of church and state,

Lunacharsky argues that the state should not pay for those who propagate religious views within the school system (Lunacharsky 1985, 111–15, 165–69). By and large, Lenin agrees, urging Skvortsov-Stepanov in 1922 to write a book on religion, or rather against religion, which would outline the history of atheism and the connections between religion and bourgeoisie (Lenin 1919f, 110–11/95; 1922m, 570/210). Yet, in an article from the same year, "On the Significance of Militant Materialism," an increasingly impatient Lenin castigates the educational programs for apathy, incompetence, and lack of efficiency in getting the job done (Lenin 1922h, 229–30/25–26).[16] As for the persistence of religion, Lenin suggests (half-heartedly, it seems) that the masses still remain half-asleep, not yet having awoken from their religious torpor.

However, this still does not answer the question as to why religion persists after the revolution. In many respects, Lenin does not answer this question directly, although one approach would be to argue that the oppressive conditions that give rise to religion have not yet passed. Lenin's frequent postrevolutionary discussions of both the continuation of the class struggle, in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is crucial, and the international situation in which the bourgeoisie is hell-bent on thwarting the Russian Revolution, may support the contention that the vale of tears has not yet been overcome. Lunacharsky does entertain this argument explicitly, especially before more militant audiences (Lunacharsky 1985, 254–66). Nevertheless, that almost brings us to the conclusion that the revolution made no difference at all, with respect to religion, class conflict, and conditions of oppression. Another and more satisfactory answer is to identify the revolutionary possibilities within a religion like Christianity, incentives that both feed into the revolution itself and thereby persist after its initial moment has passed. Does Lenin admit—anywhere and even in passing—that religion may also have a revolutionary dimension? The answer to that question involves a somewhat long and winding but very necessary search.

Spiritual Booze and Image of Man

> Opium is for us a treasure that keeps on giving, drop by drop. (Vvedensky 1985b, 223)

We have reached a turning point in the logic of Lenin's arguments concerning religion, a point marked by an unanswered question. Before pursuing that question—concerning revolutionary potential—a recap is in order. Despite the increasing complexity of his approach, Lenin still remains within a conventional paradigm of opposition to religion: Religion may be both a result of and cause of suffering, whether through our own dearly held beliefs or through the teachings of the church; the reply is a combination of patient education and agitation for revolution that overthrows the economic basis of oppression. At this point, however, we face a question concerning the continuation of religion after the revolution, a question that requires a search throughout his overt statements on religion. That search, running back to 1905, reveals an even subtler approach to religion, a subtleness sometimes lost in the earthy, blunt, and polemical style of his writings.

The first hint comes in one his most famous comments on religion:

> Religion is opium of the people [опиум народа—*opium naroda*]. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image [образ—*obraz*], their demand for a life more or less worthy of man. (Lenin 1905a[3], 83–84/143)

This text is a direct allusion to Marx's even more famous observation:

> *Religious* suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people [*das* Opium *des Volkes*]. (Marx 1844a, 175–76; 1844b, 378–79)

An initial reading may attribute to Marx's more elaborate prose a subtler appreciation of religion—as both expression and protest, as the sigh, heart, and soul of oppressed creatures in a heartless, soulless world. And a closer study of the key term, opium, reveals a profound multivalence in Marx's usage (see Boer 2012a). For opium was both a cheap curse of the poor and a vital medicine, a source of addiction and of inspiration for poets, writers, and artists, the basis of colonial exploitation (in the British empire) and of the economic conditions that allowed Marx and Engels to continue their work relatively unmolested; in short, it ranged all the way from blessed medicine to recreational curse. As the left-leaning theologian, Metropolitan Vvedensky, said already in Russia in 1925, opium is not merely a drug that dulls the senses, but also a medicine that "reduces pain in life and, from this point of view, opium is for us a treasure that keeps on giving, drop by drop" (Vvedensky 1985b, 223; on Marx, see also McKinnon 2006).[17] That Marx himself was a regular user of opium increases the complexity of the term in this text. Along with "medicines," such as arsenic and creosote, Marx imbibed opium to deal with his carbuncles, liver problems, toothaches, eye pain, ear aches, bronchial coughs, and so on—the multitude of ailments that came with chronic overwork, lack of sleep, chain smoking, and endless pots of coffee.[18]

Do we find this multivalence in Lenin's recasting of the opium metaphor? Marx's "*das* Opium *des Volkes*" is directly translated as "опиум народа—*opium naroda*." The usage is the same, "opium of the people," with a genitive in Russian as in German. Unfortunately, the English translation in Lenin's *Collected Works* renders the phrase in this text with the dative,[19] "opium for the people," thereby producing the sense that religious beliefs are imposed upon people rather than emerging as their own response: Religion is no longer *of* the people, but has become something devised *for* them. Such a translation may have been preferred due to Lenin's swift gloss, "a sort of spiritual booze [род духовной сивухи—*rod dukhovnoi sivukhi*]," which seems to reinforce this impression.[20] And does not the next phrase—"in which the slaves of capital drown their human image"—deploy the conventional role of alcohol, in which sorrows are drowned? Religion becomes a bottle of wine, a carton of beer, a flask of vodka, with which one dulls the pain of everyday life.[21]

It is worth noting here that even if Lenin did use the genitive construction (following Marx), in the USSR, the dative construction came to dominate. Thus, as

Sergey Kozin points out, people mostly used the phrase “opium for the people” rather than “opium of the people” as the standard definition of religion.[22] Perhaps, the most famous example is the line from the movie, *Twelve Chairs* (based on Ilf and Petrov’s satirical novel of the same name from 1928), where the main character keeps teasing his competitor, the Orthodox priest, with the line: “How much do you charge for the opium for the people?”

In order to draw us back to the ambivalence embodied in the “opium *of* the people,” we need to consider carefully the rest of Lenin’s description. He introduces two items: “human image [человеческий образ]” and “their demand for a life more or less worthy of human beings [свои требования на сколько-нибудь достойную человека жизнь].” Both terms—human image and decent human life—wrench the text away from a simple drowning of sorrows. At first sight, these terms seem like alternative ways of saying the same thing. Yet, the fact that they appear side by side introduces a minimal difference between them, one that is exacerbated by the biblical and theological echoes in Lenin’s text. Recall Genesis 1:26, where we find that the human beings are created in the “image of God”: “Let us make humankind in our image [*tselem*], according to our likeness [*demuth*].” Here too we find a minimal difference, between image and likeness; here too they seem to speak of the same thing, and yet they are different.

Lenin’s own context was infused with Orthodox theology and it is precisely that tradition which exploits the distinction between the two terms. Thus, while Adam and Eve may have been created in the image of God, being thereby able to participate in the divine life (when they were fully human), sin has blurred and fractured the union of divine and human, resulting in a situation that is less than human, with the unnatural result of death. However, in Orthodox theology, especially after St. Maximus (although one may find the idea in the Cappadotians, John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, and even in Irenaeus), what went “missing” after enjoying the fruit of the tree was not so much the “image,” but the “likeness.” Christ’s central task in salvation is thereby not merely a process of restoring the pre-lapsarian state, but rather a new state achieved uniquely in Christ, which was not there with Adam and Eve. That is, beyond the image, one becomes a likeness of God—*theosis*, or deification. *Theosis* actually designates a closer fellowship with God than even the first human beings experienced. Christ may be the second Adam, but he is also more than that, enabling a far greater communion that was initially the case—so much so that Christ may well have been incarnated simply for that reason, even without the first stumble.

Is it possible that Lenin, without necessarily evoking the whole economy of salvation, alludes to this complex interplay between image and likeness, with his usage of “human image” and “worthy human life”? Our human image may be obscured, drowned, inebriated, blurred—as though one were blind drunk—but even so the demand for a decent life persists.[23] That is, a life worthy of human beings echoes not merely the broken image that runs through Orthodoxy, but especially the restoration to the likeness of God through Christ.[24]

At the same time, Lenin turns this theological heritage of the image and likeness on its head. Rather than staying within the theological framework and asking why

it is that human beings are sinful, he accuses the framework itself with creating the problem in the first place. The issue is neither human culpability nor even the deception at the hands of third party, but rather religion itself. Let me put it this way: Lenin unwittingly parleys one tradition of interpretation against another, now in what may be called a more Reformed sense.[25] The narrative of Genesis 1–3 opens up a third, rarely traveled path of interpretation, in which the one responsible for the Garden of Eden with its two trees—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life—is also thereby responsible for the act that sends the likeness into exile. If God had not created the flawed crystal of the Garden in the first place, the Fall would not have happened, despite its narrative necessity for the rest of the Bible (it would have been a drab story indeed if the first humans had remained in the state of paradisal bliss for page after page). It is a charge that the deity refuses to answer, so keen is he to lay the blame on the human beings and serpent, who are punished as he sees fit. By contrast, Lenin does lay the blame precisely here. Only when that has been addressed may a worthy human life—now a very human "likeness"—be attained.

What about that famous spiritual booze? Might that not also be a richer metaphor? To begin with, in 1925, the Moscow Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, Alexander Vvedensky, pointed out that "booze [сивуха—*sivukha*]" is a good translation of "opium" (Vvedensky 1985b, 223),[26] which opens Lenin's phrase up to more ambiguity. However, we also need to combine that fact with a greater appreciation of the role of alcohol in Russian culture. Even today, one finds that beer has only recently (2011) been designated an alcoholic drink, although most people continue to think that it is not. Even after this legislation, not much has changed in Russia's beer-drinking culture except that Putin's "police" increasingly fines youngsters for drinking in public. Two-liter bottles are still available in most shops. And the famed vodka may be bought in bottles that fit comfortably in one's hand, a necessary feature due to that great Russian tradition in which an opened bottle must be emptied. Italy and France may be fabled as wine cultures and Germany, Scandinavia, and Australia as beer cultures, but Russia's drinking identity is inseparable from vodka. Russians may be admired for their fabled drinking prowess, vodka may be a necessary complement to any long-distance rail travel (as I have found more than once), it may be offered to guests at the moment of arrival (for otherwise the host is unforgivably rude), it may be an inseparable element of the celebration of life,[27] but it is also the focus of age-long concern. One may trace continued efforts to curtail excessive consumption all the way back to Lenin. For example, Khrushchev and Brezhnev sought in turn to restrict access to vodka with tighter controls, although their efforts pale by comparison to the massive campaign launched by Gorbachov in 1985. And Lenin fumed at troops and grain handlers getting drunk, molesting peasants, and stealing grain during the dreadful famines (or rather, during the period of a lack of means to transport grain to areas where it was desperately needed) during the foreign intervention after the Revolution. Nonetheless, vodka was a vital economic product. Already in 1899 in his painstakingly detailed *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin provides graphs and data concerning the rapid growth of distilling industry (Lenin 1899b, 288–91/285–88).

In other words, alcohol is as complex a metaphor as opium, if not more so. It is both spiritual booze and divine vodka: Relief for the weary, succor to the oppressed, inescapable social mediator, it is also a source of addiction, dulling of the senses, and dissipater of strength and resolve. Religion-as-grog[28] thereby opens up a far greater complexity concerning religion in Lenin's thought than one may at first have thought.

Freedom of Conscience

Where's your fear of God? (Lenin 1910y, 168/242)

The multiple layers enclosed in Lenin's image of religion-as-alcohol come to the fore in his argument concerning freedom of conscience.[29] Lenin pays close attention to this phrase for a number of contextual reasons, especially in his articles from 1909. The occasions for detailed statements on religion were multiple: the rise of the God-builders among the Bolsheviks (Lunacharsky and Gorky being the most prominent);[30] the Western European legacy—which largely meant the powerful German Social-Democrats—of widespread invocation of the "freedom of conscience" position; as well as a statement in the Duma by the Social-Democratic representatives concerning religion. While the God-builders advocated their position strongly within the party, the statement of the Duma representatives, although excellent in outlining a materialist position (without overemphasizing atheism) and the class allegiances of the clergy, was felt to fall short precisely on the issue of freedom of conscience. As far as the Western Social-Democrats were concerned, freedom of conscience was a standard position, applying to all spheres and embodied in the *Erfurt Program* of 1891: "Declaration that religion is a private matter [*Erklärung der Religion zur Privatsache*]" (SPD 1891a, 3; 1891b, 3).[31] This was so even in the far Left that would become the Spartacus Group in Germany. For example, Rosa Luxemburg argues vehemently in *Socialism and the Churches* from 1905:

> The Social-Democrats, those of the whole world and of our own country, regard conscience [*Gewissen*] and personal opinion [*Überzeugung*] as being sacred. Everyone is free to hold whatever faith and whatever opinions will ensure his happiness. No one has the right to persecute or to attack the particular religious opinion of others. Thus say the Social-Democrats. (Luxemburg 1970, 132; 1982, 19)[32]

For Luxemburg, the reasons for such a position were self-evident: Opposition to the state's efforts to control one's political aspirations, let alone religious affiliations (the tsarist autocracy persecuted Roman Catholics, Jews, heretics, and freethinkers), and resistance to the church's attempt to demand allegiance, especially by using a judicial system saturated with religious laws, mean that one does not seek to impose the same type of control as a socialist.

While Lenin adheres to this position in many statements of the Social-Democratic platform,[33] in both "Socialism and Religion" and "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion," he makes a few qualifications.[34] He distinguishes between two levels of analysis, between the state and the party: Religion must be a purely

private affair, separated in all respects from the state; the party must not make religion a private affair, yet atheism is not a prerequisite for membership.[35] The former position might be expected, but the latter less so. Why? As far as the state is concerned, the properly communist position is a radical separation of church and state, as well as (given the close ties between education and the church) separation of church and school (see also Lenin 1906n[1], 194–95/269–70; 1906k, 35/226). Here the reasons overlap closely with those of Luxemburg: Given the sad history of the church's dirty little relationship with the state, in which one's spiritual life was subject to as much policing as one's political and economic life, the removal of the church from all influence was a basic and necessary step. An end to state support of the church, to the possession of lands, state-derived incomes, even government positions for clergy, was a minimum requirement (Lenin 1905a[3], 84–85/143–44).[36] In this respect, however, the socialists shared the same platform with the radical bourgeoisie (as we shall see later, Lenin was a proponent of the bourgeois revolution, arguing that socialists should take the lead in such a revolution where it had not happened as yet). Thus, "Everybody must be perfectly free, not only to profess whatever religion he pleases, *but also to spread or change his religion*" (Lenin 1903t, 402/173).[37]

Now comes the intriguing twist, for Lenin argues that the party must *not* make religion a private affair. Contextually, he sought to counter the Western European application of freedom of conscience to all spheres, as well as (later) the God-builders who deployed the same position to propose that socialism should draw on all the best resources of religion. For Lenin, this is a mistaken move. Given that religion is both the symptom of economic oppression and one of the contributing factors to its perpetuation, the socialists should fight, publicly, against such oppression. Advanced fighters for the emancipation of the working class "must not be indifferent to lack of class-consciousness, ignorance or obscurantism in the shape of religious beliefs" (Lenin 1905a[3], 85/145). For this struggle, the separation of the church from the state is an absolute prerequisite, so that the party may be free to undertake its ideological struggle (one of the responses to religious oppression we noted earlier) against religion without hindrance. In this respect, religion is not a private affair, but a very public matter for the whole party.

Does this mean that one must tick the box marked "atheist" in order to gain a party membership card, that one must vow never to partake in religious ritual and never entertain even a flicker of religious belief? Not at all: Even though a socialist may espouse a materialist worldview in which religion is but a medieval mildew, even though the party may undertake a very public and unhindered program of education against the influence of the church, and even though one hopes that the historical materialist position will persuade all of its truth (Lenin 1905o[1], 509–10/289–90; 1905x[1], 23/65–66; 1905y[1], 47–48/102–3), the party still does not stipulate atheism as a prerequisite for membership. Even more, no one will be excluded from party membership if he or she holds to religious belief. As Lenin stated it forcefully in response to the Bund: "Organisations belonging to the R.S.D.L.P. have never distinguished their members according to religion, never asked them about their religion and never will" (Lenin 1903e, 331 fn/120 fn).[38] More than one person among the

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various shapes of the right-wing, let alone the workers and socialists themselves, were astounded at such a position, asking "Why do we not declare in our Programme that we are atheists? Why do we not forbid Christians and other believers in God to join our Party?" (Lenin 1905a[3], 86/145).

One may identify three reasons in Lenin's texts. First, opposition to religion actually strengthens the reactionary elements within religious organizations. Lenin cites Engels, in response to the ultra-Leftist Blanquist Communards and their war on religion, to Dühring's proposal that religion should be banished in a socialist society, and in relation to Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, waged against the German Roman Catholic Party (the "Center Party") in the 1870s. In each case, the struggles directed everyone's attention away from political issues and toward religion, thereby steeling the resolve of those attacked (Lenin 1909a, 403/416–17).

Furthermore, attacking religion is a red herring, argues Lenin, for it diverts attention from the central question of opposition to economic subjugation. Now we come back to our starting point: If the yoke of religion is the product of the economic yoke, if, in other words, religion is a secondary, idealist phenomenon, then an attack on religion misses the mark.[39] Should one achieve the hypothetical aim of abolishing religion, then nothing would change, for the bosses would still grind workers into the dust. Yet, even with this argument, one might still be able to argue that the party should hold to an atheistic platform, while acknowledging the secondary role religion plays in the economic struggle. So now Lenin deploys his third argument, stating that any focus on religion splits the united front of the proletariat (Lenin 1909a, 407–8/420–21). The Right knows this fully well, attempting to break up the proletariat on religious lines, urging allegiance to the church, and claiming that socialism has a program of godless atheism, dividing workers along religious and antireligious lines, fomenting anti-Semitic pogroms (especially at the hands of the "Black Hundreds"). So also does the bourgeoisie, which wavers between anticlericalism in its struggle with the old order for political control and reconciling itself to religion.[40] For these reasons, the party does "not and should not set forth" atheism in its program (Lenin 1905a[3], 87/146). Or, as Lenin puts it with one of his characteristic images: "Unity in this really revolutionary struggle of the oppressed class for the creation of a paradise on earth is more important to us than unity of proletarian opinion on paradise in heaven" (Lenin 1905a[3], 87/146).

In other words, a united front is needed, drawing the line not between believer and atheist, but between workers and the owners of capital, whether landowners or the bourgeoisie. People who still hold to a religious position are welcome in the party, as long as they take part in the struggle. This agenda may be more implicit in "Socialism and Religion" but it becomes explicit in a forceful statement from the same time (1905):

> Jews and Christians, Armenians and Tatars, Poles and Russians, Finns and Swedes, Letts and Germans—all, all of them march together under the one common banner of socialism. All workers are brothers, and their solid union is the only guarantee of the well-being and happiness of all working and oppressed mankind. (Lenin

1905s, 348/81; see also Lenin 1905o[1], 509–10/289–90; 1905x[1], 23/65; 1905y[1], 47–48/102–3)[41]

This text is the first moment when Lenin recognizes a revolutionary potential within religion, a moment that suddenly intensifies his awareness, however grudging, of religion's political ambivalence. A number of other occasions may also be identified, all of which will lead into the next chapter where I discuss the religious Left in more detail, especially the God-builders, religious socialists, and peasant radicals. However, before I gather those further moments of recognition, I would like to ask a prior question: Was Lenin consistent in his dealings with religion? At first sight, he appears remarkably inconsistent: Religion may be both response to and perpetuator of a basic economic exploitation, yet it also offers the possibility of resistance to that injustice. It may be a medieval mildew, no better than primitive beliefs in response to nature, yet it is a live and ongoing reality. The party may systematically seek to educate everyone concerning the deleterious effects of religion, yet it refuses to make atheism a platform, accepting religious believers in a united front against the capitalists and landowners.

Did Lenin, then, wage a revolutionary war against God and yet offer sops to religion, playing up to workers in a cowardly fashion so as not to alienate new members? Critics certainly thought so, particularly among the anarchists, who wanted a more consistent line (Lenin 1909a, 404/418). As may be expected, Lenin argues that the position is entirely consistent, invoking both the dialectic and the pedigree of Marx and Engels. In some respects, one may agree, especially in terms of the (apparent) contradiction between consistent education on the materialist position concerning religion and the need to make religion an issue secondary to class struggle. I would add the reasoning that religion is both response to and cause of suffering, as well as the complex party platform in relation to religion—both a firm position against religion and the refusal to require atheism as a prerequisite to party membership. Once we acknowledge the basic argument that the struggle against economic oppression is primary, all of these positions make sense.

Yet, Lenin does fall short on two counts, one relating to the dialectic of collectives and the other to the political ambivalence of Christianity. On the first matter, it is simply a case of not being dialectical enough. The issue is party membership for a Christian believer, and Lenin, as we have seen earlier, has already stated that the party does not require any new member to subscribe to atheism, and that all who share the party's program are welcome. At this point, Lenin invokes the distinction between collective and individual approaches to religion and the party. In effect, he asks: Do we operate from the basis of the private individual, allowing full reign to individual freedom of conscience even within the party, or do we begin with the collective and see what the ramifications are? This question lies behind the statement, "We allow freedom of opinion *within* the Party, but to certain limits, determined by freedom of grouping" (Lenin 1909a, 409/422). If the collective has come to agreed-upon positions, through open debate (Lenin was a great proponent of arguing vehemently and openly, for this produced a healthy party) and congresses, then those who join need to abide by those positions. At

various times, he attacked Mensheviks, liquidators, the Bund, and many other "tares," not because of his supposedly dictatorial ambitions, but because they did not abide by collectively agreed positions. The same applied to religion.

In "The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion," Lenin provides two examples, one of a priest and the other of a worker (Lenin 1909a, 408–9/421–22). The case of the priest is not an accident, for it both sharpens the issue and was a common question at the time, especially in Western Europe. In contrast to the unqualified affirmative usually given, Lenin states: If a priest affirms the party program, if he shares the aims of the party and works actively to achieve them, then of course he may join. And if there is a tension between his religious belief and communism, then that is a matter for him to sort out alone. However, if the priest sets out to proselytize within the party, actively seeking to persuade others to his religious point of view and thereby not abiding by the collective position of the party, then he is not welcome and will be stripped of his membership.[42] The same principle applies to a believing worker, who should not merely be permitted to join, but who should be actively recruited. All the same, should he too attempt to persuade others of his views, he will be expelled.[43]

At first sight, this argument seems quite reasonable, since anyone who joins a political organization should subscribe to its platform. Otherwise, why join at all? But is this a fully collective position? If we stay with the minimal notion that a more or less democratically agreed platform is binding on even the minority who disagrees, then it may be regarded as collective. Yet, this approach hardly distinguishes the communists from any other political party in (capitalist) parliamentary democracies. For this reason, I suggest that we may go a step further: Within a collective movement, such as socialism, the imposition of one will over another is anathema. A collective will is not the assertion of uniformity from above, not even the vote of a majority over minority, but a collective agreement that arises from the complex overlaps of beliefs, aspirations, even foibles that are given full and open expression. Only when these many-colored expressions are allowed full reign, pursuing all manner of possibilities until they collapse in dialectical exhaustion, does a collective will emerge. Or rather, the very act of enabling such free expression and freedom of conscience is the embodiment of collectivity, the result of which turns out to be a collective will. In short, a completely collective approach is the best guarantee for full freedom of conscience.

The Ambivalence of Religion

> In the old days they used to say, "Each for himself, and God for all." And how much misery resulted from it. We say, "Each for all, and we'll somehow manage without God." (Lenin 1920w, 305/70)

The second moment in which Lenin is less consistent concerns the political ambivalence of religion, particularly Christianity. In part, this inconsistency is due to the profound ambivalence of Christianity itself, which has and continues to offer the most solid support for oppressive and reactionary regimes, while also inspiring

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one revolutionary movement after another. I have already mentioned one moment when Lenin recognizes the possibility of Jews and Christians joining a united socialist front; so let us now explore other such moments, gradually building up a picture of a somewhat unexpected Lenin.[44]

The first concerns Lenin's invocations of Marx and Engels, although this provides a negative example, a sustained practice of the studied avoidance of the complexity of religion in the work of the founders of modern socialism. Again and again, Lenin calls upon Marx and Engels to support his position on religion, arguing that their insight and consistency are the basis of his own comparable virtues on this topic. However, in order to hold that position, Lenin must slide over some substantial contrary evidence. For instance, in his obituary for Engels, Lenin avoids Engels's extensive theological and biblical interests, not only with respect to the latter's youthful engagement with biblical criticism, theology, and Hegel, but also his continuing interest in later years (Lenin 1895b, 20–21/6–7).[45] Similarly, Lenin dismisses Bruno Bauer—a biblical critic, radical theologian, and close friend and colleague of Marx (even through their polemics)—as an aloof philosopher. Some years later, in his introduction to the Russian publication of the Marx–Engels correspondence, Lenin does have to face the obvious and extensive religious content of Engels's early letters. Now he opts for characterizing Engel's father as a pious despot, stressing erroneously that Engels broke as far as possible from the Christian–Prussian context of his family, and opining that the only reason Engels maintained contact was due to his mother (Lenin 1913x, 554–55/264–65). Other moments reinforce this impression of a pattern of avoidance: The discussion of Marx's treatment of Kriege during the internal struggles of the First International leaves out the significant item that Kriege espoused a version of Christian socialism and that Marx's attacks were focused very much on this feature (Lenin 1905l[1], 323–28/53–54; Marx and Engels 1846a, 1846b).[46]

The problem for Lenin is that Marx and Engels have a good deal to say about religion and that it does not necessarily support Lenin's view, specifically on the revolutionary possibilities of Christianity. Marx may have been more militantly opposed to religion, but even he allows for the possibility that religion may offer a protest against suffering, a heart in a heartless world (Marx 1844a, 175–76; 1844b, 378–79). Engels was to take this opening much further, arguing already in the early 1840s that Christianity has a distinctly revolutionary strain,[47] an argument that would come to full flower in one of his last works, "On the History of Early Christianity" (Engels 1894–95c, 1894–95d). Here Christianity becomes a seditious party of overthrow, a revolutionary movement very much like the communists in his own day. Nonetheless, these studied avoidances function as a negative example, an unwillingness by Lenin to recognize what his own authorities made clear.

However, his avoidance was not always so resolute, for we find him acknowledging, at times unwittingly, that Christianity may well have a history of revolutionary inspiration and may continue to provide such possibilities. We do not need to look far, for already in 1909, Lenin was prepared to note the connections between certain strains of Christianity and revolutionary politics. In the midst of summing up a Duma debate over the relation between church and state, his highest praise goes to a speech by a certain Rozhkov, a Trudovik representative of peasant background.

Responding to priests claiming superiority of the church over the state, as well as to right-wing and liberal defenses of the church, Rozhkov debunks these lofty claims by listing the levies and extortions collected by the clergy for services that should have been part of the job description (marriages and so on), not to mention additional demands, such as "a bottle of vodka, snacks, and a pound of tea, *and sometimes things that I am even afraid to talk about from this rostrum*" (Lenin 1909c, 421/436–47). For Lenin, this speech from an uneducated peasant is pure gold, far more likely to revolutionize the peasants than any sophisticated attacks on religion or the church. The outrage from the right-wing majority, silencing Rozhkov before he could finish, merely reinforces the point. But then, Lenin goes a step further, noting "the primitive, unconscious, matter-of-fact religiousness of the peasant, whose living conditions give rise—against his will and unconsciously—to a truly revolutionary resentment against extortions" (Lenin 1909c, 422/437). We need to be careful at this point, for Lenin does not quite yet say that the matter-of-fact religiousness of the peasant gives rise to a revolutionary sentiment. In this text, the living conditions become the immediate cause of the sentiment, but the cheek-by-jowl connection between religiousness and living conditions opens up the possibility of precisely the connection between religion and revolution that he would recognize from time to time.[48]

The peasant's speech in the Duma may have provided a passing possibility of the connection between religion and revolution, but more enthusiastic and obvious is the encouragement offered—this time in the key text, "Socialism and Religion"—to Russian Orthodox clergymen who have seen through the corruption of the church and its complicity with the old order. Despite the overwhelming tendency of the church to extreme reaction, seeking to reassert medieval privileges through the activity of what may be called a "priestly bloc" during the period of the Dumas (between 1905 and 1917),[49] Lenin stresses that some clergy "are joining in the demand for freedom, are protesting against bureaucratic practices and officialism, against the spying for the police imposed on the 'servants of God' " (Lenin 1905a[3], 85/144; 1905h[3], 448/218; see also Lenin 1902p, 469 fn/129 fn; 1902g, 296–97/81).[50] Noting, even celebrating, such a development is not enough, for the socialists must give this groundswell among the clergy their fullest support, urging the priests and monks, in every practical manner possible, to hold the line and bring their desire for freedom, for breaking the debilitating ties between church and police and state, to a full realization. After all, suggests Lenin, you priests should believe in "the spiritual power of your weapon" (Lenin 1905a[3], 85/145). If you do not trust in that spiritual power and cave into the bribes and inducements of the state, then woe to you, for the workers of Russia will be your resolute enemies. Note that here Lenin speaks not of the odd individual renegade, breaking ranks with the default reactionary position of the church, but of the clergy as a group. No matter how strategic it may have been to encourage divisions among the clergy, as a group they may well become a radical force.

We have come to the end of a very winding path through Lenin's overt reflections on religion. Or rather, we have reached a major rest stop on a much longer path. With each twist and turn, each explicitly stated and curiously half-said argument, Lenin's position has become ever more complex. We are by now far

from the simplistic and polemical Lenin who dismisses religion as a fiction and a curse, to be opposed and crushed at all costs. Instead, we have arguments for the duality of religion as response to and cause of suffering, multilayered metaphors of booze and the human image, and the dilemma of what happens after the revolution when religion persists. From that point onward, I pursued the nuances of the "freedom of conscience" clause, in respect both to the state and the party, focusing particularly on the communist reasons for refusing to stipulate atheism as a requirement for party membership. While it may strengthen reactionary religious forces, and while the religious question is a diversion from the primary political issue of class struggle and economic oppression, I was most interested in the argument for a united front of believers, atheists, and others. From here, I traced a glimpse and then a couple of explicit recognitions of the revolutionary possibilities of Christianity. All of these led to the conclusion that Lenin, no matter how much he may have lashed religion, also reveals an occasional awareness of its deep political ambivalence. And that leads me to read in a different fashion the following sentence: "Religion also has general significance as expressing the social co-ordination of the experience of the larger section of humanity" (Lenin 1908a, 187/194). Lenin may simply have meant that religion is a response and therefore a symptom of oppressive social condition, or perhaps that religion is a phenomenon secondary to the primary matters of economics and social relations. However, he does not use those forms of expression. Instead, he says that religion expresses the "social co-ordination" [социальное согласование—*sotsial'noe soglasovanie*] of the experience of the bulk of humanity. Read in light of my argument concerning political ambivalence, I would like to push Lenin and suggest that the statement now takes on the possibility that religion may be exceedingly reactionary *and* revolutionary, that it gives voice to and fosters both the status quo and its overthrow. I will have many more occasions to explore the implications of this possibility in the chapters that follow.

Toward a Dialectic of Autonomy

> Sometimes *closer* ties will be established *after* free secession! (Lenin 1913v, 501/235)

I turn to two closely related moments in which Lenin deploys a similar argument to that in regard to religion, or more specifically in relation to his deliberations over freedom of conscience: The first concerns the national question and the second religious minorities.

The National Question

> "And as to Russia," says Engels, "she could only be mentioned as the detainer of an immense amount of stolen property [i.e., oppressed nations] which would have to be been disgorged on the day of reckoning." (Lenin 1916b, 342 fn/39 fn)

Time and again, Lenin returns to what was called the national question,[51] namely the issue as to how the many and varied ethnic groups would relate to one another

in a proposed communist state. These debates came to a peak in the mid-teens of the twentieth century, when the possibility of reshaping Russia became a real possibility after the 1905 revolution. Would the communists follow a tsarist policy of subordinating all of the linguistic and ethnic variety of the Russian empire to an enforced "Great-Russian nationalism"? How would they respond to pushes for local languages to be taught in schools, for political autonomy by places from Ukraine to the Far East, from Tatars to the Samoyeds?

Lenin tirelessly reiterates the same position: "Whoever does not recognize and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality is not a Marxist" (Lenin 1913h, 28/125). It may concern the question of history in schools, the language of instruction in those schools, or the official languages uses by governments, or indeed the nature of such government itself; it may arise in proposals by local bishops, in response to right-wing attempts to foster patriotism and anti-minority sentiment; it may come up in the context of debates in the Duma and even in bills proposed by the Social-Democratic representatives. However, the response is the same: Self-determination, national autonomy, linguistic freedom, no imposition of one nation over the other, no annexations in any peace treaty, all of which were to be embodied in incontrovertible legislation. Or, as one draft of the proposed national equality bill put it: "All nations in the state are absolutely equal, and all privileges enjoyed by any one nation or any one language are held to be inadmissible and anti-constitutional" (Lenin 1914c, 281/136).[52]

The reasons Lenin gives for such a position are remarkably similar to those put forward in defense of his position concerning a believer who wishes to be a member of the party.[53] To begin with, the imposition of one language, one ethnic identity, and one system of education comes from both the reactionary defenders of autocracy and the bourgeoisie, inevitably supported by the church. Second, the focus on national issues is, like the focus on religion, a distraction from the central issue of economic oppression. Issues of language, ethnicity, education, and even the identity of states are strictly secondary concerns that should be subordinated to the primary one of economic and class struggle. And that brings us to his third point: Nationalism splits the working class in terms of these secondary concerns. Indeed, these divisions are actively fostered by the ruling classes to drive a wedge between workers. By contrast, the working class is inescapably international, for economic exploitation and class conflict cut across national lines, uniting workers (and peasants). Workers of all languages, cultures, and ethnicities need to come together in a united front, for class is always primary (Lenin 1903k)—precisely the same argument used in regard to religion.

At this point, Lenin encounters a question unique to the national question, although it will turn out to be a question that brings him close to my argument for a radical freedom of conscience (for which I criticized him for not being dialectical enough). If one espouses complete self-determination of peoples within a communist system, does that provide the right to secede at any time? Lenin is guarded. On the one hand, self-determination should permit room to secede from any coalition of states; on the other hand, secessions are not desirable for the good of the communist cause. In Lenin's words:

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> We are *in favour of autonomy for all* parts; we are in favour of the *right* to secession (and not *in favour* of everyone's *seceding*!). Autonomy is *our* plan for organising a democratic state. Secession is not what we plan at all. We do not advocate secession. In general, we are opposed to secession. (Lenin 1913v, 500–1/235)[54]

He begins by reiterating the standard position: autonomy for everyone. But then, he extends this point to state that every part has the "right to secession." Note the subtle shift: Autonomy appears without a qualifier, but secession is a right. The parenthetical comment clarifies what that right means: Everyone may have the right, but we are certainly not keen on everyone exercising this right, for if they all seceded, the whole project would be immeasurably weakened. Realizing he has perhaps let the cat peek a little too much out of the bag, he attempts to push it back. Well, autonomy is part of our plan, but secession is not really part of that plan, even if it is consistent with autonomy, even if you have a right to secede. In fact, secession is not in the plan at all; or rather, it is in the plan, for we are opposed to it.

Has Lenin come full circle and undermined the standard position on self-determination and autonomy? Perhaps realizing the implications of his argument, he now adds a crucial qualifier: "But we stand for the *right* to secede owing to reactionary, Great-Russian nationalism, which has so besmirched the idea of national coexistence that sometimes *closer* ties will be established *after* free secession!" (Lenin 1913v, 501/235). In our current context, he says, in which tsarist nationalism and chauvinism have so alienated different groups, in which the Russian empire has systematically oppressed minority languages, peoples, and religions, the right to secession is needed. Now appears the first glimmer of a dialectical moment: In fact, closer ties may sometimes develop if everyone is allowed to secede. He is not quite certain at this point, his "sometimes" leaving the observation less sure. A few years later, however, the uncertainty of the earlier formulation dissipates and the dialectical nature of his argument comes to the fore. In the heat of events in 1917, Lenin reasserts the crucial position concerning the renunciation of annexations and the real right to secession. Yet, now its dialectical outcome is stressed with equal determination. Given that communism will be strengthened by greater cooperation, if not as large a state as possible, it endeavors to draw peoples closer together, yet it does so not through violence but through the free union of working people throughout the world. Or in a sharp dialectical formulation: "The more democratic the Russian republic, and the more successfully it organizes itself into a Republic of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the more powerful will be the force of *voluntary* attraction to such a republic on the part of the working people of *all* nations" (Lenin 1917k[2], 73/168).

One may compare a worker who is constantly harassed by her boss, micro-managed in order to ensure she acts as she should. The result is that she works badly, takes sick leave whenever possible, has low morale, and looks to escape at the first opportunity. However, should she be allowed to do things her way, to work in the way she sees best and without interference, preferably without a boss at all, it may actually turn out that she does a far better job, is happier, more efficient, and willing to become part of the larger whole in the work place. The closeness of this position to

my earlier dialectical argument concerning radical freedom of religious conscience in a collective context should be clear. The more we encourage radical freedom, whether of national self-determination of religious expression or whatever, the more will it foster a deeper and longer-lasting collective experience.

Jews, the Bund, and Religious Groups

For the sake of all the gods that be. (Lenin 1913 e[1], 370/241)

These dialectical struggles concerning religion and the national question came to their sharpest expression in relation to religious groups,[55] especially the Jews. More specifically, the question of the Bund's relations with the RSDLP pushes the dialectical position I have argued earlier to its next step: If full autonomy does take place, and if those who have pursued their own distinctive agendas do come back seeking a united front, then what do you do? Do they retain their autonomy in the new arrangement, or does one move past autonomy to a new level of unity? The first may be characterized as the Bund's position; the second was Lenin's preference.

One of the most persistent themes in all of Lenin's writings is the RSDLP's opposition to anti-Semitism. Again and again, he attacks the tsarist and right-wing "pogrom-mongers," who attempted to whip up sectarian hatred, split the working class, and divert people's attention from economic and political problems.[56] On a number of occasions, the Social-Democratic representatives in the Duma proposed clearly worded bills stressing that position. Jews, along with other religious and ethnic groups, would not be discriminated against and would have full equality before the law. For instance, the bill proposed in March 1914 points out that of all the many peoples in Russia, the Jews are subjected to the harshest discrimination and persecution. In particular, states the preamble to the bill, Jewish workers suffer under the double burden of being both workers and Jewish. So the bill stipulates that no one in Russia, regardless of sex and religion, is to be restricted in any way on the basis of origin or nationality. More specifically, "All and any laws, provisional regulations, riders to laws, and so forth, which impose restrictions upon Jews in any sphere of social and political life, are herewith abolished" (Lenin 1914f[1], 173/17).

However, when it came to the Bund and its relations with the RSDLP, Lenin took a different line. The Bund repeatedly requested that it become part of the RSDLP, and that it should be accepted as an autonomous group within a federated party.[57] At the many party congresses, the Bund was nearly always present, repeatedly asserting its position, engaging in lengthy debates and negotiations. Yet, although the RSDLP accepted the Bund at the first and fourth (Unity) conferences, Lenin persistently refused their unremitting push for autonomy. Is this not an outright contradiction with his position concerning national autonomy in a Soviet state? Not immediately, especially if we keep in mind the earlier distinction between freedom of conscience in relation to the state and in respect to the party. In regard to the former, Lenin clearly stresses the point that the Jewish question in Russia is a particular instance of the national question, sharpening the issue in light of the persecution of the Jews (Lenin 1914f[1], 172/16).[58] Thus, as with all groups,

the Jews should have all the freedoms of any other religious and ethnic group in the new state. By contrast, the Bund's membership of the party should follow the same guidelines for individual believers and even priests. They may join by subscribing to the party platform, but they are not permitted to advocate any position that is contrary to that platform—in this case, an autonomous membership. The reasons given for this position are the same as those with respect to members with religious beliefs and the national question: The need to avoid a diversion that splits the working class along religious and ethnic lines, and thereby the need for a united front that cuts across those lines (Lenin 1903d, 322–33/100–1).

Now we come to the core of the differences between the Bund and the RSDLP. For the latter, class is the key and solidarity must be formed on class lines; all else is secondary, no matter whether it is religion or ethnic identity (Lenin 1903k; see also Lenin 1903m). For the Bund, anti-Semitism is the core issue, for anti-Semitism is a universal phenomenon that leaps across class lines. They made the case for autonomy by referring to workers who had joined in with pogroms, indicating that anti-Semitism had taken root among the proletariat (Lenin 1903e, 331–32/120–21). Not so, replies Lenin: Anti-Semitism cannot be universalized, for it has specific class features, belonging at this day and age to the reactionary ruling class and the rising bourgeoisie. And if workers do join in pogroms, it proves not that they are anti-Semitic, but that they have been deceived by the pogrom-mongers (as in so many cases in which workers are split by the ruling classes).

At first sight, the case of the Bund is like that of the priest: Join by all means, but do not attempt to advocate a position contrary to the core of the party platform. At this level, Lenin appears perfectly consistent with the position, outlined earlier, in regard to party membership. A closer perusal reveals that the situation is not the same, for the primary issue with the priest or indeed worker is religious belief, while the key issue for the Bund is membership with autonomy, on the basis of a universal notion of anti-Semitism. Now the situation of the Bund begins to leak into the national question, where Lenin articulates a clear position on self-determination and yet holds back at the last minute on the question of secession.[59] To recap, groups have full autonomy and the *right* to secession, but secession is not part of the plan at all. I would suggest that the Bund's request pushes over into this territory, straddling both party membership and the structure of the state.[60]

At this point in my earlier discussion of the national question, I criticized Lenin for falling short of a fully dialectical position, in which full autonomy, pushed to its dialectical extreme, may well produce a far deeper unity, a stronger collectiveness. Such a dialectical approach expresses a more daring and thorough collective approach than the position he outlines. How does this apply to debates with the Bund? In many respects, the Bund pushed Lenin's position to its logical conclusion, continually asserting the desire for membership with autonomy. In response to this persistent request, Lenin seems to have fallen short, at least in part, resisting this push in the name of avoiding diversions and building a united front. I wrote "in part," since, in one respect, it seems to me he was correct, for persistent and unremitting autonomy leads inevitably in a case like this to Zionism: "you will turn the regrettable isolation of the Bund into a fetish, and will cry that the abolition of this

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isolation means the destruction of the Bund; you will begin to seek grounds justifying your isolation, and in this search will now grasp at the Zionist idea of a Jewish '*nation*,' now resort to demagogy and scurrilities" (Lenin 1903i, 63/28).[61]

Is this the outcome of the resolute isolation of the Bund? Now the situation becomes interesting, specifically through the Bund's refusal to join on existing terms. Throughout the long and fractious relationship with the RSDLP, the Bund took many positions. At times they argued, at times they broke off negotiations and stormed out, and at times they came to an agreement for a united front that broke down sooner rather than later.[62] Let me fill out this story with a few details: The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (the Bund) was established at a conference in Vilno in 1897, out of various Jewish Social-Democratic groups. At the first congress of the RSDLP, the Bund became members while maintaining autonomy in regard to questions pertaining to the Jewish proletariat. By the time of the second RSDLP congress, the Bund left the party after its insistence on autonomy and that it was the sole representative of Jewish worker issues was rejected. By 1906, at the fourth congress (usually designated as the "Unity" congress), the Bund rejoined, along with the Mensheviks. However, the unity was short-lived and tensions continued through to the October Revolution and beyond. It is as though they took the RSDLP position on autonomy to heart and held to it.

Yet in 1921, after the October Revolution, the Bund dissolved itself and many of its members joined the renamed Russian Communist Party as full members, giving up their claims to autonomy. I suggest that this act provides an unexpected answer to a question Lenin already asked in 1903: "Is this isolation to be preserved, or a turn made towards fusion?" (Lenin 1903i, 63/27). Let me misinterpret Lenin slightly and push his question further, since we now begin to move beyond my earlier argument in relation to autonomy and the national question, where Lenin glimpsed the possibility of full collective autonomy: If you grant autonomy, in the name of a deeper collective, free reign and if it then achieves the dialectical result of thoroughly collective unity, what do you do then? Do you continue to allow autonomy for the sake of that unity, or is there a moment when the autonomy fades away, having achieved its task? Is the Bund's joining with the party in 1921 the answer to that question? We may cite all manner of other reasons, such as the practical realization that they would be able to do far more as party members, that the new Soviet state required as solid a united front as possible. But I would suggest that the Bund in its own way, entirely unwittingly, lived out the logic that lay at the heart of Lenin's position.[63]

In Anticipation

> This is another instance of God (if he exists, of course). (Lenin 1920r, 171/141)

In this chapter, I have sought to set the scene for the full elaboration of the many permutations on the engagements between Lenin and theology in the following chapters—on topics such as Lenin's close engagements with the Bible, especially

the Gospels, his responses to religious socialism, peasant socialism (particularly Tolstoy) and the God-builders, the implications of the Hegelian dialectic, revolution as miracle, and the veneration of Lenin. Some of the themes initially broached here will return, notably the political ambivalence of Christianity, the question of freedom, and Lenin's practical responses to religion. At least I hope to have indicated with this opening engagement with Lenin's explicit statements on religion that his thought on that matter is far more complex than has hitherto been realized.

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CHAPTER 2

Gospels and Parables

> I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.
>
> —Matthew 13:35

Lenin and the Gospel parables: Is that not a strange conjunction, especially from one who was often quite dismissive of religion, let alone Christian theology and the Bible? Nonetheless, a careful reading of Lenin's texts reveals a persistent preference for the parables and sayings that we find in Jesus's mouth. In order to examine the nature and function of these engagements, I begin with a detailed assessment of *What Is to Be Done?* (*WITBD*) (1902p)[1] where the key organizing parable is that of the wheat and tares (or weeds) from Matthew 13. Lenin draws upon this parable in order to rethink the organization of the RSDLP, specifically in response to opponents, in terms of the need for discernment, vigorous and open argument, and the dialectic of illegal and legal organization. I unpick the central role of this parable in Lenin's text, a parable he would cite on a number of occasions after the publication of *WITBD* in order to indicate the core of his argument.[2] Yet, this exploration is only the first step of my argument, for Lenin's engagement with the parable of the tares and the wheat is not an isolated occurrence. He goes on to draw upon other biblical parables and sayings, especially those of an agricultural nature with a focus on seeds, growing, and harvesting. Furthermore, Lenin creates a large number of his own parables, at times drawn from Russian folklore and literature, at times developed from an opponent's writing, but mostly of his own creation. Not only does Lenin turn out to be a creative and innovative exegete, appropriating, redirecting, and providing new angles on the biblical texts, but he also deploys the genre of parables throughout his writings. All of this biblical engagement cannot avoid the question as to why he does so, a question I seek to answer in the final section of the chapter.[3]

Tares and Wheat

Let us begin with the parable in question from Matthew 13:24–30:

> Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping his

> enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No; lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn'."

In this parable (not found in the other Gospels), Jesus likens the enigmatic "kingdom of heaven" to a field sown with wheat—"good seed [*kalon sperma*]" is the specific term. However, having sown the good seed, other seed is now sown, at night by an enemy. These are the tares or weeds (*zizania*), although they are not specified as bad seeds (that would have been *kakon sperma*). Now comes the key: The man's slaves suggest gathering in the weeds after the master has answered their question concerning the source of the weeds. Not so fast, he says; let the weeds and wheat grow up together and then only at harvest time may they be separated and gathered in turn, weeds first and then wheat. The former will then be consigned to the fire, while the latter can go into the barn. Many other features of the parable suggest further paths of investigation, such as the presence of agricultural slaves (*douloi*), the problematic suggestion that the manager of the kingdom of heaven is a slave owner whom the slaves call "Lord [*kurie*]," and the precise reason why the master instructs the slaves to wait until harvest time. Is it because the young shoots look similar and that one may thereby pull out some of the wheat along with the weeds? May it be that some which look like weeds will turn out to be wheat? Or indeed that the weeds will assist the growth of the wheat? Commentators have of course speculated over these notorious gaps in the parable, but for our purposes, the following issues are important: first, the distinction between the tares and the wheat; second, the source of the tares (his enemy—*autou o echros*); third, the context of the parable; fourth, the interpretation offered in Matthew 13:36–43.

I need say little concerning the first two items, but the other two require some further comments. The parable appears in a collection of agricultural parables. The preceding parable is that of the sower with its four kinds of ground for the seed (path, rocky ground, thorns, and good soil where it flourishes) and the mention of yields of one-hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold (Lenin will use these terms again and again). An interpolated interpretation follows, in which the four types of soil become different responses to the word of the kingdom. Following the parable of the tares, we encounter the brief parables of the mustard seed and the leaven before the interpretation of the tares and wheat. Once again brief parables follow the interpretation, concerning the pearl in the field and the net of fish. Each offers varying images of the kingdom of heaven—its unexpectedness, its challenges, its negative side, and its stupendous yields. However, let me focus on the agricultural parables: Apart from the brief parable of the mustard seed, the two key parables (indicated both by length and interpretations offered) are those of the sower and the tares. They are resolutely agricultural (of the growing variety) and are both cited by Lenin.

As for the interpretation (Matthew 13:36–43), despite the agreement by critics that it is an interpolation, it is part of the biblical tradition. Here, the parable takes an apocalyptic turn: The master becomes the "Son of man" (that curious self-designator of Jesus), the enemy becomes the devil (*diabolos*), the slaves become angels who gather the harvest at the close of the age, sending the tares to the "furnace of fire [*ten kaminon tou puros*]" and the wheat to the "kingdom of the Father." By and large, Lenin is uninterested in the apocalyptic tone of this interpretation, save for one crucial item: "the good seed [*to kalon sperma*] are the sons of the kingdom; the weeds [*ta zizania*] are the sons of the evil one" (Matthew 13:38). In lay terms: The weeds or tares, sown by the enemy, are one's opponents, while the wheat designates one's own, one's allies in the struggle. For Lenin, these opponents will become many over the years, including not merely the Zubatovs of the time of *WITBD*, or even the Narodniks, katheder-socialists (professorial Marxists), utopian socialists, Bernsteinians, but also the later Mensheviks, ultimatumists, otzovists, God-builders, liquidators, conciliators (under Trotsky), and varieties on that standard label of "opportunism," which Lenin defines as "sacrificing the long-term and permanent interests of the proletariat for flashy and temporary interests" (Lenin 1906e[2], 54/245).

Lenin's Interpretation

Lenin's interpretation of the parable is as follows:

> It is precisely our campaign of exposure that will help us separate the tares from the wheat. What the tares are, we have already indicated. By the wheat we mean attracting the attention of ever larger numbers, including the most backward sections, of the workers to social and political questions, and freeing ourselves, the revolutionaries, from functions that are essentially legal (the distribution of legal books, mutual aid, etc.), the development of which will inevitably provide us with an increasing quantity of material for agitation. In this sense, we may, and should, say to the Zubatovs and the Ozerovs[4]: Keep at it, gentlemen, do your best! Whenever you place a trap in the path of the workers (either by way of direct provocation, or by the "honest" demoralisation of the workers with the aid of "Struve-ism"), we will see to it that you are exposed. But whenever you take a real step forward, though it be the most "timid zigzag," we will say: Please continue! And the only step that can be a real step forward is a real, if small, extension of the workers' field of action. Every such step will be to our advantage and will help to hasten the advent of legal societies of the kind in which it will not be *agents provocateurs* who are detecting socialists, but socialists who are gaining adherents. In a word, our task is to fight the tares. It is not our business to grow wheat in flower-pots. By pulling up the tares, we clear the soil for the wheat. And while the Afanasy Ivanoviches and Pulkheria Ivanovnas[5] are tending their flower-pot crops, we must prepare the reapers, not only to cut down the tares of today, but to reap the wheat of tomorrow. (Lenin 1902p, 455–56/115–16)[6]

Immediately it becomes clear how Lenin's interpretation is close in spirit to the biblical parable and yet has its own twists.[7] The similarities first: the crucial issue is discernment, separating the tares from the wheat, the former appearing in

a negative register as one's opponents and the latter belonging to one's own side. Furthermore, the tares must be pulled up or cut down, so that it becomes clear who is part of the wheat. And the task falls to the "reapers," who come to scythe away the weeds for the sake of the wheat.

Now the creative engagement with the parable begins. Lenin's concern is not the minutiae of biblical commentary, attempting to locate the slippery and ultimately untraceable original "meaning" or "intention" of the parable (a task that has wasted the immense energies of generations of biblical scholars). No, Lenin is interested in direct application. We may call this Lenin's homiletical concern, which assumes that the parable speaks to our concerns today, that it has immediate relevance. The task of interpretation is then to show how the text does address our concerns.

In this light, the crucial issue in the context of his interpretation of the parable is the relation between legal and illegal political activities. Should the worker movements and trade unions be strictly legal and public, working within the existing frameworks to achieve small gains? Or should the communist movement also have an illegal core, a secret network that seeks to dismantle those very frameworks themselves? Contrary to the standard interpretations of Lenin, he argued for *both* legal *and* illegal forms, indeed for a dialectical relation between them (Lih 2008, 449; 2011, 100–10; Zinoviev 1973, 153–54).[8] He was not one who eschewed the legal work of trade unions and worker organizations in favor of a small cadre of revolutionary intellectuals; instead, the illegal organization would work closely with the legal forms, spreading the socialist message, organizing strikes (both economic and political), training radical and "purposive workers," ensuring that the legal organizations have a good number of underground members involved. The legal organizations thereby became the means for a widespread movement, for the opportunity to agitate at a level well beyond that of the illegal movement. This is the classic "merger" hypothesis first put forward by Kautsky in his *The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program)*, a text to which Lenin and other communists were committed at the time (Kautsky 1910).[9] In this light, the socialist movement involved a merger between socialists and workers, as well as between illegal and legal forms of organization. These are the wheat.

But who are the tares? In this text, they are the ones who argue for legal organizations *alone*. Here we find Zubatov and the legal unions under "police socialism," as well as Vasil'ev and the priests, and the professors Ozerov and Worms who supported these movements. Not only did they attempt to "spy out the 'fiery ones' " in the legal unions, but they also used those unions to "plant their *agents provocateurs* in the illegal organisations" (Lenin 1902p, 455/115). The Zubatov unions would soon pass as the workers saw through the attempt to divert revolutionary energy. Yet, in *WITBD*, a few other tares also appear. These include "economism," the position that workers should restrict themselves to purely economic gains (better pay, shorter hours, improved conditions) and leave political agitation to the bourgeoisie, that there is no need for the merger or fusion between workers and the revolutionary tradition since worker organizations (strike committees and legal organizations) were enough.[10] Put forward in the infamous *Credo* and *Profession de foi* (the titles are telling),[11] economism argued that the only

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realistic gains would be made within the existing framework of tsarist autocracy. By the time Lenin wrote *WITBD*, economism was a dead letter, widely disparaged among socialists. However, Lenin attempted to pin the label on two rival newspapers and their editors, *Rabochee Delo* (*The Workers' Cause*) and *Rabochaia Mysl'* (*The Workers' Thought*). Both were published by the Union of Social-Democrats Abroad, the former appearing irregularly, with 12 issues from 1899 to 1902 (published in Geneva and distributed in Russia), the latter in 16 issues from 1897 to 1902 (from Berlin and St. Petersburg). *Rabochaia Mysl'* may justly have been criticized as economist, but Lenin works overtime to pin the label on *Rabochee Delo*. As Lih points out, the editors of this paper were very close to the position of the group with which Lenin was involved, which expressed its positions in *Iskra* (*The Spark*). However, in the hothouse of the exiled Russian socialist movement, this struggle became a crucial one for ideological and organizational dominance in the fledgling Social-Democratic Party. Hence, Lenin attempts to discredit this tare, *Rabochee Delo*, by attributing to it an economist position. Lenin's effort at weeding out this tare was spectacularly successful, not merely because of *WITBD*, but also because *Iskra* produced more than 50 issues between 1900 and 1903, until the editorial board was dominated by Mensheviks with the fifty-second issue in 1903 (under Plekhanov's direction). Apart from the regular appearance of *Iskra* and its wide distribution (via the famous suitcases with false bottoms and even by collaborating with Lithuanian religious groups that were suppressed by the tsar), the secret to the paper's success was also the fact that it seemed to speak with one voice, the authors not putting their names to individual pieces, and that the editors together constituted the heavy intellectual and organizational artillery among the socialists. Apart from Lenin, it included G. V. Plekhanov (the grandfather of Russian communism), L. Martov, P. B. Axelrod, A. N. Potresov, and Vera I. Zasulich.

Thus, in *WITBD*, the tares may be the Zubatov unions, economism, and rival groups with their newspapers, while the wheat are those centered around *Iskra*. But let us return to the legal–illegal issue, for it had already appeared before the debates of *WITBD* in the form of "legal Marxism" and the illegal underground movement,[12] and it would not disappear from the socialist movement, becoming an even more burning issue after the 1905 revolution, when the Tsar gave significant ground and permitted the formation of limited parliaments through elections, the Dumas (there were five Dumas between the 1905 and the 1917 revolutions). Now the legal position became known as liquidationism—the argument that with some representative democracy and the recognition of the Social-Democratic Party (along with others on the Left such as the SRs and the Peasant parties), the need for an illegal organization had passed, indeed that a purely legal organization would achieve far more.[13] Between these years, and even after the February Revolution in 1917, Lenin and others waged a bitter battle against liquidationism until the Bolsheviks took power later in the year.

Yet, is this dialectic of legal and illegal organizations entirely foreign to the biblical parable? If we look at the context of the parable in Matthew 13, we find a constant refrain: Parables are for the inner circle of disciples, who are given the deeper meaning of the parables, while those outside do not see, hear, or understand (see

Matthew 13:10–17).[14] And then, Jesus quotes Psalm 78:2 (attributing it to "the prophet"): "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). The catch with the parables of course is that their meaning remained open-ended and a little unclear even to the disciples. The inner group itself struggled to understand, thereby becoming one with the outer, public (and thereby legal) group. Here too we find a dialectic between inner and outer, between legal and illegal (in Lenin's terms). Lenin seems to have captured this sense of the parable as well—or rather, the context in which he appropriated the parable made it relevant to his situation.

In light of this legal–illegal struggle, let me focus on another dimension of Lenin's interpretation of the parable of the tares. Note especially the following sentence: "It is not our business to grow wheat in flower-pots" (Lenin 1902p, 456/116). No longer do we have the field in which the seed is sown, but now a flowerpot. The pot becomes the constraint of the existing political and economic order. One must water the plants, may constrain their growth by the size of the pot, move the pot to another location, and the harvest will of course be quite small. This is all a solely legal organization may achieve. By contrast, an illegal organization wishes to smash the pot and open up the possibility of sowing wheat in the whole field. Here one will still find tares, but once they are cleared, the wheat harvest will be far, far greater. Again and again, Lenin uses the image of thirty, sixty, and hundredfold harvests, drawn now from the parable of the sower (Lenin 1902p, 472/132, 485/146; 1902d, 248/23; 1903q, 311–12/270–71).[15]

Two final items from Lenin's interpretation go beyond the Gospel parable: First, the timing of the weeding out of the tares may take place at various moments. No need to wait for the final harvest, for one may either pull up the tares first in order to "clear the soil for the wheat," tearing "the evil up by the roots," or one may "cut down the tares of today" in order to "reap the wheat of tomorrow" (Lenin 1902p, 456/116; 1905c, 56/113). A further option is that the tares may actually assist the growth of the wheat. In the middle of Lenin's text, he urges the legal unions to continue their work. Why? In the spirit of the need for a merger between legal and illegal organizations, he argues that the growth of the tares may actually assist the growth of the wheat, with the hint that some tares may turn out to be or indeed become wheat. Now we are back with the spirit of the biblical parable, for one waits for the final harvest in order to discern clearly which are the tares and which the wheat.

This engagement with the parable of the tares was not a passing moment for Lenin. Indeed, the importance of the parable of the tares in expressing a key element of his argument in *WITBD* may be illustrated by the fact that Lenin cites precisely this passage in later works to state the core of his argument. For example, in 1905, he writes:

> It was the Ninth of January that proved again and again the importance of the task formulated in that pamphlet: "...we must prepare reapers, both to cut down the tares of today (paralyse today's corrupting influence of the Zubatov movement) *and to reap the wheat of tomorrow*" (give a revolutionary lead to the movement that has advanced a step with the aid of legalisation). The Simple Simons of the new *Iskra*,

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> however, use the bountiful wheat harvest as a pretext for minimising the importance of a strong organisation of revolutionary reapers. (Lenin 1905q[3], 155–56/262)[16]

Metaphorical Tares

> Nothing facilitates an understanding of the political essence of developments as greatly as their evaluation by one's adversaries (that is, of course, unless the latter are hopelessly stupid). (Lenin 1905g[1], 60/117)[17]

This deployment by Lenin of the parable of the tares and the wheat indicates that it may be used to characterize the myriad splits and groups within the Russian socialist movement well beyond the immediate context of *WITBD*. The political issues may change over time, from tsarist repression through the period of the Dumas (1905–17) to the October Revolution and afterward, but Lenin is never short of opponents. I have already mentioned the Zubatovs, economists, and the later liquidators, along with the rival groups and their newspapers who are the specific targets of *WITBD*, but anyone who has read Lenin's works soon becomes familiar with a field so full of tares that one wonders whether any room is left for the wheat at all. It becomes clear that these tares grow in the socialist field, thereby excluding political opponents during the period of the Dumas: the right-wing Octobrists and Black Hundred did not even count as tares, nor did the liberal Cadets who represented the interests of the bourgeoisie.

For those less familiar with Lenin and the Russian Revolution, a full roll call of the tares includes the Narodniks (who are among the earliest Russian revolutionaries and who argued, under the influence of both Marx and utopian socialism, that the Russian village-commune—*mir* or *obshchina*—provided the basis for a step straight into communism without passing through capitalism)[18]; katheder-socialists (German professors—hence "katheder"—who argued that the bourgeois state was above class conflict and would gradually reconcile all classes, thereby introducing socialism without disrupting the capitalists); "legal" Marxism (which fostered katheder-socialism in Russia and was permitted by the tsarist authorities during the 1880s and 1890s due to legal Marxist criticism of Narodnaia Volia)[19]; "Bernsteinianism" (based on the works of Eduard Bernstein, who argued that socialism would be achieved peacefully through a capitalism that was not about to collapse, for as workers gradually won more rights, their grievances would abate, thereby removing the need for revolution—the connection with economism is obvious)[20]; later the liquidators (who argued for the cessation of illegal party work and the restriction to legal work alone)[21]; otzovists (who were focused on the journal *Vpered* and took the other path, pushing for only illegal work, withdrawing the Social-Democratic representatives from the Duma and ceasing involvement with legal organizations such as trade unions and cooperative societies); ultimatumists (otzovists with a twist, for they suggested an ultimatum be given to the Social-Democrats in the Duma and, should it not be met, the deputies should be recalled); God-builders (whom we will meet in the next chapter and who tended to be the same left-wing figures who supported the previous two positions)[22]; conciliators (led by Trotsky, they attempted to bring all the factions

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together, occasionally forming blocs against the Bolsheviks and thereby trying to bring them on side)[23]; and then during the First World War, social-chauvinism (socialists in word and chauvinists in deed, those who supported the war efforts of their respective states [Lenin 1917k[2], 75–76/170–71]); as well as revolutionary defencists (after the February Revolution, who continued to support Russia's involvement in the war) (Lenin 1917l[2], 21–22/113–14; 1917x[1], 162–63/261–62).

By far, the most significant tares were to gain prominence after *WITBD* was written—the SRs (formed in 1901–2 and drawing on the Narodnik tradition and espousing both individual terrorism and the abolition of private ownership of land, which would devolve onto the village-communes and cooperatives, in which labor would be egalitarian) and the Mensheviks (who, although they shared the basic ideals of the Bolsheviks, consciously took on the title of the "Minority" after the split at the second congress, even though they were often in the majority, since the title designated advanced thought and action, albeit in the hands of a select few who would direct the workers).[24] Both would—to draw on another biblical phrase—become thorns in the side of Lenin and the Bolsheviks well after the October Revolution, as the massive number of works devoted to them indicate. Variously comrades (at least the Menshevik-Internationalists and the Left SRs), members of a coalition government, vocal opponents in congresses, and collaborators with the Whites, the SRs had a strong base with the peasants (deriving from the Narodniks) and the Mensheviks maintained their influence in some centers.[25] Indeed, for the most part of 1917, both SRs and Mensheviks had the largest number of representatives in the crucial Petrograd Soviet, forming the basis of the all-important Central Committee. Yet, here we find a tension between what I want to call Lenin's sectarianism and his ecumenism, or the tension between whether the weeds will always remain weeds or whether they can turn into wheat. That is, we find a consistent pattern of vicious polemic, both theoretical and personal, and then a desire to work on a united front, complete vituperation combined with cooperation. Thus, the Mensheviks were nearly always present at the RSDLP congresses, arguing, debating, agreeing, and (at the famous Unity Congress) temporarily uniting with the Bolsheviks. Then, after the October Revolution, the government was formed by a coalition between Bolsheviks and Left SRs, until the latter unleashed a terror campaign in 1918. Furthermore, as Lunacharsky points out in his *Revolutionary Silhouettes* (Lunacharsky 1967), Lenin may have enthusiastically attacked him and others in print, but when it came to the practical tasks of revolutionary organization and—especially—the formation of a revolutionary government, Lenin worked closely with them (Lunacharsky was appointed Commissar of Enlightenment).[26]

How does one make sense of all these splits, breakaways, and conflicts? Lenin seeks to rationalize them in two ways. The first is to argue that they are all (or nearly all) connected by a blue thread. Beyond simple accusations of opportunism and the deceptive pursuit of bourgeois policies (both of which function like terms such as "heretic" in other situations), Lenin attempts to trace the way the initial split in Narodism, between revolutionary and moderate wings, is replicated in later forms of the socialist movement. His interest is primarily in the moderate wing, which then reappears in "legal" Marxism, economism, and at times the

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Bund, spiced with some Bernsteinian ideas. From there, it was but a short step to Menshevism, the liquidators (who often overlap with the former) and conciliators (via Trotsky).[27] Notably, the SRs gain a special mention as direct heirs of the Narodniks; so we find Lenin returning to his criticisms of the Narodniks when the SRs became the prime representatives of radical peasant demands. This narrative seemed justified in Lenin's eyes by the occasional blocs formed by later "tares," such as the Mensheviks, liquidators, otzovists, Bundists, and Trotskyites (Lenin 1914f, 1914b).

Second, Lenin suggests that they are all signs of the immaturity of the socialist movement, and that the splits and acrimonious debates are a necessary part of the process of theoretical and practical clarification. Concerning the latter, he repeatedly urges that all struggles take place openly, especially at party congresses, for these hard debates are necessary for the dialectical process of gaining clarity of direction (see especially Lenin 1904j, 44/4; 1903a, 19/5). As the epigraph to *WITBD* puts it clearly, quoting Lassalle, "Party struggles lend a party strength and vitality." On the first point, one cannot help being reminded of Engels's observations concerning the parallels between early Christianity and socialism. For Engels, both movements appealed to the oppressed classes; experienced false prophets who led people astray; suffered persecution, ostracism, conflict between ascetic self-denial and libertinage; hoped for a better world that inspired the struggle in the face of innumerable setbacks; and—the key for our purposes—suffered from incessant splits and bitter sectarian squabbles. As I have argued elsewhere, both Engels and Marx made such comparisons often, especially when dealing with opponents and sectarian tendencies. One finds comment after comment in this vein in their works on Weitling communists, Proudhonists, Blanquists, the German Workers' Party, and the Bakuninists.[28] As Marx put it succinctly, "In fact, every sect is religious" (Marx 1868b, 133; 1868c, 569). Yet, despite the liking that Marx and especially Engels had for such comparisons, a close search through the many occasions when Lenin cites them, even from texts such as *The Peasant War in Germany*, reveals a studied avoidance of religious connections (Lenin 1902p, 368–73/22–28; 1895b, 20–21/6–7; 1913x, 554–55/224–25; 1905l[1], 323–28/53–58; 1914s). For instance, Engels may have written,

> Incidentally, old man Hegel said long ago: A party proves itself victorious by *splitting* and being able to stand the split. The movement of the proletariat necessarily passes through different stages of development; at every stage part of the people get stuck and do not participate in the further advance; and this in itself is sufficient to explain why the "solidarity of the proletariat," in fact, everywhere takes the form of different party groupings, which carry on life-and-death feuds with one another, as the Christian sects in the Roman Empire did amidst the worst persecutions. (Engels 1873a, 514; 1873b, 591)

However, when Lenin discusses the "primitiveness" and amateurishness of the communist movement, even citing Engels on the matter, he carefully avoids the comparison with early Christianity (Lenin 1902p, 440–51/99–111).[29] So we find ourselves in a curious situation: Lenin refuses the comparison between socialist and early Christian sectarian struggles handed to him by Marx and Engels, and

yet he deploys key biblical parables to map precisely those struggles. One may interpret this situation in at least two, not necessarily unconnected, ways: Lenin creatively uses biblical texts themselves, moving beyond Marx and Engels, or he radicalizes their insight, especially when we realize that the New Testament was primarily the collated document of that early Christian movement.

Beyond Biblical Tares

Into the orbit of the parable of the tares and wheat, Lenin draws other parables, especially that of the sower, and also sayings of sowing, new shoots, and reaping (Matthew 6:26; 9:37–38; 13:31–32; 25:24; Mark 4:26–32; Luke 10:2; 12:24; 13:18–19; 19:21; John 4:31–38). The sower is of course the other major parable in Matthew 13 (with versions in Mark 4:3–20 and Luke 8:4–15), replete with an interpolated interpretation in an attempt to dispel the disciples' bewilderment. Lenin's references to the sower are more allusive, offering passing references to its key themes. He is occasionally interested in the seeds sown on thorny or rocky soil, or even on the pathway. Here, we find references to "rich harvests for the gendarmes," or to those who have "sown distrust towards the firm and steadfast leaders" (Lenin 1902p, 458/118, 462/122). However, the preferred soil is the fourth type in the parable, deep and rich, where the seed takes root and produces a harvest thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold more than the seed sown—images of extraordinary plenty for both the peasantry in the time of Jesus and at the turn of the twentieth century in Russia. During the revolutionary period of 1917, the soil was indeed receptive to the message of the Bolsheviks (Lenin 1917t[1], 59/309), finally providing the extraordinary yields that Lenin had foreseen earlier (Lenin 1902p, 472/132, 485/146; 1902d, 249/24; 1903q, 311–12/270–71).[30] The seed may not sprout immediately, but one should not worry, for the optimistic Lenin suggests that the "extremely virile shoots" are not uprooted, but rather hidden from the police and temporarily suppressed, their roots deep and strong in the good soil and waiting to shoot above the surface (Lenin 1902p, 461/121, 463–64/123–24, 487/148, 508/170–71). Eventually, the seed will shoot up, pushing up green sprouts from soil well fertilized by previous revolutions, if not by the worms of opposition; the grain will ripen and the harvest will be gathered in the revolution (Lenin 1907n[1], 102/101–2; 1906b[2], 219–22/291–94; 1906j[1], 485/174). Now the allusions begin to overlap with other parables of sowing, new shoots, and harvest, whether in terms of the harvesters being few for the harvest, reaping the fruits of what one sows, or sowing the seed and bearing the fruit of detailed organization of revolutionaries by trade, the spread of literature, and organization of strikes (both political and economic) (Lenin 1902p, 472/132; 1907u[1], 122/127; 1905o[2], 562/337; 1907q[1], 152/158; 1906j[1], 485/174; 1919m, 426–31/20–26). Above all, the seeds of revolution are growing: "*It has been sown*. It is growing. And it will bear its fruits—perhaps not tomorrow or the day after, but a little later; we cannot alter the objective conditions in which a new crisis is growing—but it will bear fruit" (Lenin 1908c[1], 288/292).

Other biblical parables appear with less-intensive engagement than either the parables of the tares or of the sower. One example is the parable of the good

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shepherd (John 10), which we may connect with that of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12–13; Luke 15:3–7; see also Matthew 12:11). In the former, the good shepherd knows his sheep by name, goes before them, and guards the sheepfold by night. By contrast, many are those who seek to mislead the sheep, steal into the sheepfold, and make off with a sheep or two. In the latter parable, the good shepherd is one who will risk life and limb to find one missing sheep, even if he has 99 left. He thinks not that 99 will be enough, but that each one counts.

Lenin gives that second parable his own sharp interpretive twist, which at a deeper level embodies the spirit of the parable's own radical point. Two moments in Lenin's texts are worthy of note, moments with a comparable succinctness to that of the biblical passages.

> At the start of his career he was a poor man, a liberal and even a democrat; towards the end of his career, he was a millionaire, a self-satisfied and brazen extoller of the bourgeoisie, who grovelled before every turn in the policies of the powers that be. Is this not typical of the *bulk* of the "educated" and "intellectual" members of so-called society? It is true, of course, that not all practice renegacy with such furious success as to become millionaires, but nine-tenths, perhaps ninety-nine out of a hundred practice the very same renegacy, *beginning* as radical students and *ending* up as holders of "cushy jobs" in some office or other, in some swindle or other. (Lenin 1912e, 274/43)

> If, out of a hundred persons who are subjected to that operation, one member of "society" grows hard, that will be a useful result. There will be nothing good without demarcation. (Lenin 1911m, 303/380)

The first instance is an astute piece of writing. Lenin begins with what appears to be a similar approach as the biblical parable: The lost sheep is the recalcitrant one, who has gone astray through its own willful indulgence. Thus, the intellectual may begin as a poor radical, whether liberal or democrat,[31] but eventually he becomes a self-satisfied millionaire who cravenly supports the powers that be. Initially, he seems to be the lost sheep. But then, the twist occurs: He actually represents the *bulk* (emphasis in original) of the intellectuals, or at least the educated members of "society." He is but one of many, like 9 out of 10 or 99 out of 100. They remain, unthinkingly, in the security of the sheepfold under the care of the "shepherd." The 99 percent are the renegades, the traitors, the careless ones who betray what radicalness they may have had for some cushy job or the mad pursuit of wealth.

The Gospel parable has been turned on its head, for the valorization of the 99 has been reversed. No longer do they remain quietly and anonymously in the background, for now they are the obnoxious, business-suited counterrevolutionaries. What of the sole, lost sheep? Its situation remains implicit in the first reworking of the biblical parable quoted earlier. Given that the 99 that remain are now renegades, the one sheep that runs away and becomes "lost" does so only from their perspective: He has moved outside the normal confines of acceptable conduct, of reputable political positions. With the second quotation, the implicit becomes explicit. The one sheep that appears "lost" is actually a toughened revolutionary.

In the context of oppressive economic conditions, autocratic government, and systemic police repression, if 1 out of 100 is radicalized, then that is a very useful outcome indeed. This sheep may be "lost" from the perspective of the 99, but from the side of the revolutionaries, he has come in from the cold and is no longer lost.

With this comprehensive rearrangement of the biblical parable's alignments, the focus has also shifted. Instead of a concern with the acts of the shepherd, who risks all—even the 99—for the sake of one who was lost, Lenin's concern is with that one sheep-cum-revolutionary that has broken ranks. All of which leaves a question begging: What has happened to the shepherd? In light of the church's appropriation of the terminology of sheep-farming, in which priests become the "pastors" and the congregation the sheep, in light of the landlords' deployment of the terminology of shepherds and sheep to describe their relations with peasants, and in light of the control of the early soviets after the February Revolution of 1917 by Mensheviks and SRs, Lenin is scathing. These "shepherds" are all evil, for their only interest is to "shear" the sheep, to lead these poor "talking sheep" to "slaughter." However, it will not always be so, retorts Lenin; the sheep will not forever dumbly line up to be ripped off, for they are becoming politically conscious (Lenin 1907l, 268/128; 1917v^1, 192/17; 1917c, 224/49).[32]

Lenin is not done with this complex parable from John, where we find the key statement: "So Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep'" (John 10:7). In an earlier piece from 1903, Lenin elaborates on the image of the door, constructing his own parable with a revolutionary bent (Lenin 1903t, 418–19/189–91). Once again, he speaks of the peasants, focusing on the demand from the Social-Democrats for peasant committees that would restrict bondage and restore cutoff lands appropriated by the landlords. This demand is, however, not the final word, not a barrier, but a door through which all peasants must pass to full emancipation. Now the door takes on multiple senses: It may be the existing order that needs to be smashed, the threshold to revolution, if not that revolution itself. Like the entrance to the sheepfold, that door is a passage to full rights and real liberty. No longer should only peasants pass through it, for they are the first among many, which includes workers. The problem is that some cannot see the door (Narodniks and SRs); so all their strivings for socialism are blind—in contrast to the Social-Democrats, who "point so insistently to this first and nearest door" (Lenin 1903t, 419/190). In a fashion that will become familiar when I discuss Lenin's own parables, the key image has transmuted once again. It has become multiple, the first of many doors through which peasants and workers will need to pass on the road to socialism. However, the shepherd too has changed roles, for he is no longer a guard at the door, if not the door itself. Instead, the Social-Democrats have become shepherds, identifying the door through which the sheep must pass. And the sheepfold on the other side of the door(s) has become socialism.[33]

Arguably, this interpretation, if not appropriation and development, is even more creative than the first parable I considered earlier (the tares and wheat), for now Lenin has used it as a basis for his own creative act. The remaining parables appear briefly, a citation perhaps or an allusion, but they show the spread

of Lenin's biblical engagement. Close in spirit to the lost sheep are the "prodigal sons of 'society'," that is the Menshevik representatives in the Duma, who have split from the Bolsheviks and whom the bourgeois press now expects to return to their own benches, having been emancipated "from 'revolutionary illusions' " (Lenin 1907i², 456/274). Or Lenin may cite items from parables or stories closely related to those of seed and sheep, such as the crumbs under the table in the story of the Syro-Phoenician Woman (Mark 7:24–30; she is the Canaanite women in Matthew 15:21–28), now attributed to the students who have "crumbs of the socialist ideas," fed as they are on scraps of knowledge (Lenin 1902p, 462/122); or in stark contrast to that meager diet he may refer to the Great Banquet of Luke 14, to which all the homeless, starving, oppressed, from the highways and the byways, are invited: "They [the committees] will consist of peasants, paupers, intellectuals, prostitutes (a worker recently asked us in a letter why not carry on agitation among the prostitutes), soldiers, teachers, workers . . . we must attract to it, enlighten, and organize all who labor and are exploited, as stated in our programme—all without exception: handicraftsmen, paupers, beggars, servants, tramps, prostitutes" (Lenin 1905x², 237–38/223).

The remaining references move away from the agricultural focus of those I have discussed thus far, but they are equally as earthy and quotidian, such as the contrast between the wide and easy way over against the narrow gate and the hard way of Matthew 7:13–14. The easy way becomes the bourgeois-democratic revolution of Germany, which was soon crushed (despite some provisional revolutionary governments) and saw power restored to the Prussian emperor, or it becomes the French Revolution of 1789, in which workers and peasants led for a time, resulting in the republic and a new form of freedom (Lenin 1905s³, 241–42/226–27). Yet, this second road is difficult and requires perseverance, for one may be waylaid by the bourgeoisie (as in France):

> Don't let the "unusual" appearance of this road frighten you, don't be put out by the fact that in many places you will find no beaten track at all, and that you will have to crawl along the edges of precipices, break your way through thickets, and leap across chasms. Don't complain of the poor road: these complaints will be futile whining, for you should have known in advance that you would be moving, not along a highway that has been graded and levelled by all the forces of social progress, but along paths through out-of-the-way places and back-alleys which do have a way out, but from which you, we or anyone else will never find a direct, simple, and easy way out. (Lenin 1902a, 126–27/325)[34]

From Parables to Sayings . . .

Is this all Lenin has to say concerning the Bible? By no means, for the earthy parables of Jesus are but a gate into the biblical text. To be sure, the material I have discussed comprises his most intense engagements, but the gate now swings wide open to reveal a significant breadth and consistency in biblical references. The vast bulk of these citations are to sayings, especially those of Jesus in the Gospels, but they spread well beyond the Gospels to the rest of the Bible. Again, one may argue that these biblical sayings were part of the linguistic framework

within which people lived, having entered Russian (or indeed any other Christian culture) as "old proverbs." Yet again, I am interested in the specific sayings Lenin cites, how he uses them and their context.

Some are clear favorites, such as the designation of opponents, no matter whom, as "philistines." As Lih points out, Russian has a rich vocabulary of abuse, among which *filisterstvo* is but the most prominent (Lih 2011, 15). Others include *obyvatel'shchina*, *meshchantsvo*, and *poshlost'*, all of which were regularly thrown at those who did not share Lenin's optimistic and even heroic view of socialism and the potential of the Social-Democratic Party. Among hundreds, if not thousands of references to the "philistines," one captures its sense better than all the others:

> Do you remember the German definition of a philistine?
> Was is der philister?
> Ein hohler Darm,
> Voll Furcht und Hoffnung,
> Dass Gott erbarm
> [What is a philistine?
> A hollow gut,
> full of fear and of hope
> in God's mercy (Goethe)]
>
> This definition does not quite apply to our affairs. God . . . God takes a back seat with us. But the authorities . . . that's a different matter. And if we substitute the word "authorities" for the word "God" we shall get an exact description of the ideological stock-in-trade, the moral level and the civic courage of the Russian humane and liberal "friends of the people." (Lenin 1894b, 262/269–70)[35]

No matter that the biblical Philistines were quite different from the bad press that they have received, for they were decidedly more cultured than the barbarian Israelites. Given the shaping role of the dominant ideologies of the biblical text, the Philistines have become (in Lenin's references as well) the exemplars of backwardness, ignorance, and timidity, fearful of any bold advance or new direction. Similarly, the Pharisees have suffered in traditional usage. These down-to-earth priests among the people, who shared their depredations, wants, and hopes,[36] have become—through the New Testament's polemical representations—the paradigms of haughty legalism and hypocrisy. And as a profound hater of hypocrisy, Lenin is quick to pounce on any sign in his opponents, who may as well, like the biblical Pharisees, lift their eyes to heaven and pray: "I thank thee Lord that I am not as one of those 'extremists'! I am not a revolutionary; I shall be able to adjust myself most obediently and abjectly to any measures" (Lenin 1906d, 415/229).[37] The biblical texts are Luke 18:9–14 and Matthew 6:5–13 (see also Luke 11:1–4), when Jesus provides guidelines on how one should pray. Do not act like those Pharisees, says Jesus, those who ostensibly pray in public, lifting their eyes to heaven and thanking God that they are not like other people, thieves, rogues, adulterers, or tax collectors. Instead, find a quiet space and pray so that no one can see you. He then offers them the prayer that has become known as "The Lord's Prayer."

Jostling for the biblical space in Lenin's text, alongside Philistines and Pharisees, is perhaps Lenin's favorite biblical character, Judas Iscariot. It may be the treacherous

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Judas himself, the name attached to many enemies, from right-wing politicians through bourgeois Duma representatives and liquidators to Trotsky himself, all of whom are guilty of "Judas policies" or "Judas kisses" (Lenin 1914k[1], 309/167; 1914e, 471/337; 1918p, 245/254, 276/287). Most of all, Lenin has a distinct liking for Jesus's words to Judas (John 13:27) at the moment when Jesus hands him a piece of bread dipped in a dish at the Last Supper, "That thou doest, do thou quickly" (Lenin 1906j[1], 488–89/177–78; 1906a, 499/84; 1906d[2], 38–39/228–29; 1905n[2], 528/300; see also Lenin 1902n, 79/275; 1907i, 342–44/213–15; 1906b[2], 215/288; 1906j, 252/49–50; 1911h, 45/96; 1901c 237/284; 1901a, 406/420). Here we stumble across a double-layered allusion, for at times Lenin refers to Judas Golovyov, the nickname of Porphyry Golovyov in M. Saltykov-Shchedrin's novel *The Golovyov Family*. A sanctimonious and hypocritical landowner, this Judas continually betrays the serfs under his control (Lenin 1902j, 252/35; 1907m[1], 481/457; 1914l, 335/193; 1922g, 205/416). With "Judas" as the sole name, the allusion invokes both the novel and the Gospels, but even with the surname, Golovyov, the invocation winds its way back to the biblical text, thereby transporting yet another character into Lenin's own works.

An already crowded text is about to become full to overflowing, for Lenin also cites an almost endless string of biblical sayings. The references are almost always to revolutionary activity: Oppression, police tyranny, and the inquisitorial persecution of religious sects might be so great that even "the very stones cry out." In order to gain a sense of Lenin's engagement with the Bible, I offer a creative reconstruction in order to highlight those references and allusions. You the bourgeoisie, says Lenin, may appear as a "wolf in sheep's clothing,"[38] while the poor serfs, before the abolition of feudal dependency in 1861, were nothing better than "baptised chattels." And should anyone give even a widow's mite to the magnates, then that would entail entering "into a *new dependence* on big capital." Betrayal of the workers and peasants is like sending one from "Pontius to Pilate." As for the fateful Narodnik effort of the nineteenth century to "go the villages," they remind me, says Lenin, of Jesus in his hometown: "they came unto their own, and their own received them not." After all, "There is truth, it seems, in the saying that 'a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country'." In the final analysis, however, all the efforts of our opponents are "built on sand," they are the "root of all evil," are nothing better than "whited sepulchres," and they are on "the road to hell," where there is weeping and "gnashing of teeth."[39]

Yet, these myriad biblical allusions do not come out of the blue, for Lenin enters into a realm of public political debate that is saturated with the Bible. The signal of such a context is manifested in the way he turns the favored sayings of his opponents against them. You (the hypocritical Cadets) may say, "Love one another," while the government of which you are a part may try to hoodwink the workers by suggesting they exhibit "Christian love" to their bosses, since those bosses show nothing but such love to their employees. Meanwhile, "Holy" Russia's "Christian soldiers" are fighting yet another unpopular war, while you members of the severely restricted third Duma claim to make "even the blind see," claiming to be the "alpha and omega." You may complain that you are becoming "weary carrying" your "cross," or, perhaps like Jesus on the cross, you may "cry with a loud

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voice." Even more, all you liberal government officials, bourgeois intellectuals, bored rentiers, and similarly haughty, self-satisfied, and idle members of the public fancy yourselves "the salt of the earth." Throughout it all, you fear revolution, says Lenin, seeking to "wash your hands" of it and counseling that he "who raises the sword shall perish by the sword."[40]

As for you fellow revolutionaries, may I give you some warnings and advice? You may feel as though you are like the "Madonna on the clouds," "holy instruments" of the will of God, swearing and invoking the name of God. You may tell each other to "cast out the beam out of thine own eye, friend," or advise "physician, heal thyself," or "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," or seek bread instead of stone, or send missives that resemble the letters to the seven churches in Revelation. Long were "the days when we sinned a great deal," for which we were crucified and exiled. But I warn you not to miss the spirit of the law by adhering to its letter, not to put new patches on old garments or new wine into old bottles, not to shake the dust off your feet against a comrade, not to wash your hands of the struggle at hand. When the time comes (such as during the arrests of the Bolsheviks during July 1917), our wayward comrades among the Mensheviks and SRs will either find that the cock has crowed thrice or begin to see the truth—"Now the blind will see and the stones will speak." And one should never, ever take either the name of Marx or the RSDLP "in vain." Nor should one dismiss some of the more provocative elements of their thought (such as the nature of a proletarian democracy), treating them like the primitive naïveté of early Christians, which they lost when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire. Many are the traps for our revolutionaries: Stumbling blocks and false prophets may arise, promising the "blessed time" if workers would only have patience, and one needs to be careful to merge with the workers rather than offer the socialist message to those who would refuse it, which would be to cast "pearls before . . . " We may often feel like "a voice crying the wilderness," but I warn you not to be fainthearted, "of little faith" or even apostasy, not to pray, as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Away, away! Let this cup of revolutionary-democratic dictatorship pass from me!"[41]

Not all is so grim, despite the long years of counterrevolution and repression, for even in these times, when our "daily bread" was false-bottomed suitcases for distributing party literature, and especially during the upsurges to the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, I am irrepressibly optimistic. Let us be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves! Thus, the revolution will strengthen the need for a clear partisan approach to the truth, not showing even a mite of Christ's mercy to those who deviate, for the one "who is not for revolution" is against us. Indeed, "outside of socialism or Soviet power there is no deliverance" or salvation, for the "only way to save mankind" from the yoke of capital and endow it "with the blessings of peace," to inaugurate "the reign of peace, the reign of the working people," is through a communist revolution. "By this sign shall ye conquer." Our opponents may say, "Lenin! His name is Legion" (Mark 5:9), but that is only because what we say expresses the interest of the proletariat and all the exploited. You revolutionaries—who were actually called "disciples" in the 1890s—will have greater expectations placed upon you, since you are "people to

whom much is given and of whom much is required." And remember, especially during tough times before or after the revolution, that "he who will not work, will have to go without food."[42] But the rewards are beyond expectation, for the very coordinates of life will be changed: "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." Let me urge you activists not to hide your "light under a bushel," so that others may learn from your example, for even by a small "sign shall ye conquer." In this way, like the wedding banquet, all may come and join our party, "all who labour and are exploited," whether "handicraftsmen, paupers, beggars, servants, tramps, prostitutes." Or, to borrow a comment from the peasants with the advent of electricity: "We peasants were unenlightened and now light has appeared among us, an 'unnatural light, which will light up our peasant darkness'." Remember that victory belongs to those who have faith in the people, those who are immersed in the "life-giving spring" of popular creativity. And for those who "have eyes to see and ears to hear," the call may come at any moment: "Lead us whither you have called us!" Woe to those taken unawares by the moment, for then will the wheat be separated from the chaff. Despite all the setbacks and disappointments, we need to take inspiration from the revolution of 1905 in which the "old Adam" was cast out. At the crucial revolutionary moment, it is simply a case, as Jesus says in Matthew 7:7 (also Luke 11:9), of "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," for the work of political agitation is never wasted, ultimately leading to a resurrection of vigorous revolutionary activity, if not insurrection itself.[43]

Above all, let me gloss the "great commission" of Matthew 28:18–20, when the risen Jesus urges his followers to go into all the world. "Go among the people!" Go to all classes of the population, as theoreticians, as propagandists, as agitators, and as organizers. It may be a long struggle, the bond between workers and peasants may take time, but that "is a great cause, and to that cause it is worth devoting one's whole life" (Lenin 1905i^2, 36/90–91; 1902p, 425/82–83; 1903t, 411/183).

...To the Hebrew Bible

Now we step back in terms of the biblical narrative, for although Lenin preferred the New Testament, especially the Gospels, he was not averse to plundering the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), when it suited him. In order to gain an impression of the way these biblical allusions are woven into his text, let me once again offer an account, a collage, which captures Lenin's usage.

You opponents, he declares, may compare the "the labour of the children of modern peasants to Ruth's gleanings," but that is to offer "honeyed words" in the blatant defense of economic oppression, a defense of the "Holy of Holies of huckstering," a "small fig-leaf" that actually maintains the autocracy. If anyone challenges you, even the moderate liberals, you accuse them of behaving like Moses, faces glowing with righteousness. Yet, when strikes and unrest and civil war continue, you vacillate, deceptively offering the promised land, "flowing with milk and honey," or collapsing like a "giant with feet of clay," or heaping ashes on someone's else's head and asking them to wear sackcloth. Or you threaten that "some new Egyptian plague must be expected." Indeed, my opponents within the

Social-Democratic Party say the same thing, suggesting that I myself may suffer "an Egyptian plague" when I have to front up to an argument with someone like Martynov of the new *Iskra* editorial board. But be warned: They who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind![44]

Speaking directly to those opportunists, who may have studied the "hind-parts" of historical materialism, Lenin says: You may pretend to be the spark (*Iskra*) that sets alight the "burning bush, burning without being consumed," yet you fire up no one![45] And if we include *Rabochee Delo* and the liquidators, you may act like a "wrathful Job," full of thunder and lightning, trying to chastise us "with scorpions," accusing us of being "stiff-necked" when we argue clearly and forthrightly, of setting up our program "against the movement like a spirit hovering over the formless chaos" when we argue for the crucial role of organization and the raising of worker consciousness. Or you act like a lot of wise Solomons, condescendingly suggesting to purposeful workers that they should become not so much lions among lambs, but lambs among lions, indeed (to extend the metaphor) that the "capitalist wolf" will "lie down with the lambs." After all, as the sage in Ecclesiastes once said, "Everything in good season." You labor "in the sweat of your brow," promising that after you the Deluge will come, that the walls of Jericho will fall, that "paradise on earth" will come, but you will soon find that the fig leaves will be ripped off, that you are actually nursing a "viper in the bosom." In all your huffing and puffing, you are merely "throwing laboured phrases to the wind." As the old Russian proverb would have it: "God save us from our friends, from our enemies we shall save ourselves."[46]

True enough, our own movement has gone through a long "nomad period," wandering in the wilderness like the Israelites, and we have offered lamentations for the "tactlessness and self-assurance of revolutionaries in harassing the government." But we will not let up on our critiques of oppression, of a corrupt autocracy, or of the Dumas, and we will never "defile our lips" by combining "long live" with "government." Instead, we uphold the "first commandment" that any trade union movement or socialist party should rely solely on the strength of its own class, for "green is the tree of eternal life." Moreover, we know that (contrary to Jeremiah 18), "it is not the gods who make pots," for it is we who will make the revolution—although we will not make a "Shibboleth" of revolution. And we remain faithful to the "first *profession de foi* of world socialism, the *Communist Manifesto*," written by those "two scholars and fighters," Marx and Engels, whose relationship to each other was like that of David and Jonathan, even surpassing the "most moving stories of the ancients about human friendships." "Gird up your loins, we are still full of fight." For the key is, as Joshua said to the Israelites, to choose:

> For revolution or for counter-revolution? for freedom or against freedom? He who would be a true democrat must fight, he must break with the grovellers and traitors, he must create an honest party that will have respect for itself and for its convictions, he must take his stand firmly and irrevocably on the side of the armed uprising.[47]

Or in Latin: *Aut-aut. Tertium non datur* (Lenin 1921l, 324/383).

From Bricklayers to Yard Cleaning: Lenin's Parables

By no means content to restrict himself to creative interpretations and homiletical applications of biblical parables, or indeed the myriad allusions to biblical texts, Lenin sets about creating many of his own parables. They may be constructed from a common saying,[48] or developed from Russian literature,[49] or they may be purely Lenin's own creation, but they are all marked by a distinct earthiness, an ability to communicate in a way that spoke at an everyday level to all. I have already explored Lenin's imaginative development of the image of the door from John 10, but now I examine his love of writing parables of his own.

For the sake of completeness, let me begin by listing all of Lenin's own parables that I have been able to locate. In light of the large numbers of Lenin's parables, I organize them in categories, a deceptively simple yet painstaking process that has not been undertaken thus far:

1. Relationship parables:
   Love Affair, Sweetheart, Married Woman, Family Quarrel.
2. High culture:
   Metaphysical Philosopher, Orchestra (twice), Painting, Museum.
3. Hypocrisy:
   Slave-owner, People from Another World.
4. Diseased bodies:
   Hand, Bandages, Abscesses (four times), Malignant Disease (five times), Canker, Blisters and Pus, The Putrid Ulcer (thrice), The Staggering Wounded, Small Cut (twice), Rotting Alive (eight times), Vile-Smelling Corpse, Worms and Resurrection.
5. Rural life, with a focus on animals:
   Lion and Prey, Lion, Bear, Bear Skin, Swan, Crab and Pike, Chicken Coop, Fox and Hen Coop, Hen and Ducklings, Sated Beast, Locomotive and Dray Horse (twice), Bird in Snare, Horse and Oats, Wolves and Sheep (twice), Waters, Earth and Whale, Two Chickens in a Shell of Steel, Geese, Hens and Eagles, Fish in Muddy Waters, Shearing Sheep, Lost Sheep.
6. Everyday realities of peasants and rural workers:
   Chains and Flowers (twice, borrowing from Marx), Cleaning the Yard, Spitting in the Well, Moss and Stone, Door, Prison, Broken Pot (twice), Wall, Cloth, Mud, Mud and Fog, Catching a Fly (twice), Stinking Sewer, Awakening, Crust of Bread, Good Bread, Kneading Bread, Fresh Breeze, Torturer, Mustard, Unripe Apple, Bit of String, Cards on the Table, Root of Things, Lottery, Soiled Shirt, Old Woman Collecting Firewood (twice), Tumbler, Climbing a High Mountain, Sowing and Reaping, Good Shepherd.
7. Everyday lives of industrial laborers:
   Bricklayer, Bricks, Scaffolding, Blacksmith, Ladder (twice), Cog and Screw, Transmission Belt, Cargo and Flag, Chain and Its Weakest Link, Two Evictions, (Imperial) Machine, Science Course.
8. Revolutionary parables, although many of the preceding also have this message at an implicit level:
   a. Transport: Locomotive (four times), Locomotive and Dray Horse (twice), Train and Wheelbarrow, Train Changing Its Tracks, German Express Train, Deadly

Locomotive, Cart, Cart in the Ditch, Automobile and the Bandits (twice), Coachman and Horses, Easy and Hard Ways.

b. Conflagrations: Forest Fire, Mass of Sparks, Fanning the Flames, Spark and Flame.
c. Storms: Gale, Torrent (twice), Whirlwind (four times), Fresh Breeze, Storm and Chasm (part of the Chicken Coop parable), Barometer and Storm (thrice), Tide.
d. Warfare: Army, Battle for the Forts, War and Forestry, Man on Crutches, Conqueror and Conquered.[50]

Lenin obviously has relatively little interest in matters of high culture, relationships, or even hypocrisy. As is clear from the way I have organized this collection, the vast bulk of the parables focus on rural life, whether of animals, peasants, or rural laborers, on the everyday life of industrial workers, and on various approaches to revolution. The last theme is to be expected, but the weight of parables given over to rural, peasant affairs may not have been expected. Before I proceed, a preliminary question: What, exactly, is a parable? The shortest answer is the best: A parable is a story with an arresting point (*punctum*). It matters little how long or short it may be, running from an involved story to a brief saying. Yet, a parable is not a moral, fable, or allegory, although it may overlap at times with such genres. It makes a sharp and often unexpected point that overturns listeners' and readers' expectations. In the paradigmatic Gospel parables, this *punctum* is usually political and theological at the very same time (Herzog 1994; Crossan 2012). Lenin's enthusiastic deployment of the parable genre is of the same ilk. In order to illustrate that usage, I focus on four parables out of the massive collection gathered, arranged, and presented earlier. They are among the better instances, showing Lenin at his best (against an occasional tendency to overdo his point, like a terrier with its quarry). One concerns party organization, another draws attention to current oppressive conditions, and two address revolution: the Bricklayer, the Lottery, the Transmission Belt, and Cleaning the Yard.

The first of these parables, the Bricklayer, comes from *WITBD*, toward the close of the final chapter on the need to establish a national Social-Democratic newspaper. "Pray tell me, when bricklayers lay bricks in various parts of an enormous, unprecedentedly large structure, is it 'paper' work to use a line to help them find the correct place for the bricklaying; to indicate to them the ultimate goal of the common work; to enable them to use, not only every brick, but even every piece of brick which, cemented to the bricks laid before and after it, forms a finished, continuous line?" Of course, the key is who places the line, for if it is wayward, the bricks themselves will be crooked, threatening to fall. So we need a line that is true, that can guide the bricklayers. In an ideal situation, the bricklayers would be old hands who know how to work together, having become so practised that they can lay the bricks without a guideline. But that is not the case now, for without experienced bricklayers "bricks are often laid where they are not needed at all . . . they are not laid according to the general line, but are so scattered that the enemy can shatter the structure as if it were made of sand and not of bricks."

And if you think that is hard enough, spare a thought for the countryside, where scarcely a bricklayer is to be found, let alone an experienced one (Lenin 1902p, 501–2/163–64, 505/167).

The *punctum* here is an arresting image of the guideline: You may think a newspaper is a trifling business, a distraction from the main revolutionary task. On the contrary, the party newspaper is precisely that core activity which will unite us and give us a clearer, common purpose. One may argue that this example is merely an extended simile, in which the bricklayer's line is like the proposed newspaper, or perhaps an allegory and less so a parable. But a parable often picks up a simile and constructs a story around it. It may also open itself up to allegorical interpretation (the Gospel authors were constantly tempted to turn parables into allegories). Yet, a parable typically refuses to offer such an interpretation, for that is left to the hearers or readers. In this case, one may read the guideline as the newspaper putting forth the socialist narrative, the bricks as workers, peasants, or members of the Social-Democrats, and the experienced bricklayer as that crucial "purposive worker" who has studied and become enthused with socialist theory and practice, ready to offer leadership to other workers and peasants. Nonetheless, Lenin does not offer such an interpretation; he leaves it up to the reader.

So also with the Lottery, a parable from a piece from 1903, "To the Rural Poor," which is a text saturated with biblical imagery. Now our concern is peasant life and vain promises for relieving rural oppression. Once again we have a self-contained story, introduced by a comparison: Those who extol small-scale farming (Narodniks and others) actually deceive the peasant in the same way that people are deceived by a lottery. How?

> Let us suppose I have a cow, worth 50 rubles. I want to sell the cow by means of a lottery, so I offer everyone tickets at a ruble each. Everyone has a chance of getting the cow for one ruble! People are tempted and the rubles pour in. When I have collected a hundred rubles I proceed to draw the lottery: the one whose ticket is drawn gets the cow for a ruble, the others get nothing. Was the cow "cheap" for the people? No, it was very dear, because the total money they paid was double the value of the cow, because two persons (the one who ran the lottery and the one who won the cow) gained without doing any work, and gained at the expense of the ninety-nine who lost their money. Thus, those who say that lotteries are advantageous to the people are simply practising deceit on the people. (Lenin 1903t, 393/163)

The unexpected twist of this parable is that what looks like an easy way to gain a cow is in fact far more disadvantageous than not having a lottery at all. The very content of the parable is economic without being pedantic, making its point in a way that is beyond dry theory. But the relevance for everyday life among the peasants is inescapable: Landlords squeeze labor and rents from us, our land keeps decreasing in size, and even with the supposed ending of serfdom in 1861, the landlords have used it to make life worse, blocking us off from vital sources of water, fuel, arable land, and good grazing. We are on the road to the ruin; indeed, many of us have already been ruined. Yet, that is better than a quick fix! On this

occasion, Lenin does go on to offer his interpretation, in which the single winner of the lottery becomes a middle peasant who becomes rich, while the 99 (note the biblical allusion to the parable of the 99 sheep) remaining peasants are worse off, for now they are all poorer by one valuable ruble. Where there is one winner, all the rest are losers, for the "poor would only be impoverished all the more!" (Lenin 1903t, 393–94/164). But does Lenin really need to offer this interpretation? I would suggest not, for the punch lies in the parable itself.

Thus far, I have explored one parable concerning the impossible conditions of everyday life and one on party organization. The remaining two focus on the process of revolution. Thus, in the brief parable of the Transmission Belt, the mass of people below becomes the big wheel that is driving the little wheel of the government. Thereby, the task of the moment "must be directed towards strengthening the transmission belt which connects the big wheel that has begun to revolve energetically down below with the little wheel up above" (Lenin 1907j[1], 155/22). A more extensive and pointed revolutionary parable is that of Cleaning the Yard, which shifts from the industrial location of the former to the countryside:

> Imagine, gentlemen, that I have to remove two heaps of rubbish from my yard. I have only one cart. And no more than one heap can be removed on one cart. What should I do? Should I refuse altogether to clean out my yard on the grounds that it would be the greatest injustice to remove one heap of rubbish because they cannot both be removed at the same time?
>
> I permit myself to believe that anyone who *really* wants to clean out his yard *completely*, who sincerely strives for cleanliness and not for dirt, for light and not for darkness, will have a different argument. If we really cannot remove both heaps at the same time, let us first remove the one that can be got at and loaded on to the cart immediately, and then empty the cart, return home and set to work on the other heap. (Lenin 1907l, 282/142–43)

A simple parable from everyday life, is it not, with an obvious solution? It is also the most open of the parables thus far. The cart and labor of the peasant are reasonably obvious, but two heaps of rubbish? What are they? Are the heaps landed proprietorship and capitalist exploitation, both of which worked in reasonable synergy in Russia? Here Lenin comes to our aid and opts for this interpretation, but perhaps he has moved too quickly, for that forecloses other possibilities for the parable's interpretation. The parable spins out of the interpreter's control, conjuring up all manner of heaps of rubbish: the Duma and the tsar? Perhaps, because Lenin is replying to the "People's Freedom" (Cadet) party in the Duma, which complains of all manner of rubbish but shies away from a revolutionary solution. The traditional family and the church? Once again, these "pillars" of society could well do with some cleaning out. Or the oppression of the "baba," a traditional picture of female ignorance, illiteracy, and exclusion from public life, and the male worker? Or repressed nationalities and languages? Or the persecution of religious sects and native peoples? Or colonialism and bourgeois "liberty"? The heaps are almost endless, multiplying one upon the other, so the grunt work of revolution becomes both harder and more necessary.

The immediate issue for the parable is how one should go about removing these heaps, whether all together or one at a time. The answer is almost banal in its practical solution: If you cannot remove both (or more) heaps with the cart, remove one first and then return for the other(s). More significant, however, is the question opened up the sentence: "I permit myself to believe that anyone who *really* wants to clean out his yard *completely*, who sincerely strives for cleanliness and not for dirt, for light and not for darkness, will have a different argument." The issue is how determined we are in insisting on real freedom to change the very conditions of our existence, to opt for revolution rather than remain constrained by formal freedom, but that is the topic of another chapter.

Conclusion

Jesus, disciples, sower, harvester, Syro-Phoenician woman, travelers on the road, guests at the wedding banquet, shepherds, sheep, Philistines, Pharisees, Judas Iscariot, Moses, Ruth, Solomon, and above all the common people—Lenin's texts are full to overflowing with biblical characters, parables, stories, and sayings, let alone his own parables. At odd moments, he finds this biblical register a "strange, a preposterous terminology" (Lenin 1908a, 130/132)[51] when he encountered such a register in others (here Feuerbach), but it does not seem to have stopped its systematic usage in his own works. Yet, a few questions remain.

Why the Bible?

> Shit is the soul of agriculture. (Lenin 1907c, 182/233)

To begin with, how might we understand Lenin's widespread deployment of the Bible? He cites freely from his favored Gospels and then from elsewhere in most of the Bible. At one level, this extensive pattern of citation may be attributed to education, or part of a general cultural awareness in which the Bible was a key cultural artifact. If so, then the Bible is on par with the continual references to literature, particularly Russian literature. The fact that he occasionally weaves in such references to his interpretation of biblical texts strengthens this impression. For instance, in his interpretation of the parable of the tares and the wheat, we find that he also refers to Gogol's short story, "The Old World Landowners," where Pulkheria Ivanovna tends her flowerpots to the exclusion of any other concern (Lenin 1902p, 455–56/116; Gogol 1835, 129–50). Furthermore, as we saw, some of Lenin's own parables are constructed from this literature, such as Ivan Krylov's "Lion's Share" and "The Swan, the Pike and the Crab," as well as Chekhov's "The Sweetheart" (Lenin 1897e, 313/312; 1905y^2, 416/281; Krylov 2010, 25–26, 105–6).[52] Beyond this close interleaving of Bible and Russian literature, he also liberally sprinkles his text with references to "the man in the muffler" (or "the man in a case"), a man lacking all initiative and creative thinking from Chekhov's story of the same name, or to Gogol's *Dead Souls*, or to Saltykov-Shchedrin's *History of a Town* and *The Golovlyov Family*, to Goethe's *Faust* and so on (Lenin 1907a, 22/8;

1907q[1], 152/158; 1907b, 333/312–13; 1905r[2], 65/122; 1904a, 196/180; 1904k, 500/81; 1917l[1], 45/134; Gogol 1842; Saltykov-Shchedrin 1876, 2000; Goethe 2000).[53]

While some truth may be found in this position, it does not get us very far. We need to ask: Why these biblical texts and not others? How does he interpret them? Why does he interpret and use them in the way he does? In many respects, this chapter has sought to answer these questions, with specific focus on the parables and sayings of Jesus, but also Lenin's own parables. In *WITBD*, the key issues turn out to be party organization, the legal–illegal dialectic, and the struggles with opponents in the Social-Democratic movement, but beyond that text, they all relate in some way to political struggle and the revolutionary movement. All of these myriad interpretations and references provide down-to-earth touchstones that enable him to identify the core of his argument and then advance it—all in a language easily understood.

The greatest concentration of Lenin's engagement with the Bible is, as I have argued in this chapter, with the Gospels, especially the parables and sayings of Jesus with a distinctly earthy and often agricultural focus. To be sure, he also deploys parables and sayings such as the Syro-Phoenician woman, the Prodigal Son, the Great Banquet, Patches on Old Garments, and the Two Ways, but his clear preference is for parables and sayings of the land and its farmers. Why these parables, concerning sowing and reaping, animals and husbandry? I would suggest that an insight may be gained from his persistent interest in matters agricultural, not least of which was his concern for the revolutionary involvement of the millions of peasants. From his first works through until his last pieces, written in the few moments he had available in the midst of the tasks of government, he was vitally interested in the economics of agriculture, peasants, and the implications for communism.[54] Often these interests are interlaced directly with the parables and sayings and even mere phrases, as we find, for instance, in the biblical mosaic of "To the Rural Poor" (Lenin 1903t).

These specific interests in agriculture and the overlaps with the biblical material, however, suggest a deeper reason. Lenin shared Ernst Bloch's insight: The mass of peasants was vital for the revolution, but their worldview was framed in terms of biblical stories and characters. These narratives also partook of a creative mix of agricultural-cum-ecclesial rituals, avid interest in the lives of saints, and a panoply of spirits and demons. That is, the agricultural parables we find in the Bible spoke to peasants and those with a peasant background in ways that no other stories were able. It may be objected that *WITBD* deals primarily with interparty debates, and that the RSDLP's primary focus was workers. In reply, I would point out that many workers had themselves made a recent transition from the countryside, often with troubled ties to their peasant origins. Some made the transition more completely than others, while a large number maintained their religious practices and connections to the village (Smith 2008, 83–87).[55] Even for those who made a more radical break, the language of the Bible determined the quotidian terminology of life in a way that Henri Lefebvre was to identify so well (Lefebvre 1991, 226). It is not for nothing that Lenin preferred precisely those biblical stories and sayings with an earthy, agricultural bent, a preference that spilled

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over into the construction of his own parables. Yet, we may push even deeper, for anyone who reads Lenin attentively begins to notice a feature that struck his contemporaries, the concrete, unpretentious, and down-to-earth nature of the language he uses (Sukhanov 1955, 280; Trotsky 1976, 53, 140–47; Lunacharsky 1980, 12). The political obstacles to a university appointment may have helped in this matter, as also his origins from the countryside, but in the very fibers of his language, the turns of phrase and vocabulary, we encounter that uncouthness of which I have been speaking. At this level, the oft-disregarded earthiness of the Bible (Boer 2012b), peasant and working-class language, and the everyday life of agriculture and labor meet.

Sectarianism versus Ecumenism

> I belong to the Stone-Hards. (Lenin 1905r, 62 fn/166 fn)

A second question concerns Lenin's perpetual struggle with tares. Was Lenin, as the standard interpretations would have it, a sectarian who sought to destroy all who disagreed with him? Even at the time, he was regarded by his opponents as a factional player, doctrinaire, and unforgiving. Far from being an invention by comrades after the October Revolution, "Leninist" (ленинец—*leninets*) was initially a term of abuse from opponents, an accusation of splitting (Lenin 1912q[1], 407/225). As we have seen, the list of opponents over the years is long indeed, with Lenin devoting much of his energy to polemic in factional struggles. Yet, his interpretation of the tares suggests a more complex picture, for he leaves room for the possibility that what we thought were tares may turn out to be wheat, indeed that the tares may themselves become wheat. Does Lenin display ecumenist tendencies alongside, or in tension with, his sectarian bent? Is there perhaps a deeper relation between sectarianism and ecumenism in his work?

The material is full to overflowing with evidence of Lenin's sectarianism. He was opposed to blocs with other left-wing or liberal groups in the Duma, held that the "purity of revolutionary Social-Democracy is dearer" than party unity (Lenin 1907h[2], 172/56), and he was opposed to the "conciliators," led by Trotsky, who sought to bring together the warring factions. He even managed to argue that this latter group, in cooperation with the liquidationists, otzovists, God-builders, Bund, Mensheviks, and even Narodniks (SRs), was actually aggravating splits (Lenin 1911e, 179/234; 1911l, 1912p[1], 1912t; 1912v, 445/266–67; 1914p, 61/252; 1914l).[56] Why? The outcome would only ever be compromise, a dilution of the socialist task. The picture of a sectarian, doctrinaire Lenin remains reasonably common (Valentinov 1968, 1969; Lincoln 1986, 235–36; Read 2005), although this is merely to agree with Lenin's opponents, especially the Mensheviks in their unremitting campaign against him and the Bolsheviks. They even managed to persuade Kautsky and Luxemburg over to their perspective.

However, a closer reading of the material reveals a constant pattern of bitter polemical struggles with the tares and then simultaneous drives to unity. The most telling example concerns the Bolshevik–Menshevik split, which emerged to the dismay of many in the Social-Democratic Party after the second congress. Yet, with

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the era of the Dumas upon them from 1905, they agreed to have a joint conference, the landmark unity congress of 1906 (Lenin 1906w[1]; 1903b, 307–9/91–93; 1906p[1]). The congress documents are full of statements such as "The Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. has been held. The split no longer exists" (Lenin 1906b, 310/395; see also 1906l[1], 376/60). Even more, the agreement included Polish and Lettish Social-Democrats as well as the Bund. However, just as the drive to unity gained strength, the sectarian tendency manifested itself once again. So we find accusations of vote rigging and devious machinations, both during and after the congress (Lenin 1906y[1], 1906l[1], 1907r[1], 1907b[2]). Once again, the various factions drifted apart, so much so that the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks seem to be two distinct parties . . . only to attempt a unified project once again a few years later (Lenin 1910d[1], 1910p, 1910n). It seems as though centripetal and centrifugal forces were constantly in struggle, pushing apart in the very act of coming together.

A similar tension emerges during the period of the Dumas, when the Social-Democrats often considered alliances with other socialist parties, such as the SRs, and more liberal parties like the Trudoviks and Cadets. Lenin's text, "The Social-Democrats and Electoral Agreements" (Lenin 1906r[1]), embodies this tension very nicely. On the one hand, it is absolutely vital to remain faithful to the cause and not compromise by making any deals with any other political party, by making any blocs or alliances or joint tickets (Lenin 1906y[1], 294–98/379–84; 1905i[3], 382–95/126–41; 1905t[1], 468–74/235–41; 1906x, 1907d[2]; 1907f[2], 132/149; 1906r[1], 279/77, 282–83/80–81, 288/86; 1906f, 1906e[1]; 1906d, 417–18/231–32; 1907l[1], 424–25/239–40; 1907y[1], 452–55/270–73; 1907i[2], 458/276, 466/284; 1914q[1], 517/386, 519/388). Yet, under a situation of extreme necessity, it may be necessary to form such an alliance, albeit temporarily and even with liberal parties. As with the later arguments concerning the need for working with opponents after the October Revolution, the necessities of struggle may dictate the need for compromise and alliances, although those alliances should never sacrifice an iota of ideological independence. On this matter, one may work together for a common cause, but then use the situation to show how the other parties are ultimately wrong—as the Bolsheviks did when joining forces from time to time with the liberals in the struggle against tsarism, with the Mensheviks and the SRs in the crucial months of 1917, and even with Kerensky's forces from the Provisional Assembly in order to thwart the Kornilov putsch of the same year (Lenin 1906r[1], 296/94; 1906l, 300–1/104–5; 1912h[1], 469–70/139–40; 1907i[2], 471/289; 1907b[2], 40–41/318; 1920i, 66–77/50–62).

I suggest at least three reasons for this continued tension in Lenin's political practice and thought. The first is purely practical. In a specific political situation, one may enact a "fighting agreement": If the SRs, peasant parties, and even other semipolitical organizations share the opposition to landlords, to Tsar or Duma, to provisional government, or to capitalist exploitation, and if they represent the broad aims of the peasants and even the petty bourgeoisie, then the Social-Democrats will join in a united front. Such a fighting agreement is, after all, in the interest of socialism; it will even provide the opportunity to expose the semi-socialist positions of the other parties (Lenin 1905o, 70/127–28; 1905z[2]; 1906w[1], 158–59/233–34).

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A second reason is personal. Lenin was known to work closely together, on a day-to-day basis, precisely with those he attacked in print or party gatherings. Even more, he would not hesitate either to attack a closest comrade if he thought that comrade had taken a wrong turn, only to turn around the next day and embrace that same comrade on the basis of their common ground.[57] A couple of examples make this abundantly clear: Despite his attacks on Trotsky, Lenin and Trotsky were the two pillars of the October Revolution and of the early Bolshevik government in the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (later the USSR); and the intriguing God-builder, Anatoly Lunacharsky, whom Lenin attacked remorselessly in the first decade of the twentieth century, was appointed Commissar of Enlightenment after the October Revolution and became particularly close to Lenin.[58]

On a theoretical level (not unrelated to the practical and the personal), Lenin felt that the path to unity is not via compromise. Instead, it is dialectical, for only open and sharp arguments lead to deeper union. He argued again and again that, as the epigraph to *WITBD* (quoted from Lassalle) puts it, "party struggles lend a party strength and vitality" (Lenin 1902p, 347/1). He was always keen to have these struggles out in the open, to engage in them enthusiastically, for only then would strong agreements emerge. The key lies, as Lih makes clear in a scintillating analysis of the aftermath of the famous split during after the second congress, in the sovereignty of the party and its organizations. The chief characteristic of the Bolsheviks was not—as standard interpretations would have it—their bloody-minded sectarianism (Lih 2008, 489–553). Instead, the Bolsheviks had a deep commitment to the sovereignty of the Party, to its guidelines, decisions, and laws, all of which had been achieved through open and at times heated debates. Thus, the Bolsheviks were in favor of an elected party congress; the Mensheviks were not. The Bolsheviks sought wide worker involvement through a merger between workers and intellectuals; the Mensheviks did not. The Bolsheviks adhered to the guidelines laid down at the congress; the Mensheviks did not. In this light, the Mensheviks prove to be the more sectarian, especially when one keeps the question of the Party and its organization to the fore.[59]

The conclusion can only be that Lenin's sectarianism and ecumenism are two sides of the same coin; or rather, they are dialectically connected: neither one, nor the other, but both in tension. Lenin's passionate commitment to open debate was a path to stronger agreements and commitments by the organization.[60] For this reason, he was dead against passive abstention, of *laisser faire, laisser passer*, papering over of differences, of compromising between different groups, even of squabbles behind closed doors. Instead, the key was a very public "*unity of action, freedom of discussion and criticism*," which would lead to recognition of a deeper truth and provide the basis of class and party unity (Lenin 1906e[1], 320/125; 1904j, 444/4, 447–48/7–8; 1903s, 117/96; 1914q[1], 1915n; Bensaïd 2007, 155).

Revolutionary Gospels

The third issue picks up the unremitting theme of organization. Time and again, Lenin was engaged in all levels of organization—for congresses, party structure,

political campaigns, war (after the revolution), and economic reorganization after the "civil" war. Out of many examples, let me return to the text with which I began this chapter, *WITBD*, especially in the fourth chapter in which the parable of the tares and wheat appears, and then again in the final chapter concerning the role of a party newspaper. As we have seen, in that fourth chapter, the key issue is the dialectical relation between the secret, underground organization (operating in terms of *konspiratsiia*, the "fine art of not getting arrested" [Lih 2008, 447[61]]) and the public, legal organization. Precisely at this point, Lenin draws most deeply upon the Gospel parables. The implication: The Gospel stories become resources for revolutionary organization; here Lenin finds a place where the issues facing the socialists echo those of the circles of disciples and the need to spread the "good news" (what Kautsky would openly call the *euangelion*, the good news of socialism). In short, the Gospels provide excellent templates for the organization of militant revolutionary activity.

All of which lead me to ask, what happens to the Gospels themselves in the process of such interpretation and translation? Those stories and parables themselves become radicalized.[62] The men and women who gather with Jesus in the Gospels begin to look more and more like radicals, the teachings become stringent economic and political critiques, the message becomes a revolutionary one of *metanoia*, of transforming the very coordinates of economic and social life—on this score, Lenin's reading overlaps with that of Pasolini's fim, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Or is it the case that Lenin's interpretations reveal a dimension of the parables that is intrinsic to them?

CHAPTER 3

Christian Revolutionaries and God-Builders

The greatest of the prophets—Karl Marx

—Lunacharsky 1908b, 188

A particular group of opponents—or "tares" as we found Lenin calling them in the last chapter—were the various manifestations of the religious Left. Although we met some sundry radical priests and Christian socialists in the first chapter's initial consideration of Lenin's explicit statements on religion, here I explore them more fully. They range from Christian revolutionaries of various stripes to the God-builders. Throughout, I examine in detail Lenin's often ambivalent responses to this persistent and variegated thread of the religious Left. The Christian revolutionaries comprise the tradition of Christian socialism (and indeed anarchism) and peasant socialism, although the most consistent expression was to be found in the works of Leo Tolstoy. Lenin found Tolstoy particularly troublesome from a theoretical point of view. In a series of pieces prompted by Tolstoy's death, Lenin twists and turns, attempting to argue that Tolstoy may have asked all the right questions, but that his answers were inadequate. I deal with all of this material in the first part of this chapter. The second part focuses on the God-builders, perhaps one of the most intriguing components of the Bolsheviks and central to the revolution. Among others, they included Anatoly Lunacharsky and Maxim Gorky, both particularly close to Lenin. Rather than pursuing links between Orthodoxy and Marxism ("God-seekers"), in terms of pursuing links *from* Marxism to an existential version of Orthodoxy, God-builders sought to promote the affinities between Marxism and religion, fostering the "warm stream" of Marxism in terms of enthusiasm, feeling, the new human being, the radical dimensions of religion, all of which were to be embodied in revolution.

The third section turns to analyze *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, the text in which Lenin extensively attacked the God-builders, especially Lunacharsky. Both vilified and redeployed in ingenious fashions, the book arrives at its critique of God-building by lambasting empirio-criticism. A philosophical trend

that persists in various forms today (through the pragmatism of William James), empirio-criticism was initially developed by Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach. Building on the thought of Berkeley and Hume, and putting itself forward as both radically empirical and positivist, empirio-criticism argued that the only knowledge available comes from sensation; therefore, knowledge must be restricted to experience. To claim that a material world exists outside our senses, or that it is structured in terms of causation, is not a materialist position at all, but a metaphysical postulate that is unverifiable. In light of the increasing influence of empirio-criticism at the time, Lenin viciously attacked it, drawing deeply on Engels's effort to cut a line through all philosophy in terms of materialism and idealism. If materialism means the existence of an objective world that we gradually understand more comprehensively through science, then empirio-criticism must be a species of idealism. And if it is a form of idealism, then it surreptitiously enables God to sneak back into philosophy. At this point, my own interest in Lenin's argument is aroused, not least because Lenin attacks some of the God-builders who were drawn to empirio-criticism. My discussion of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* acts as the link to the following chapter, where I trace Lenin's reassessment of this argument through a rediscovery of Hegel, a rediscovery that opens up a more ambivalent position on God-building.

Christian Revolutionaries

> They would certainly think that such a man was either crazy or a "Christian Socialist" who had found his way into the ranks of Social-Democracy by mistake. (Lenin 1907b, 343/322–23)

A united front that includes Jews, Christians, disaffected priests, peasant believers who are communists without being members of the Party—all of these I have already discussed in the first chapter. In that discussion, I was interested in exploring the tensions in Lenin's positions concerning religion, if not the mostly unrealized dialectical potential for freedom of conscience. In the following, I focus on Lenin's engagements with varieties of Christian revolutionary movements. He is interested in the Christian anarchists (*Zhizn'*), even if their popularity is a sign of widespread unrest, for the ultimate aim is to draw them into the party (Lenin 1903o, 478/302; 1905h[3], 448/218; 1906v, 437–38/123–24; 1913y[1], 559–61/367–69).

Father Georgi Gapon

> The true character and intentions of this man are still wrapped in a mystery. (Olgin 1917, 112)

Far more important are the peasant socialists and the contradictions embodied in the work and life of Leo Tolstoy. However, let me begin on a slightly different tack, namely the curiously positive appreciation of Father Georgi Gapon, who led the protest march of no less than 200,000 workers in St. Petersburg on Bloody

Sunday. The culmination of months of militant strikes, the march's purpose was to present a petition to Tsar Nicholas II, requesting amelioration of the grinding conditions of factory labor.[1] The response: At the direct order of the tsar, troops opened fire, massacred hundreds, and injured thousands. The day—the infamous Bloody Sunday of January 9 (on the old calendar)—sparked the 1905 revolution. Opinions are somewhat divided on Gapon, for he was a product of the Zubatov "police" unions. For instance, while Gapon's 1905 autobiography presents his own perspective on events leading up the massacre and immediately afterward (Gapon 1905), stressing that he used police and Okhrana patronage to further his own plans, the voluminous endnotes to the *Collected Works* present Gapon as an agent of the tsarist secret police, who had founded the Assembly of Russian Factory and Workshop Workers (Lenin 1907c[1], 546, n. 169/521). This position comes close to that of the Mensheviks, as well as Bolsheviks such as Doroshenko and Gusev, secretary and leader of the Petersburg committee. Not only were they slow to understand the importance of the movement led by Gapon, they also remained highly suspicious of this priest with uncomfortably close relations with the police (Cliff 2002, 133–37; Le Blanc 1990, 110–13). According to this reading, Gapon was a *provocateur*, inciting the workers to demonstrate before the Winter Palace in order to present a petition to "Our Father," the Tsar, for the alleviation of cruel working conditions. Gapon had done so to enable a repression, which would take the wind out of strikes and the protest movements. The narrative must end with the plan backfiring, for it sparked waves of mass strikes and the revolution itself.

Lenin's response is in stark contrast to these assessments of Gapon. He argues that even if all this is the case, even if Gapon did initially work under the patronage of the secret police and Zubatov, the events took hold of him and turned him into a revolutionary.[2] Initially, Lenin gives Gapon even more credit, suggesting that he may have come from a progressive, reformist movement among the younger clergy, and that he may have been a Christian socialist before the event (Lenin 1905p[2], 106/211). In that respect, he may well have been duped, for while believing that he was carrying out an honest task, he was simultaneously an unconscious instrument of the police plan. Upon further reflection, Lenin sharpens his dialectical analysis. Apart from his most intimate friends, writes Lenin, we will never know Gapon's inner motivation. He may initially have been a police agent, and suspicions concerning a priest, a believer in God, are understandable. But look at the facts: Your run-of-the-mill agent provocateur does not behave like that, for such a person would have quietly disappeared under police protection before the troops opened fire. Instead, Gapon became more radical; he agitated for intensifying the revolution; he switched from peaceful petition to violent uprising. These facts, writes Lenin, "decided in Gapon's favour" (Lenin 1905p[2], 112/218).[3]

Lenin goes even further: Not only was Gapon radicalized by the massacre, but he voiced the cry of the oppressed. Gapon was the mouthpiece for millions and millions of workers and peasants who until now had believed naively that the Tsar would listen to them: "Their feelings and their mood, their level of knowledge and political experience were expressed by Father Georgi Gapon" (Lenin 1905p[2], 111/217). And like them, the reaction of the Tsar broke Gapon's faith that the Tsar would do the right thing once he realized the plight of his subjects. In short,

if Gapon had not appeared, we would have had to invent him. In support of his arguments, Lenin quotes an open letter sent by Gapon to the Socialist Parties of Russia:

> The bloody January days in St. Petersburg and the rest of Russia have brought the oppressed working class face to face with the autocratic regime, headed by the blood-thirsty tsar. The great Russian revolution has begun. All to whom the people's freedom is really dear must either win or die. Realizing the importance of the present historic moment, considering the present state of affairs, and being above all a revolutionary and a man of action, I call upon all the socialist parties of Russia to enter immediately into an agreement among themselves and to proceed to the armed uprising against tsarism. All the forces of every party should be mobilised. All should have a single technical plan of action. Bombs and dynamite, individual and mass terror—everything that can help the popular uprising. The immediate aim is the over throw of the autocracy, a provisional revolutionary government which will at once amnesty all fighters for political and religious liberties, at once arm the people, and at once convoke a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot. To the task, comrades! Onward to the fight! Let us repeat the slogan of the St. Petersburg workers on the Ninth of January—Freedom or Death! Delay and disorder now are a crime against the people, whose interests you are defending. Having given all of myself to the service of the people, from whom I myself am sprung (the son of a peasant), and having thrown in my lot irrevocably with the struggle against the oppressors and exploiters of the working class, I shall naturally be heart and soul with those who will undertake the real business of actually liberating the proletariat and all the toiling masses from the capitalist yoke and political slavery. Georgi Gapon (Lenin 1905m[1] 163/279; Gapon 1905, 170–71)

Quite to the point, suggests Lenin, for Gapon has stated the aims of the revolution quite clearly: overthrow of the autocracy; provisional revolutionary government; immediate amnesty to all fighters for political and religious liberties; immediate arming of the people; immediate convocation of an All-Russian Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage. And the "fighting agreement" he proposes is both possible and essential, although we must ensure that we keep our clear identity among all the revolutionary groups. It is best to march separately and strike together (Lenin 1905m[1], 163–66/279–82).

Lenin does not ask whether the letter might be a hoax, a further step in the provocation. Indeed, one cannot help wondering whether Lenin was taken in, as he was later with Malinovsky (a member of the Central Committee and police agent, whom Lenin defended until he was at long last convinced otherwise, after the October Revolution [Elwood 1977]). Gapon's subsequent movements are ambiguous. Soon after Bloody Sunday, he fled abroad, first to Geneva and then London, penned his autobiography, and met Lenin before the third congress of the RSDLP (April 1905 in London[4]). At the congress, Lenin reported on their meeting and an invitation from Gapon to a conference of a broad coalition of revolutionary parties. This was attended by Lenin and other RSDLP delegates, only to find it dominated by SRs, with whom Gapon had the most sympathy (Lenin 1905i[3], 416–21/180–85).[5] Before the end of 1905, Gapon was back in Russia and in contact with the Okhrana. In trying to persuade his close ally and SR member, Pinhas

Rutenberg (who had saved him from the guns on Bloody Sunday), of the value of the connection with the secret police for the workers' cause, he overstepped the mark. He was found hanged in a cottage in St. Petersburg in early 1906, although Rutenberg and the SR movement blamed one another for the death. In the end, it does not matter for my analysis, for what is striking about the whole affair is the way Lenin sees in Gapon, however misguided he may have been, an example of how workers and peasants (Gapon was himself born a peasant) were radicalized by the shock of Bloody Sunday. Lenin's incurably optimistic expectation, even in the midst of the darkest days of the movement, was suddenly vindicated: Faced with systematic and cruel oppression, workers and peasants would become revolutionaries. And Gapon—a priest and believer in God no less—provided the model of such a transformation.[6]

Tolstoy

> Lenin, in his magnificent works on Tolstoy, which no Marxist literary critic can afford to ignore. (Lunacharsky 1973, 171)

From the fiery Gapon, we move to the calmer Christian socialism of Tolstoy. That Lenin knew Tolstoy intimately is obvious not only from the easy citation of the latter's works, but also from Krupskaya's comment that during their "exile" in the village of Shushenskoe in Siberia, Lenin counted Tolstoy among his favorite authors and read him avidly.[7] At the time of Tolstoy's eightieth birthday and then at his death a couple of years later, Lenin wrote half a dozen articles that both responded to other assessments of Tolstoy and sought to identify his value for socialism.[8] Central to these articles is a complex understanding of contradiction, for here we find a sophisticated forerunner of what would later be called the "imaginary resolution" of real contradictions, championed by Fredric Jameson in heavy dependence on Lévi-Strauss (who in turn acknowledges his dependence on Marx but not Lenin). More of that later; now I would like to set the context briefly and then assess Lenin's treatment of Tolstoy.

By the time of his death, Tolstoy was the subject of varying assessments and political appropriations (Sorokin 1979). Not only had the Slavophiles (Grigor'ev, Strakhov, and Dostoyevsky), or the aesthetes (Turgenev), or the Symbolists (Merezhkovsky) made claims to him, so also had radicals since the 1850s, such as Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, and Narodniks, especially Mikhailovsky. The appeal for the latter two groups came from Tolstoy's advocacy of peasant values, feeding into a romanticizing of peasant life and village-commune (*mir* or *obshchina*) as offering a peculiarly Russian and thereby alternative path to socialism. Lenin had already attacked such positions on numerous occasions, pointing to the feudal and exploitative nature of the village-commune (Lenin 1894b, 176/176, 494–95/520–21; 1895a, 238–39/232–33, 245/240, 264–65/261–62; 1908k, 34–35/20–21; 1908e, 1910c). Closer to home, the Mensheviks, especially Nevyadomsky and Bazarov (in *Nasha Zaria*), had argued that Tolstoy represented the misdirected aspirations of the Russian intelligentsia, constructing a vast synthesis based on the position of nonresistance to evil (Morawski 1965, 8). With a similar sociobiological

and ideological focus, Plekhanov had suggested Tolstoy was an extreme representative of idealist individualism, even siding with the oppressors, but that he was at least able to show up—episodically—the undesirability of the present situation, without understanding at all the struggle for transformation of social conditions (Plekhanov 2004, 559–61, 572–89). Handing Tolstoy over so easily to his romantic admirers made it easy for the government newspapers, both liberal and conservative (*Russkoe Znamia*, *Novoe Vremia*, and *Rech'*), to claim Tolstoy enthusiastically as one of their own. He was a great seeker of God, a prophet expressing the Russian soul. Lenin disagrees; not only does he seek to counter such celebration, but he also wishes to provide an analysis as a direct counter to and far more sustained than that of Plekhanov (Morawski 1965, 8).

For Lenin, the greatness and power of Tolstoy's artistic achievement is due to its contradictions, or rather, the fact that he responds to, attempts to resolve, and thereby replicates at another, artistic, level the social and economic contradictions that he experienced at such an intense and personal level.[9] Thus, Tolstoy's response or answer to his situation is to offer both an incisive critique of that situation and an essentially religious solution, with its nonresistance to evil, vegetarianism, simplicity of life, and claims to have recovered the authentic nature of early Christianity. That contradictory response has a number of overlays, such as the universalizing move in response to a historically specific situation, as well as the progressive and reactionary features of Tolstoy's answers, the former of which may actually be appropriated by the socialist movement. In other words, Tolstoy may offer a moving diagnosis of the situation but his prognosis is wayward and backward looking. Thus far, Lenin may seem to agree with the most sympathetic element of Plekhanov's analysis.[10] But now, he goes a significant step further. Instead of dismissing Tolstoy, he asks: How to make sense of this complex pattern of contradictory responses? Lenin argues that they reveal an equally complex answer to a situation riven with tensions: The peasants' own political aspirations, which Tolstoy expresses with intense clarity; the contradictions of the Russian Revolution of 1905; the class contradictions of Tolstoy's own situation; and above all the passage from feudal economic relations to capitalist ones, especially between the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the revolution of 1905. I will explore each item in more detail.

To begin with, Tolstoy's work is riven with a deeply contradictory feature: His artistic power lies in the devastating criticisms he levels at both feudal and capitalist patterns of exploitation, yet his solution of a simplified, ascetic Christian spirituality disengaged from politics is highly problematic.[11] These two sides of the contradiction may be designated the critical and the constructive. On the critical side, Tolstoy registers economic exploitation with uncanny and heart-rending genius. Not only does he expose the inexorable trend of ever-increasing destitution among the peasantry, but he also shows with utmost realism the evils of capitalism, government repression, corruption of the courts, and even the way the growth of wealth is concomitant with increasing poverty.[12] As for peasants, while they continue to use primitive methods on allotments of land that had been reduced after 1861, the landlords adroitly turn to their own advantage the abolition of serfdom and the giving of land to peasants: Now landlords demand peasant

labor and their tools and animals in exchange for access to "cut-off lands," namely, meadows, watering-places, and so on. At the same time, ruined peasants flock to the towns, rapidly swelling the ranks of the working class by feeding exploited labor into the boom in railway construction, mills, and factories.[13] In each situation, exploitation, destitution, hunger, and want are evident. All of these lead to the "mountains of hatred" piled up against both the system of landlords and the ravages of capitalism—expressed so well by Tolstoy's pen.

How does one offer a constructive solution? For Tolstoy, the answer is an exceedingly conventional one: Recover the simple forms of earliest Christianity. Why conventional? The internal dynamic of Christianity is a perpetual cycle of reforming an apparently corrupt and otiose institutional form. And one justifies that reform in the name of an authentic original Christianity, without the accretions of institutional time. So also with Tolstoy, for over against the dirty little relationship between church and ruling class, in which the church provides the theological bulwark of feudal and capitalist economic depredations, Tolstoy turns against this current form of Christianity in the name of a simpler spirituality. One lives ascetically, becomes vegetarian, withdraws from politics, eschews violence, and seeks inner peace.[14] Tolstoy finds the immediate resources for such a life in the rapidly disappeared village-commune of the peasants, reinforced by a deeply moral Christianity that follows the precepts of an anarchist Christ and unfettered by the weight of the church's odious history. In this light, we may understand his famous "commandments," distilled from the Gospels: Do not be angry; do not lust; do not bind yourself by oaths; resist not him who is evil; be good to the just and the unjust (Tolstoy 2009, 45–71).

Even more, Tolstoy asserts that his answer calls upon the " 'eternal' principles of morality, the eternal truths of religion" (Lenin 1911i, 50/101), without realizing that this putative universal is merely the expression of his own particular circumstance, caught as he is in the maelstrom of a world turned upside down. What that circumstance is we will see in a moment, although Lenin traces the presence of this "Universal Spirit" through a range of Tolstoy's writings, especially *The Slavery of Our Times*, *Lucerne*, *Kreutzer Sonata*, "Progress and the Definition of Education," and "On Life" (Tolstoy 1900, 1857, 1889, 1888).

Already we have begun to see that Lenin finds this "solution" woefully inadequate, although the reasons will take some unfolding. And already we have witnessed the dialectical tenor of Lenin's arguments in these six pieces on Tolstoy. Although that tenor waxes and wanes, its greatest strength emerges when he moves to explicate the reasons for Tolstoy's contradictory position, caught as it is between the latter's incisive analysis of the current situation and his dreadfully inadequate solution. Lenin offers four overlapping explanations of this artistic and indeed political contradiction. First, Tolstoy gives voice both to the peasants' economic despair and to their political aspirations: "The ancient foundations of peasant economy and peasant life, foundations that had really held for centuries, were broken up for scrap with extraordinary rapidity" (Lenin 1908j, 206/210). In his greatness as a writer, Tolstoy registers the shock of the changes experienced by the peasants, voicing their collective anger and dissatisfaction; centuries of hatred of the landlords, priests, and Tsar turn against the capitalist bosses and

tax collectors. Yet, despite all this protest, the peasants have not yet found an adequate political answer: "Through his lips there spoke that multitudinous mass of the Russian people who *already* detest the masters of modern life but have not *yet* advanced to the point of intelligent, consistent, thoroughgoing, implacable struggle against them" (Lenin 1910c[1], 353/70). Why? The peasants found themselves caught in a contradictory position, halfway between the class-conscious proletariat and the defenders of the old regime. The peasantry may have been spontaneously revolutionary in its hatred of the old regime, but it was not yet politically conscious enough for a full revolution. So also Tolstoy.

Second, this analysis has profound implications for the 1905 revolution: "It was a peasant bourgeois revolution because the objective conditions put in the forefront the problem of changing the basic conditions of life for the peasantry, of breaking up the old, medieval system of land ownership, of 'clearing the ground' for capitalism; the objective conditions were responsible for the appearance of the peasant masses on the arena of more or less independent historic action" (Lenin 1910j, 324/20). The significance of that revolution is that the peasantry emerges as a political force. It seeks to sweep away all the old and new forms of oppression and to replace them with communities of free and equal citizens. And this is precisely the locus of their backwardness, for the image of that new society is an old and patriarchal one, with the equality of the village-commune reinforced by a deeply moral Christianity, following the precepts of an anarchist Christ, and unfettered by the weight of the church's odious history. Here we find the source of Tolstoy's utopian image of religiously inspired peasant life, providing a model for living in a rapidly changing world. Yet, it can be only backward looking, a reactionary utopia. Tolstoy as the voice of peasant aspirations can look only to a mythical past rather than to really qualitative change. Thus, the response to the existing structures is not a militant one, seeking to destroy all that oppresses them. Instead, the peasants and Tolstoy weep and pray, moralize and dream, and write petitions to the authorities to grant their wishes. After all, one must show nonresistance to evil, "which was a most serious cause of the defeat of the first revolutionary campaign" (Lenin 1908j, 208/213). No wonder the autocracy took advantage of the peasants and imposed even harsher conditions of life in a vicious counterrevolution, condemning the peasants to live at the edges of the lowest strata of society.

Thus far, Lenin has argued for two closely related reasons for Tolstoy's contradictory position, both relating to the problems inherent to peasant politics.[15] The third reason both shifts ground a little and it is less articulated in Lenin's argument. Mostly he assumes that Tolstoy speaks movingly from a peasant perspective, this despite the fact that Tolstoy himself was a landlord. Yet, on a couple of occasions, Lenin registers this crucial feature of Tolstoy's own class formation. To begin with, Lenin suggests that one dimension of Tolstoy's contradictions may be inherent in his personal views, but then moves on to argue that those personal views actually reflect much deeper social and economic tensions (Lenin 1910j, 325/20–21). Furthermore, Lenin recognizes the importance of this issue of class location, pointing out that "by birth and education Tolstoy belonged to the highest landed nobility in Russia" (Lenin 1910k, 331/39–40), but that he sought to

break with all the customary views of this environment. Was that break complete? Did Tolstoy really manage to discard all of those assumptions and fully express the travails of peasants? At times, Lenin suggests so, but at the moments I have just identified, he comes closest to the crucial point that the contradictions in Tolstoy's art are also due to his tension-ridden class location. Or, as he puts it: "Despair is typical of the classes which are perishing" (Lenin 1910k, 332/41).[16]

Lenin is at his strongest with the fourth point, namely, that the deep contradictions of Tolstoy's art are due to the profound *transition between modes of production*, with all of its dislocation, violence, and exploitation, along with the sheer release from encrusted and apparently unassailable ways of life of the system now falling to pieces (Lenin 1910j, 1911i). Tolstoy's artistic production is a comprehensive effort to solve at a cultural level the deep contradictions embodied in the brutal shift of modes of production.[17] This is not to say that the ancient patterns had entirely disappeared, for the relics of feudalism are everywhere to be found. The state is still autocratic, the church still asserts its monopoly, and the landlords still exploit peasants in an official policy of tyranny and robbery. It is as though the feudal system lives on in a modified and suspended form between 1861 and 1905. Yet, at the same time, capitalism leaps all over the old system. This is stated succinctly in a key phrase from *Anna Karenina*, where the character Levin is talking about arrangements for the harvest: "Here in Russia everything has now been turned upside down and is only just taking shape" (Lenin 1911i, 49/100; Tolstoy 1873–77, 870). All of which is to state that Tolstoy offers an imaginary resolution of real social and economic contradictions. However, since culture is never able to offer a real resolution to those contradictions, the cultural response perpetuates those contradictions, albeit transposed and reconfigured. That response is, as we have seen, a juxtaposition of searing and incisive criticism and retreat to a simple Christian life infused with nonresistance to evil. It is a desperate effort to resolve at a cultural level the seismic shift of modes of production.

Lenin's final move is to draw out from Tolstoy's work what is positive for the socialist movement. Not unexpectedly, it turns out not to be his retreat into inner contemplation and a purified Christianity (for which Tolstoy was excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church), but his incisive criticism of both crumbling feudalism and rampant capitalism. This critique provides an immeasurable service to the socialist movement, for Tolstoy expresses so well the "mountains of hatred" against both the system of landlords and the ravages of capitalism experienced by everyone. Seen from the class perspective of the proletariat—in contrast to the liberals and conservatives who write of a "great conscience," which is to focus on his backwardness yet miss the concrete criticisms he leveled (Lenin 1908j, 202–5/206–9; 1910g)—Tolstoy's criticisms provide fertile ground for socialist agitation and point forward to a world in which that exploitation is no more. Deploying a dialectical mode of analysis that would become central to Ernst Bloch's work, Lenin suggests that these eminently useful socialist elements appear amid the reactionary nature of Tolstoy's work. In other words, precisely because Tolstoy expresses the pain and desire of a class that is being replaced by the bourgeoisie, he thereby provides insights for the class that is going to replace the bourgeoisie. Feudal socialism may be passing, finding a great voice in Tolstoy, but it is the

dialectical harbinger of proletarian socialism. In short, Tolstoy contributed, no matter how unwittingly, to the "epoch of preparation" (Lenin 1910j, 323/19). For these reasons, Lenin can write, in an extraordinary moment of prescience, that although Tolstoy is known at that moment only to a minority, after the revolution, he will be known by all—his time is to come (Lenin 1911i).

What are we to make of Lenin's analysis? I wish to make two points, one methodological and the other concerning what may be called Christian communism. To begin with, Lenin has here provided an extraordinary model of what would later be deployed by Claude Lévi-Strauss and then famously developed by Fredric Jameson, who framed this theory of literature in Althusserian language (Althusser 1971, 127–86; Jameson 1981, 77–80; Lévi-Strauss 1989, 229–56). For those unfamiliar with the theory, a brief description: The cultural products of a society invariably attempt to resolve intractable social and economic tensions at an ideological and cultural level, especially when no resolution is available at a socioeconomic level. Lévi-Strauss's key example is drawn from his research among indigenous tribes in South America. His interest was drawn to the facial decorations of the tribes he visited, especially the Caduveo. He noticed that the Caduveo use those decorations to ameliorate and repress the social tensions between social groups within the tribe. But those decorations indicate a tension, for they are based upon an axis at an oblique angle to the face. That is, rather than use the natural lines of nose, mouth, and eyes, the Caduveo patterns follow another axis at an angle to these natural lines. There are, in other words, two axes in these face decorations. The reason: Unlike the neighboring Guana and Bororo, who have the social checks and balances of moieties to mitigate their caste system, the Caduveo have no such social solution. Their art then becomes another means of dealing with social tensions. The catch is that in the very effort to deal with such a tension, the art shows up the tension at a formal level. Even though Lévi-Strauss acknowledged his debts to Marx in this theory, Jameson was to provide a more explicit Marxist terminology (with debts to Althusser)—an imaginary resolution of real social contradictions that reproduces those contradictions at another level, one that is cultural and ideological. Examples include productions of alternative realities (as in science fiction or utopian works); stories that violently break through the tensions (as in many works that solve the story's problems through a violent conflagration at the end); or efforts at formal innovation (new genres in the mixture of old ones, new styles of painting, and so on). In other words, the ley lies not in the representation of a particular ideology, not in the overt content of the text, but in the contradictory intersections between the form and content of a cultural product—what Morawski calls the "artistic-cognitive" dimension of a work (Morawski 1965). Until I read Lenin, I had assumed that this insightful approach to cultural products—which I have deployed on a number of occasions (Boer 1996, 2003, in press-a)—owed its origin to Lévi-Strauss and Jameson. But now, all those assumptions fall away, for Lenin in his reading of Tolstoy offers an analysis that anticipates not so much Lévi-Strauss's limited anthropological analysis, but the Marxist criticism of Jameson.

As far as Christian communism is concerned, Lenin has both extraordinary insight and a significant blind spot. Lenin may have identified the regressive nature

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of Tolstoy's simplified Christianity, but he fails to see that the depth of his critique of economic exploitation is also part of the tradition of Christian communism. Some explanation is in order: With its emphasis on simplicity, pacifism, vegetarianism, and communal life modeled on an idealized peasant village-commune, Tolstoy's model and personal example draw upon elements of the tradition of Christian communism that is first expressed in the Acts of the Apostles. The key text reads: "And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44–45).[18] The nature of this Christian communism may be sketched easily: A common belief in the resurrection of Christ, communal living, communism of goods, with those owning possessions selling them so that the proceeds may be redistributed, and thereby absence of need. I should add to these items the practices of having meals in common and the abolition of family life (through both communal living and tendencies toward asceticism), as well as the story of the rich young man from the Gospels, where Jesus tells him, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mark 10:21; see Matthew 19:21 and Luke 18:22).

Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky were the first to give this tradition the title of "Christian communism," both stressing that it was a communism of goods rather than production (Luxemburg 1970, 1982; Kautsky 2007, 1977). However, they differ concerning its fate, with Luxemburg arguing that it petered out since no fundamental change was effected on the mode of production. Thus, communism of goods became alms from the rich and communal life transformed into hierarchical structures. While Kautsky agrees with this initial analysis, he also emphasizes that Christian communism did not fade away so easily. Relegated to the margins of a triumphant and powerful church after Christianity became the religion of the Roman empire in the fourth century, it remained an inspiration for the monastic movement, which both sought to recreate that initial community time and again and offered sustained critiques of the church's increasing power and privilege.

Tolstoy does indeed seem to draw on this tradition identified by Kautsky and Luxemburg (in part), for movements of reform typically resorted to the critiques of otiose church structures embodied in monasticism, if not monastic orders themselves that had become far too comfortable. Here too may be found simplicity bordering on asceticism, invocations of the early life of Christian communities, and the eschewing of power for the sake of retreat from an evil world. However, the problem with this form of Christian communism is that it tends to remain on the margins, failing to capture the imagination of the bulk of Christianity, often because it is has always been a retrogressive response to times of trouble. It may (although not always) invoke a fading way of life, now idealized and transposed into a largely mythical past that one needs to recover (Boer 2011b). In this sense, it remains a reactionary utopia, despite its great appeal. It may also of course offer a critique of the present order and at the same time look forward to its destruction and replacement with a better world—in the sense of classical utopianism. Lenin's criticisms of Tolstoy recognize at least the regressive side of Christian communism.

However, another dimension of Christian communism may also be identified, a revolutionary tradition that offers trenchant critiques of a corrupt and oppressive status quo, seeking not to retreat from the world but to change it. As we have seen, Lenin attempts to drive a wedge between Tolstoy's retreat from the world, which he identifies as Christian, and his criticisms of a brutal and oppressive status quo, which Lenin sees as eminently useful for socialist agitation but which he does not regard as Christian. Here is Lenin's blind spot in regard to Tolstoy, for this prophetic, revolutionary element is also very much part of the Christian communist tradition. That element was first identified clearly by Engels already in his early twenties, coming to full articulation in his later work, "On the History of Early Christianity", albeit not without significant preliminary statements (Engels 1894–95c, 1894–95d, 1850a, 1850b, 1882a, 1882b, 1883a, 1883b). The most succinct statement may be found in Engels's preface to a reissue of Marx's *The Class Struggles in France*:

> It is now, almost to the year, sixteen centuries since a dangerous party of overthrow was likewise active in the Roman empire. It undermined religion and all the foundations of the state; it flatly denied that Caesar's will was the supreme law; it was without a fatherland, was international; it spread over the whole empire, from Gaul to Asia, and beyond the frontiers of the empire. It had long carried on seditious activities underground in secret; for a considerable time, however, it had felt strong enough to come out into the open. This party of overthrow, which was known by the name of Christians . . . (Engels 1894–95a, 523; 1894–95b, 526)[19]

Unable to explore in full the promising line of research opened up by this insight, the ageing Engels requested Kautsky to do so, as a series of communications between them shows (Engels 1891a, 200; 1891b, 114; 1891c, 174; 1891b, 88; 1892a, 1892b; 1892c, 493–94; 1892d, 422–23; 1894a, 314; 1894b; 1894c, 321; 1894d, 268; 1894e, 328–29; 1894f, 276). The result of Kautsky's labors was not so much his *Foundations of Christianity* as the multivolume *Forerunners of Modern Socialism*, which he too was unable to complete (Kautsky 1947a, 1947b; Kautsky and Lafargue 1977; Lindemann and Hillquit 1977; Kautsky 2002).[20] Here Kautsky and those who completed the series traced the perpetual pattern of revolutionary movements inspired by Christianity, running through from the early Middle Ages until the eve of Marxist socialism. The dilemma of such a project is that one must mediate between claims to the novelty of the Marxist moment and the sense that it is heir to a long tradition of revolutionary upsurges by the downtrodden. Stress the break too much and you lose any sense of the many threads that led to the break; stress continuity and you risk discarding the novelty of the break. Kautsky typically attempts to resolve this dilemma in evolutionary terms, arguing for Marxism's completion of a historical progression, fulfilling the unrealized potential of all these earlier revolutions. But is not a dialectical approach more useful, in which the rupture of Marxism is through its very ruptural moment dependent upon continuity with Christian communism? That is, those ruptures and breaks are determinative of the tradition itself.[21]

The upshot of all this is that Lenin has identified only one dimension of the heritage of Christian communism embodied in Tolstoy. All Lenin sees is nostalgia

rather than hope, quietism rather than action, retreat rather than advance, communal life rather than revolution. So Lenin castigates this regressive dimension of Tolstoy's thought and life, assuming that this is the sole locus of the latter's Christianity. But Lenin fails to identify the other dimension of Christian communism to which Tolstoy is heir, namely, the revolutionary push for a better world.[22] I would suggest that the inspiration for Tolstoy's resounding critiques of devastating exploitation relies not only on the profound sense of a life that is passing, but also on the anticipation of a better life that lays in the future. In that respect, it may well be that implicit within Tolstoy's critiques is precisely that revolutionary anticipation.[23] On that score, Lenin was perhaps more an heir of Tolstoy than he may have cared to admit.

Peasant Socialism

> The land is God's. (Lenin 1907l, 297/157)

We find ourselves in a situation in which Lenin seeks the actuality of Tolstoy for the socialist cause, while dismissing what he understands to be Tolstoy's inadequate religious solution. Yet, I have also suggested that Lenin's enthusiastic appropriation of Tolstoy's critique owes some implicit debts to the prophetic, active, and revolutionary dimension of Christian communism—despite Lenin's belief that he is drawing upon a nonreligious element of Tolstoy's art. But this conclusion is by no means the last word on this whole question, for if we look wider than Lenin's half-dozen articles on Tolstoy, we find that he does recognize the theological tenor of criticisms such as those deployed by Tolstoy, even if Tolstoy himself did not utter them. Who then deploys Tolstoy-like critiques? They are the various representatives of peasant socialism who crop up in Lenin's texts from time to time.

This argument has a number of twists; so careful attention is needed. Thus far, I have proposed that a major source of both dimensions of Tolstoy's art is Christian communism, in both its passive, communal form (which can be a backward-looking utopia) and its active, revolutionary form. However, Christian communism was not the only source of Tolstoy's thought, for we may also identify what is best called peasant socialism. The twist here is that this peasant socialism was itself informed by theological, or more specifically, biblical currents. As I pointed out in the chapter on Lenin and the Gospels, the ideological framework and patterns of everyday life for peasants were in large part determined by biblical perceptions of the world, along with the rhythms of Orthodox religious practice and belief, albeit "mingled" with a good deal of local practice—the usual situation for Christianity, so much so that it is useless to speak of "syncretism" between pagan and Christian elements. Thus, Tolstoy's valorization of the ideal peasant village-commune is not merely a relic of patriarchal feudal economic and social structures, but also one that is infused with the ambivalent legacy of biblical patterns. Why ambivalent? As I have argued elsewhere, that legacy is caught in its very internal dynamic in a tension between, on the one hand, reactionary tendencies that lend themselves all too easily to supporting the powers that be (in this case the tsar, landlords, patriarchal priests, and sundry hangers-on) and, on the

other hand, revolutionary leanings that will not put up with the shady dealings of those who claim to have been appointed by God to their roles of power.[24] All of these make much sense of the inherent contradictions of peasant socialism, which, as we saw, Lenin identifies as one element of Tolstoy's work.

However, what interests me here is not the reactionary wing but its revolutionary wing, specifically in the way Lenin acknowledges its inescapably theological nature (which he does not do in his treatments of Tolstoy's radical criticisms). While he notes—in commenting on Duma debates—the deployment by right-wing delegates of biblical justifications for supporting the tsar,[25] Lenin cannot miss the theological justification for the peasant claim to land redistribution: "the land is God's," that is, it belongs to no one and therefore everyone. Or more fully, as the priest Tikhvinsky, an independent left-wing Duma representative, states it in a speech supporting a Trudovik land bill:

> This is the way the peasants, the way the working people look at the land: the land is God's, and the labouring peasant has as much right to it as each one of us has the right to water and air. It would be strange if anyone were to start selling, buying or trading in water and air—and it seems just as strange to us that anyone should trade in, sell or buy land. (Lenin 1907l, 297/157; see also Lenin 1906y[1], 287/369; 1906l[1], 345/28–29)

Lenin of course goes on to reveal the limitations of such a position, namely, that the argument for an egalitarian redistribution of land will be useless if the deeper question is not addressed: As long as capitalism is present, any land reform will fail. Tikhvinsky may feel that the sale of land, air, and water is strange, but one need only look at the way capitalism already renders them for sale in the large industrial centers, mines, and factories. Even this pales by comparison with the sale of labor power, with the wage slavery of millions, and thereby with the sale and purchase of love, conscience, and science.[26]

Nonetheless, in the midst of his efforts to deepen the understanding of a peasant representative like Tikhvinsky, Lenin also evinces his admiration for a man who "deserves all respect for his sincere loyalty to the interests of the peasants, the interests of the people, which he defends fearlessly and with determination." Furthermore, Tikhvinsky and others like him—such as the "kindly village priest," Poyarkov (a member of the first Duma in 1906[27]), who knew fully well how the liberal landlords acquired land by whatever foul means were available (Lenin 1907b, 392/373)—share instinctively the deep ideals of socialism: "I am well aware that this viewpoint springs from the most noble motives, from an ardent protest against monopoly, against the privileges of rich idlers, against the exploitation of man by man, that it arises out of the aspiration to achieve the liberation of all working people from every kind of oppression and exploitation" (Lenin 1907l, 297/158).[28] All of which may be traced back to the slogan, "the land is God's."

Profound appreciation and sharp criticism—this dual assessment of peasant aspirations is one we find again and again in Lenin's texts. While the peasants' revolutionary organization is still woeful, its actions scattered, its allegiances

with liberals fateful, its resolute focus on land redistribution too monarchist, and its slogans concerning "God-given land" too theological for Lenin's liking, yet he is taken with their revolutionary spirit, with the refusal to be cowed by the landlords, with their own initiative in creating the Trudovik Party for the Dumas, and speaking truth to power (Lenin 1911o, 125/177). This pattern of appreciation and sharp analysis of where peasant socialism falls short is the same pattern that we found in Lenin's detailed treatments of Tolstoy, but with one crucial difference: In his treatment of Tolstoy, Lenin identifies the latter's solution as hopelessly religious and thereby futile, but Lenin enthusiastically appropriates for the socialist cause Tolstoy's stinging criticisms of economic life, all the while failing to see that these too come out of the Christian communist tradition. However, when it comes to peasant socialism, it is precisely the unrelenting attacks against the landlords and against unjust land distribution that draw their inspiration from theological and biblical sources. Of course, Lenin finds the slogan, "the land is God's," inadequate, but he cannot avoid the fact that this tradition of economic criticism, crucial to peasant socialism, finds it voice in theological terms. If we remember my earlier point that the peasant socialism Lenin both castigates and appreciates is itself another dimension of the Christian communist heritage, we are left with the conclusion that both elements of Tolstoy's powerful art owe much to this heritage. With this in mind, I can indeed agree with Lenin that Tolstoy's weakness lies in his pacifist disengagement, but that his strength lies in his unremitting critique of economic and social depredation—with the proviso that this element of his art comes straight out of the tradition of Christian socialism, as Lenin recognizes in relation to the peasant socialists themselves.

God-Builders

> Lunacharsky spoke like a god. That night Lunacharsky was a genius. (*The October Storm and After* 1967, 276)

Tolstoy and the peasant socialists may have been easier for Lenin to divide and conquer, attempting to generate some distance from the more obviously religious dimensions of their Christian communism. Not so with the God-builders, for they arose from the inner ranks of the Bolsheviks. The power and appeal of their position and the fact that it was a development from within drew from Lenin a deeper response and far greater energy than what was required by his work on Tolstoy. The God-builders show both striking differences and similarities with Tolstoy and the peasant socialists. Unlike the latter, the God-builders manifested no obvious belief in divine powers or the conventional doctrines of Christianity. Instead, they sought to provide a dimension to Marxism that went beyond the focus on cold theory, preferring to emphasize enthusiastic, emotional, and ethical elements—adding what Ernst Bloch would later call a "warm stream" to Marxism. The catch is that such a stream drew upon the same traditions of Christian communism, now in an even stronger form, as those that fed Tolstoy or the peasant socialists.

Lunacharsky's Warmth

> The personal understanding of the value of life only in connection with a grand sweep of collective life—that is the religious feeling of Marx. (Lunacharsky 1911, 347)

But who was Lunacharsky? Playwright, poet, polemicist, gifted orator, romantic, art and literary critic, prolific writer,[29] expert on the history of religions, revolutionary, inspired first Commissar of Enlightenment in the new Soviet government,[30] key to winning over the intelligentsia to the new project of constructing communism,[31] and even the one who coined the term "cultural revolution" (Lunacharsky 1981, 241), Lunacharsky is one of the most fascinating figures of the Russian Revolution. He was hailed by admirers throughout the new Russia as "a true apostle of enlightenment," as the representative of "the spiritual dictatorship of the proletariat" (Fitzpatrick 1970, 1). Internationally, he was recognized as one of the most erudite ministers of education throughout the world. It is far beyond my remit to deal with the vast realm of Lunacharsky's thought and life,[32] for my specific concern is his enthusiastic proposal for God-building.

With this impressive pedigree, let me turn to the God-building (*bogostroitel'stvo*) position that emerges from *Religion and Socialism*, a work that remains virtually unknown.[33] Apart from manifesting a significant level of research and reading, the work itself is structured into two long volumes, which are formally analogous to the Old and New Testaments (Lunacharsky 1908b, 1911).[34] The content too indicates such a structure, for the first provides the groundwork for the second, in which the focus is the New Testament and then key elements of the Christian tradition. The first volume begins with a discussion of the conditions for its publication, the long germination of the author's ideas, the eternally perplexing difficulty of defining religion, and perhaps the first survey of socialist positions on religion (including Engels, Plekhanov, Feuerbach, and Dietzgen)—finding that they fall short. From there, in what is arguably the less interesting part and most indebted to contemporary evolutionary theory of religion, Lunacharsky explores the origins of religion and its stages of development, moving from "primitive" forms such as animism, through polytheism to monotheism, and then focusing on the developments of Brahmanism, Judaism, and Hellenism (see also Lunacharsky 1985, 15–47, 147–51). Yet, even here, he deploys what will become a consistent process of discernment, seeking the revolutionary and democratic features of these forms. The most significant section is that on Judaism, for it deals with the Hebrew Bible (which Lunacharsky understood primarily as Jewish Scripture rather than Christian). Tellingly, he does not see Greek religion as a high point—like Hegel—from which humanity fell afterward, but focuses on its negative, idealist, and class side (Lunacharsky 1908b, 216–27).[35] The second volume, however, is more germane to my interests here, for it deals extensively with the New Testament, the historical Jesus, Paul, and then the early currents of Christianity in terms of millenarianism, Gnosticism, and orthodoxy with its clear statement in Augustine. From this point, it moves into Christian socialism, with a particular eye on its appeal in Russia, assesses the development of liberal theology, especially in Protestant Germany, and then discusses at some length contemporary European, mostly German, religious philosophy (Spinoza,

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Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and, most fittingly, Feuerbach). An important discussion of utopian socialism, important especially because of formative effect on and continued appeal for modern socialism, precedes the final treatment of Marx and Engels. Not only does this structure anticipate the later approach of Bloch, but it also generates its own problems concerning its apparently evolutionary and teleological nature. And it raises the tension that first faced Engels and Kautsky, namely, between the rupture offered by Marxism in relation to earlier forms of religiously inspired communism and continuity with those earlier traditions. I will return to these matters later.

The work itself was the result of long periods of often intense study. Despite his frequently avowed atheism and denial of a supra-sensory world,[36] he had studied the history of religion in depth on more than one occasion, beginning with works available in the Paris libraries, especially the Musée Guimet in 1897, escaping there after he had managed to avoid Russian military service due to his extreme shortsightedness. Once again, he returned to the subject during the six months of solitary confinement in the Taganka prison in Moscow in the second half of 1899. Here, despite insomnia through bad food and lack of exercise, he felt that he had clarified his "personal religion," which was to be expounded almost a decade later in *Religion and Socialism*. His poetry, plays, stories, literary and art criticism, and even reflections on education also evince a preoccupation with religious and often biblical themes (along with, apparently, social reform and married women), which may be read both in terms of the influence of those studies and the cause for them. Again and again, the settings of his creative writings are populated with spirits, angels, and demons, if not the gods themselves, or they are set in epochs, usually the Middle Ages, saturated with religion.[37] An attentive reader also finds theological themes laced throughout his writings on education, art, and literature. So we find reflections on Alexander Blok's Christian communism and left-wing Narodnik dreams, Tolstoy's mythical peasants as the model of his man "born of God" and the source of his retirement from the world to his little cabbage patch, Titian's sensitive paintings of Pope Paul III, which bring out his drive for temporal power alongside his doubts, and critical notes on the intersections of pagan and Christian themes in the opera "Legends of the City of Kitezh" (Lunacharsky 1981, 45–58; 1973, 159, 170–85, 210–17; 1985, 105–10).

Back to *Religion and Socialism*: The primary motivation for the work is at least twofold. To begin with, it seeks to explore the relations between religion and socialism, or, more specifically, of "determining the place of socialism among other religious systems" (Lunacharsky 1908b, 8). Note that he entitled the study *Religion and Socialism*. The arrangement of the two nouns is not accidental, with religion being the prior term. It may be seen as a direct response to Lenin's "Socialism and Religion" (Lenin 1905a[3]), in which socialism is the all-encompassing frame. More arrestingly, Lunacharsky wishes to locate socialism within other religious systems, or at least understand it in those terms. Here, apparently, is grist for the critical mill that charges socialism with being a secularized form of (especially Jewish and Christian) theology. Apart from the facetiousness of that suggestion, Lunacharsky outflanks it by arguing that socialism may be seen as another form of religion.

But what does he mean by "religion"? I will allow his complex understanding to emerge through the following points.

A second motivation is the need to provide a dimension to Marxism that goes beyond the focus on cold, " 'dry' economic theory" (Lunacharsky 1908b, 9). Instead, it prefers to emphasize enthusiastic, emotional, and ethical elements—what Ernst Bloch would later call a "warm stream" to Marxism. As for the cold stream, the man largely to blame was Plekhanov, the "father" of Russian Marxism. Lunacharsky has little time for Plekhanov,[38] finding him locked into pure rationalism, a feature he also found among the Mensheviks who held to a rigid theory of the stages of revolutionary development, moving via the maturity of the bourgeois revolution into an eventual communist revolution. Lunacharsky blamed this on Plekhanov's heavy reliance on Engels, although I would add that this was a partial Engels, mediated through the works read widely by the first generation of Marxists after the founders, works such as *Anti-Dühring* and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, rather than the enthusiastic and optimistic Engels of "On the History of Early Christianity," his amusing and youthful "Letters from Wuppertal," or the entertaining and voluminous correspondence (Engels 1894–95c, 1894–95d, 1839a, 1839b). Even the Bolsheviks tried to accommodate themselves to an "orthodox" Plekhanovite Marxism that was not really Marxism at all, or at least a one-sided distortion of Marxism.

The problem was that they had lost what may be called the "warm stream" of Marx's own thought and practice.[39] This was the sensitive, enthusiastic, ethical Marx, the one who, alongside his deeply scientific practice, also provided an emotional appeal as a moral philosopher, the one who, according to Lunacharsky, "said that poets need many caresses" (*The October Storm and After* 1967, 274). He was, in other words, a "voluntarist in politics," just as the Bolsheviks were in Lunacharsky's own day (a major reason for his own decision to the join the Bolsheviks), ready to seize the opportunity rather than wait for the inexorable march of history. Lunacharsky speaks openly of his enthusiastic "conversion to Marxism" and describes that system as a "deeply emotional impulse of the soul" (Lunacharsky 1908b, 9). Actually, Marx was the latest in a long line of prophetic figures, full of fiery condemnation of oppression and longing for deliverance, his precursors being no lesser figures than Isaiah, Christ, the Apostle Paul, and Spinoza. The key to Marxism was then a synthesis of science and irrepressible enthusiasm.

How to recover this lost warm stream of Marxism, full of enthusiasm and emotional appeal? One avenue was art, a lifelong passion for Lunacharsky, and the other was religion. In fact, he saw religion as the necessary groundwork for a full treatment of materialist aesthetics, regarding them here as intrinsically linked rather than as two discrete zones (1908b, 18).[40] By religion, he meant not the belief in divine figures or a supernatural world that determines this one,[41] but rather the emotive, collective, utopian, and very human elements of religion. He formulates this definition in different ways. It may be in the form of a question: How does religion answer the fundamental needs of the human spirit (1908b, 21)? Or, "religion is enthusiasm and 'without enthusiasm it is not given to man to create anything great' "—understanding "enthusiasm" here is its full sense of being full of

the spirit and of eschatological hope (1908b, 228). It may be expressed in the words of the Apostle Paul, "we are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24, quoted in 1908b, 49). Or, the "dreams of humanity" are expressed in nothing less than "religious myths and dogmas" (1908b, 7), and thereby religion marks the contradiction between the ideal of those dreams and reality (1908b, 42).[42] If the latter point comes close to Marx's idea of religion as providing a heart and soul in heartless and soulless conditions, the former is more heavily influenced by Feuerbach.[43] It is worth noting that Lunacharsky is far from seeing religion in a utilitarian manner, as useful for socialism, whether in terms of appealing to those with a religious bent or in terms of appropriating some peripheral elements of religion. Instead, he seeks the core of religion, its workings, contradictions, and possibilities. To this end, he focuses not "so much on the external socio-economic fate of institutions,"[44] but on the analysis of the main religious ideas and sentiments, "the meaning of which must be comprehended in the light of our religious consciousness" (1911, 126) a consciousness that is found in the connection between collective ideals of socialism and the organic and conscious needs of one's own life. The result is rather remarkable, for the reader encounters a Bolshevik discussing at some length theological matters such as Christology, justification by faith, salvation, and eschatology.

The main feature of Lunacharsky's contribution is the sustained awareness of the political ambivalence of religion, which thereby requires a strategy of discernment. That is, while he deeply appreciates Feuerbach's (and implicitly Durkheim's later) effort to see religion in a positive light, Feuerbach's religion is ultimately a little too romantic. In religion, human beings may well project best of themselves, yet Lunacharsky is all too aware that religion can be brutally oppressive. In this respect, he sets out to counteract the oppressive forms of religion, in which it may easily become an ideological means of ensuring subservience, resignation to one's lot, punishment for sin by a vengeful God, and the offer of a reward in the next world (Lunacharsky 1981, 84–85, 150–51; 1973, 99–100; 1985, 233). However, before I deal with this feature of his analysis in more detail, I focus on a number of other items: The role of myth and poetry; the religious drive for collective life, especially in Christian communism; and the revolutionary tradition, in its continuities and ruptures, from the ancient prophets to Marx. Each element may found in both the early *Religion and Socialism* and many of his later, postrevolutionary works.

Myth, Poetry, and Human Ingots

> In a word—one who is not yet a species being. (Lunacharsky 1911, 337)

One matter does need to be clarified before I discuss these points and that is the supposed worship of human beings. God-building tends to be understood by some who have commented upon it as a proposal to replace the traditional gods with human beings (Fitzpatrick 1970, 1; Bergman 1990). We are the new gods, it is suggested, and should focus all our religious energies upon ourselves. Some isolated statements may be understood in this sense, but to do so is to misunderstand the nature of Lunacharsky's proposal. It is God-*building*.[45] That is, the gods

provide ideal models of human desire and achievement (goodness, hope, knowledge, social transformation), models to which we aspire. However, we are in our current state far from such an achievement—hence the need for a long process of construction. Or, in his own terms, we are living ingots, still to be shaped: "Our ideal is the image of man, of man like a god, in relation to whom we are all raw material only, merely ingots waiting to be given shape, living ingots that bear their own ideal within themselves" (Lunacharsky 1981, 57).[46]

In such statements, however, the acclaimed poet shows forth, albeit in terms of the language used. This poetic, image-laden language is characteristic of all his writing. But he also reads texts in terms of the same sensibility, especially the Bible (which features strongly in both volumes). The Gospel narratives of Jesus are full of drama, linguistic power, tragedy, and triumph (Lunacharsky 1911, 18–22). Above all, he finds the Apostle Paul a writer of remarkable skill, the bright and sparkling poet of early Christianity, and the internationalist democrat who at the same time spiritualizes Christian thought (1911, 27–60). The fact that accurate historical evidence of Jesus outside Gospels is not available (1911, 13–14) provides Paul with great scope to reshape the myths of Christ at the right hand of God, as the dying and rising God who acts as the culminating point of all that has gone before (1911, 38–40). By contrast, the Gnostics—or at least some of them—produce poetic gibberish that rubs in the wrong way all of Lunacharsky's sensibilities. It should come as no surprise, then, that he should see the importance of myth (anticipating Ernst Bloch by many decades). With its metaphoric language, its ability to speak of matters that cannot be expressed in ordinary language, myth points us to the ineffable appeal of religion. Indeed, religion itself may be characterized as myth, a "wonderful, graceful interweaving of tales" (1908b, 191). And these myths are full of the strange, the savory, the comic, and the scandalous nature of stories that produce delight and awe. Only in such language do the artists of tomorrow reach out to new, or rather bind the gold of the past with the art of the future (1908b, 102).

Christian Communism

> Christian ideals are to such an extent contrary to the established order of things, that a sincere Christian cannot fail to notice this and not feel the greatest hatred and contempt for those imaginary servants of Christ. (Lunacharsky 1911, 158)

Within that framework, Christian communism looms large in Lunacharsky's analysis. He would never relinquish the point that early Christianity was characterized by comradeship, equality, and honesty, that the early message was a "Gospel of the poor," of the slaves, artisans, and proletarians,[47] and that the early communities were "permeated by a spirit of collectivism," sharing what little property they had (Lunacharsky 1911, 111).[48] On this matter, he draws upon all of the key texts in the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospels concerning such communism and the resolute opposition to acquiring private property (1911, 65). Lunacharsky has no hesitation in calling this a form of "democratic, egalitarian socialism" throughout *Religion and Socialism* (see also Lunacharsky 1985, 114, 76, 84–85, 92, 120–21,

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173–76). A number of elements play a role here, including the democratic virtues of the God of the Hebrew Bible, offering a sense of justice, aversion to power, to luxury, and to the associated vices and crimes (Lunacharsky 1911, 7); the role of the Essenes and their monastic communism, as well as the Ebionites, "the poor" (1911, 11, 23–26, 35–36, 61); the subsequent history of Christian socialism, with all of its continuities and breaks (1911, 139–82).

At times, he qualifies these statements, pointing out that the communist dimension tended to be other-worldly, that the communism in question did not address the question of production, remaining within the realm of consumption, and that the democratic element lasted only as long as the early church was made up of the lower classes. All of these enable him to deploy a narrative of betrayal, if not a fall from grace. Soon enough, it becomes a religion of power and hierarchy, ready to assume that God justifies the rich and mighty so that they may assert their influence over the masses, promising reward in heaven in exchange for subservience on earth. How did this happen? Lunacharsky's answer focuses on Gnosticism, which is the aristocratic answer to the democratic and revolutionary forms of Christianity (1911, 69–101). Here may be found the sources of the doctrine of the Logos, so crucial to Orthodox Christianity, and of individualism and thereby of individual power (which he is clear does not derive from Paul).[49] Above all, it enables an aristocratic takeover of the church and the marginalizing of the revolutionary communist side of Christianity (1911, 104–39). In other words, Gnosticism did not fail, as the conventional narratives of the early ecumenical councils would have us believe, but succeeded in gaining control at structural and doctrinal levels. The last chance for an alternative lay with the ambiguous work of Clement and Origen, especially in their efforts to produce syntheses of communist and aristocratic elements, but they failed, as may be seen in the full statement of orthodox Christianity in Augustine and the clear class identification of the clergy with the ruling class (1911, 106–22). As he sums up in the later debates with Vvedensky, a transformation took place from a "chaotic primitive church into a strong, cunning, subtle instrument of oppression" (Lunacharsky 1985, 92). Whether this account holds up is another matter, but Lunacharsky needs what may be called a narrative of the Fall from that early communism (a narrative found in its paradigmatic form in Genesis 2–3). Class is inextricably tied up with this development, for although the original church may have appealed to poor peasants and workers, it soon attracted a morally bereft aristocracy and propertied classes, who then smoothed the passage for Christianity to become a religion of empire (Lunacharsky 1985, 121–24). While the need for some account of how early Christianity became the church of today is necessary, a Fall narrative is problematic for a number of reasons. It assumes a betrayal of an initial, original impulse that one must seek to restore. In that respect, Lunacharsky's argument falls into the perpetual logic of Christian reform movements, which seek the elusive origin to justify their own positions. Furthermore, it substitutes a linear narrative for a more subtle analysis that recognizes the tensions at the heart of a religion such as Christianity. This subtlety emerges in Lunacharsky's concern with the theological and political ambivalence of Christianity—a theme that is in many respects more important in his study (see in the following).

More astutely, Lunacharsky introduces a crucial distinction into his discussion of Christian communism: Communal, democratic, and radically equal living constitutes only one dimension, for the other element is revolution itself. Christianity may have exhibited elements that qualify it as communist in the first sense, but what about revolution? Here Lunacharsky is unequivocal: Christianity was also revolutionary, since it included a rough justice for the wealthy and ruling class:

> The communist spirit of early, popular Christianity is not in doubt. But was it revolutionary? Yes, of course. In its negation, the radical, merciless negation of the civilized world of the time, in posing in its place a completely new way of life, it was revolutionary. Any ideology that truly reflects the mood of the oppressed masses can only be revolutionary in its depth. (Lunacharsky 1911, 139)[50]

He deploys this distinction between communist living and revolution in a number of ways, at times combining them and at others exploring their contradictions, but here he sees enough similarity on both counts between Marxism and Christianity to call them communist, for "their ideals are partly congruent" (Lunacharsky 1911, 159).

Revolution and the Revolutionary Tradition

> In a religious society one cannot make a revolution or a broader reform that is not a revolution in the field of the relationship with God. (Lunacharsky 1908b, 70)

Not only do Christianity and Marxism share the communist and revolutionary drive, but revolution itself becomes the key moment of God-building, constituting a heightened time in which the new person may be constructed. But how exactly do they relate to one another, given the historical gap between the time of early Christianity and modern Marxism? Is it a continuous tradition, with the earlier manifestation feeding eventually into Marxism? Not quite, for the connection between them is somewhat more complicated. Given that there are traditions of Christian communism, the best way to understand his approach is to distinguish between the false and true traditions of Christian communism.

The false tradition is precisely the recent Christian socialism that appealed to so many. In England, it may have been Carlyle and the radical clergy; in Germany, Naumann and Kutter led the push; in Russia, Tolstoy was the great proponent, but it also included Bulgakov for a time, Merezhkovsky, and Metropolitan Filaret (Lunacharsky 1911, 155–82). But why are they false? One reason Lunacharsky states clearly: They may have picked up certain radical elements of earlier Christian revolutionary forms, but they offer aberrations—a cold and drab alternative, a tendency to adopt all of the secularist and free-thinking approaches so that they are hardly Christian at all, an ineradicable bourgeois sentiment, if not actually a counterrevolutionary one. The other reason is not stated directly, but I would suggest that Lunacharsky had to make such an argument in order to claim the ground for Marxism. If he had granted them too much legitimacy, then one would wonder at the need for modern socialism at all. These Christian socialists

would be enough. Instead, he seeks to show that they are not the true inheritors of radical and revolutionary religious traditions, for that honor belongs to Marxism, the "great new religion" (1911, 182) that will replace all the others.

By contrast, the true tradition of revolutionary religious communism is ancient indeed, running all the way back in the Bible to a dimension of the Hebrew God, Yahweh. Quoting the Bible extensively, he traces Samuel the staunch antimonarchist, the rebellious people after the death of Solomon (Lunacharsky 1908b, 163–64), but above all the Hebrew prophets: "Great prophets are always on the borders, among seething social struggle. With eagle eyes peering into the future, they provide a slogan, generalize the struggle, scourge the enemies of their ideas, console supporters" (1908b, 70). So we find Amos the firebrand, bright Hosea, Isaiah the democrat, Jeremiah the furiously eloquent, elements of the Law, the Apostle Paul as the revolutionary, democratic internationalist, and of course, Jesus the scourge of the propertied and wealthy (1908b, 165–78).[51] Beyond the biblical text, Lunacharsky also discerns this prophetic tradition in the "everlasting Gospel" of Joachim of Fiore (a favorite of Ernst Bloch), adding Francis of Assisi, Fra Dolcino, Thomas Müntzer and the Peasant Revolution, the Münster Revolution of 1534–35,[52] even the Puritans of the English Revolution (Lunacharsky 1911, 55, 141, 145–55; 1908b, 183–84; see also 1985, 92–102, 120–25, 181–83). Here indeed are the fiery preachers of the three ages—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in the spirit of the prophets, with the last, eschatological age about to happen. And (once again like Bloch) he is not afraid to claim the millenarian, eschatological dimension of all these prophets for Marxism (1908b, 171–72; 1911, 34–35, 61–69).

This complex tradition, with its shortcomings and achievement, leads ultimately to revolution, but I have not yet explicated how Lunacharsky understands such a revolution. In this case, since the only revolution he had experienced at the time of writing *Religion and Socialism* was the failed one of 1905, with 1917 yet to come, I draw on some other works to gain a sense of his approaches to revolution.

One approach was to draw on the theme of sinless sacrifice, specifically in relation to the 1905 revolution. Soon after Bloody Sunday, Lunacharsky penned an extraordinary poem, "On the Anniversary of the Ninth of January" (1905b). The poem takes the voice of a young man who relates both his and his father's participation in the march, led by Father Gapon, to present a petition to the tsar. Despite what the two protagonists initially believed—having followed the advice of the "good priest Gapon" who spoke to these workers every Sunday afternoon "in a workers' meeting"—the march was to turn bloody. Gapon had convinced the workers that all they need to do is be good Christians and address their grievances to the earthly father, the tsar. Biblical allusions appear throughout, marking key theological and liturgical moments. It begins with the lamp of hope that "has not been extinguished" (Exodus 27:20–21; Leviticus 24:2–4), which is also the lamp in a home's icon corner. The icon image itself is carried in the march (Genesis 1:26) and the people give voice to their suffering, murmuring against their rulers (Exodus 15:24 and throughout the wilderness wanderings). Thus, with the icons before them, anticipating God's representative on earth to respond to their prayer of supplication, the crowd sings hymns and smiles. They are in for a rude shock,

for the commander of the Cossack regiment does not wish to listen. He has his orders: To talk to the Tsar directly, like the nobles do, is not for ordinary men. On that terrible day, the "clouds poured blood" (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20; Revelation 6:12), the Cossack regiment fires on the sinless workers (Isaiah 52–53), and the old man is killed. The white snow, a symbol of sinlessness, is turned red with innocent blood (Isaiah 1:18). Broken icons lie scattered about. Of course, the whole father–son relation is deeply theological, except that on this occasion, the father dies a sinless death. In response, the son now vows that next time, instead of religious banners, he will carry a red flag; instead of icons, he will take to the procession "bombs, guns, and dynamite," and they will sing not church hymns but *La Marseillaise*.[53]

The successful revolution was yet to come. October 1917 was indeed an ecstatic moment for a man given to an intensity of feeling. In the midst of the revolution itself, he shared his excitement, his profound spiritual ecstasy, with all around him. To Sukhanov, he exclaimed, "These events are epoch-making! Our children's children will bow their heads before their grandeur!" (Fitzpatrick 1970, 1). He wrote that life was "colossal in everything, tragic, and significant," indeed that it was "the greatest, most definitive act of 'God-building,' the most dazzling and decisive step towards fulfilling the program laid down by Nietzsche—'the world is without meaning, but we must give it meaning' " (Lunacharsky 1919, 31). Caught up in these immense, strongly felt experiences, he was not afraid to speak of God, albeit a God that has now given himself to the world. All this should make it clear that the revolution constituted not so much the worship of human achievement, but a heightened process during which human beings took a leap forward in the process of shaping those living ingots.

Ambivalence: Between Democracy and Oppression

> The gap between the old and new image of God becomes so deep that the deity was divided into two gods. (Lunacharsky 1908b, 75)

I have left the most significant contribution of *Religion and Socialism* until last, namely the consistent uncovering of the political and theological ambivalence of religion and the consequent need for discernment. Again and again, Lunacharsky points out that a religion like Judaism or Christianity faces an inescapable tension between the revolutionary and the counterrevolutionary. The gods themselves may be the embodiment of democracy, the aspirations of the poor, and of resolute hatred for the rich and powerful; yet, the gods may also sit very snugly in the seat of power (Lunacharsky 1908b, 64). At times, this awareness takes a less-insightful form, such as the argument that early Christian communism was systematically marginalized and that the church fell from grace to become a religion of empire (as I noted earlier). At other times, he may follow a conventional opposition, such as that between the priests and the prophets, between ideologues of power and their fiery critics (1908b, 68–69). And at times, he may lose his dialectical sharpness, as when he lumps the Reformation in with liberal Christianity, an expression of the new power of the bourgeoisie (here he follows Engels; Lunacharsky 1911, 193–99). Yet, even here, a glimmer of dialectical analysis appears, for the

Reformation failed to live up to its initial agenda—freedom of individual, reading the Bible, freedom of faith, absence of ritual, and external piety.

This glimmer opens up the full exercise of a dialectical approach to political ambivalence, in which revolutionary and reactionary elements are inseparable, the one enabling the other. This is a tension internal to the logic of the biblical material in which those texts may simultaneously side with power and be a source for protest. The examples are many, of which his favored prophets are one:

> The prophets were *revolutionaries* because they fought for the people who were oppressed and they sought a social upheaval in the spirit of egalitarianism. They were [also] *reactionaries* because they placed their ideal in the past, in the simplicity of the morals and in the patriarchal equality of the pastoral period, and they fought against economic progress that had to go through concentrations of land and of capital. (Lunacharsky 1908b, 165)

It is no surprise, then, that a great prophet like Isaiah (whom Lunacharsky quotes extensively) was both a democrat and compromiser with the ruling class (1908b, 169). In other words, the revolutionary impulse of the prophets is itself enabled by a backward-looking, pastoral, small-proprietor, and anti-progress perspective. Without the latter, they would not have been revolutionary, yet that reactionary element ultimately hobbles the unleashing of a full revolutionary approach.

A comparable tension appears in the poet of early Christianity, Paul (Lunacharsky 1911, 41–45, 53, 58–60). In response to the delay in Christ's return, Paul constructs an idealized, mystical, and other-worldly theology that spiritualizes a very earthly and political movement. The heavenly face of Christ now overshadows the worldly person (1911, 53). At the same time, by means of that spiritualization, Paul breaks through to a more international and democratic form of Christianity: It is no longer ethnically and nationally limited, for it belongs to all. The analysis of Paul becomes even more subtle, for in internationalizing Christianity, he overcomes yet another tension, now within early Christianity. That form, which Lunacharsky admires, may have been resolutely communistic, yet it was trapped within a fierce nationalism and hatred of foreign oppressors. Paul's response both moves away from that early communism and negates its fiercely nationalistic focus. Indeed, he was able to do so only through an anticommunist spiritualization. Even so, at this higher level (*Aufhebung*), Paul offers a new revolutionary doctrine: Justification by faith is itself deeply revolutionary, for it destroys the privilege of the rich and powerful (1911, 55). Finally, it is precisely this mystical theology that makes of Paul the great mythmaker, producing a reshaped myth of the dying and rising Christ, a myth that Lunacharsky admires for its sparkling poetic power.

One may even see this tension embodied in the deity. The aspirations of the people of the Old Testament for freedom, for social justice, for equality, if not communism, are inspired by none other than God. Yet, with the establishment of a new order, this revolutionary God turns into a conservative or moderate liberal (1911, 76). Or, as Lunacharsky puts it later, the tribal god, Yahweh, appears as "ally of the lower classes, the god of revolution," one who overthrows tyrants and

those who have grown fat on the bones of others. At the same time, he is a "cruel commander," one who demands bloody sacrifice (the first-born and circumcision) and the complete extermination of whole peoples, even down to the children (Lunacharsky 1985, 50). Christ too embodies these two faces, being both a "communist," "a humble teacher of wisdom," full of life and the desire for a higher good. Yet, he is also "horrible and grim," fostering in the hearts of people a desire for revenge (Lunacharsky 1911, 139–40).

A religion like Christianity, therefore, may take oppressive forms, all too often an expression of the dominance of nobles and priests, and it may also be "essentially a complete denial of all noble rank, of all noble birth, of any war, of any vengeful feeling" (Lunacharsky 1981, 150). Or, to echo Ernst Bloch many years later, Christianity may be both a "creed of democracy" and a justification for "meekly bearing the yoke" of oppression (Lunacharsky 1985, 92).[54]

I close with a slightly different example, from Lunacharsky's literary analysis, but one that expresses this awareness of the ambivalence of Christianity in a unique way. It appears in the midst of a long engagement with Bakhtin's study of Dostoyevsky (Lunacharsky 1973, 79–106). Here, Lunacharsky offers a sharp analysis of Gogol, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky. He locates the first two at either end of the political spectrum, Gogol as a supporter of the landowners and Tolstoy as an implacable warrior against such slavery. Both can easily justify such positions by resorting to the Gospels. In between, we find Dostoyevsky, who both avoids a spiritual break with socialism while anathematizing materialist socialism. This tension becomes the key to Dostoyevsky's polyphony, characterized in a brilliant passage by Lunacharsky, worth quoting in full:

> He devoted all his genius for thought, feeling and character-drawing to the erection of altars rising to heaven. There is something of everything: the subtlest sophism and the faith of a charcoal-burner; the frenzy of the "fool in Christ" and refined analysis; the poet's facile gift of winning over the reader by the acute insight attributed to the religious characters, etc. Yet Dostoyevsky returns in doubt again and again to survey his many-storied edifices, understanding that they are not built to last and that, at the first underground tremor caused by the movement of the fettered Titan whom he has buried in his own heart, the whole pile of spillikins is going to collapse. (Lunacharsky 1973, 104)

"At the first underground tremor caused by the movement of the fettered Titan whom has buried in his own heart"—only Lunacharsky could express the deep, internal ambivalence of Christianity in such a fashion.

Summing Up

> It is not necessary to look for God. Let us give him to the world! There is no God in the world, but there might be. The road of struggle for socialism . . . is what is meant by God-building. (Lunacharsky quoted in Yermakov 1975, 35)

In looking back over the extensive project that is *Religion and Socialism*, Lunacharsky was all too aware of the partial nature of the work; yet he felt he

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had achieved some clarification concerning religion in relation to Marxism: "I tried to open wide the door of the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies of emotional Marxism. My book is at the threshold of the doorway" (Lunacharsky 1911, 394). In concluding this analysis of his project, I would like to raise three points: His argument that Marxism offers a culmination and higher synthesis of religion; the tension between old and new; and the subsequent fate of God-building.

To begin with, what does it mean to say that communism offers the highest synthesis of religion? Lunacharsky speaks of Marxism as a new religion, the most complete synthesis, the fifth great religion that emerged out of Judaism. He describes Marx as a prophet in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets, of Zoroaster, and of Jesus. These are arresting formulations; yet they raise some questions. Those who ascribe to the hypothesis that Marxism is merely a secularized form of Jewish and Christian salvation history will sagely nod their heads, for Lunacharsky expresses an obvious truth. The catch here is that this common perception, which has become a given due a thousand repetitions, collapses under the weight of evidence. As I have argued elsewhere (Boer 2011), this was precisely the religiously saturated and deeply apocalyptic version of socialism that Marx and Engels resolutely opposed. The fact that Lunacharsky feels called upon to introduce these elements into Marxism indicates their absence within that system of thought and action. Furthermore, the argument that Marxism offers a new and higher synthesis of religion faces the thorny problem of Marx's own largely negative understanding of religion, as the sign of a world out-of-joint, as the response to real suffering that must itself be overcome for religion to fade away, as an other-worldly and empty belief in God, and as the expression of bourgeois individualism (Lunacharsky 1911, 337). On this matter, Lunacharsky feels called upon to redefine religion and take a step beyond Marx to suggest that Marx's sense of religious feeling is "the personal understanding of the value of life only in connection with a grand sweep of collective life" (1911, 347; see also 335). Another problem is that the grand narrative, from the prophets to Marx, follows an evolutionary, if not teleological path that can culminate only in Marxism. On this matter, Lunacharsky is wary indeed, avoiding such a framework and preferring to describe Marxism as a search for what is already almost found (1911, 365). We search for the lost item, at times coming close to finding it, at others being far away. Marxism comes closest of them all.

I suggest, however, that Lunacharsky touches here on the perpetual problem facing revolutionaries, that of rupture and continuity (Lenin also faced this problem—see the fifth chapter). A new movement, especially one that achieves revolutionary success, must of necessity define itself over against all that has gone before, for otherwise it would not be so new. Yet, new movements do not appear ex nihilo, for they build upon what has gone before. Indeed, in his approach to art, architecture, and literature, Lunacharsky was a strong proponent of drawing up the best of the past and transforming it in light of the new situation. This tension between continuity and rupture shapes Lunacharsky's formulations of the prophetic, Christian communist moments that anticipate Marxism, and it also enables one to understand his arguments for breaks and discontinuities, particularly in his effort to show that modern Christian socialism is not the inheritor of

earlier revolutionary currents, and is thereby also not the forerunner of modern socialism.

I suggest that this tension enables us to make sense of Lunacharsky's occasional disavowals of the connections between Christian and Marxist forms of communism. These are more common after the October Revolution, when he was Commissar of Enlightenment. For example, in his debates with Vvedensky in 1925, he felt the need to tone down his enthusiastic assertions concerning the connections between Christian communism and Marxism. While he admits that in certain respects, Christianity "is closely linked with communism," especially in its early forms and also in Christian sects of the sixteenth century, he points out that all these likenesses still do not mean that Christianity "really rotates around the axis of socialist ideas." Now the other side of Christianity comes to the fore—its "colossal historic privilege" and its tendency to split into many groups all claiming the truth make it impossible to find any type of Christianity "that could be called true" (Lunacharsky 1985, 194). In order to drive his point home, he invokes nothing less than the saying of Matthew 19:24: "And I tell you it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The camel becomes the church, "loaded with its religious treasures" and the kingdom of heaven on the other side of the revolutionary eye of the needle is, of course, socialism (1985, 201). In short, the very idea of a contemporary communist-Christian like Vvedensky is an "absurd phenomenon" (1985, 111).

At one level, these arguments may be seen as tactical. With the erudite Vvedensky threatening to trap him with the point that socialism must be seen within the broader framework of religion, invoking Lunacharsky's arguments from *Religion and Socialism* to do so (Vvedensky 1985b, 220), Lunacharsky opts to retreat from some of his earlier formulations. Yet, in doing so, he manifests once again the tension between rupture and continuity. Emphasize too much the break and you lose all contact with what has gone before, attempting to construct the new order from a clean slate. Move in the other direction and stress the continuity with various streams that have preceded your own movement and you lose the newness of our own cause. Depending on the circumstances, Lunacharsky leans now on one side, now on the other, attempting mediation between them. Occasionally, he does achieve a deeper mediation, as when he subtly reinterprets Marx's eleventh thesis: "The old philosophies sought to interpret the world, the new aim is to remake it" (Lunacharsky 1908b, 148). If we understand the old philosophies as religious ones, then their *remaking* (and not creation) is what he seeks with God-building.

Finally, I cannot emphasize enough a point that will become important as Lunacharsky's encounter with Lenin unfolds: Lunacharsky *maintained much of the language of God-building well after the condemnation by Lenin*, especially during his time as Commissar of Enlightenment after the October Revolution. The appearance in my treatment on Lunacharsky of citations from later works, particularly from his texts on education and art, indicate quite clearly that he did so. He may have made occasional half-hearted mentions of his former "errors" but the reality was that he saw his role as commissar very much in light of the God-building project. Why? Unlike a bevy of Marxists, Lunacharsky was simply not persuaded that religion would fade away, whether before the inexorable

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march of science, or reason, or even through revolution—as held by so many of his comrades (1908b, 22–30). In this respect, he was prescient indeed, foreseeing the complex questions posed by the situation after October 1917. Is this perhaps why he persisted with his God-building?

From October to Utopia: Lunacharsky and Bloch

> To the *warm stream* of Marxism, however, belong liberating intention and materialistically humane, humanely materialist real tendency, towards whose goal all these disenchantments are undertaken. (Bloch 1995, vol. 1, 209; 1985a, vol. 1, 241)

Many are the lines that lead both into and out of Lunacharsky's position. I have identified the emphasis on communal life in early Christianity as an inspiration, as well as the biblical prophets, Jesus and Paul in the New Testament, and the fiery medieval preachers. I would also suggest that his own Orthodox tradition plays a role, for here salvation is a process of *theosis* (deification), in which Christ overcomes the breakdown of communion with God rendered through sin, thereby restoring an even fuller humanity as the union of divine and human, in which human beings leap beyond the state of creation, leaping beyond the mere image of God to become the likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). But what strikes one is the way Lunacharsky anticipates many later developments and debates within Marxism. For example, we may see his work as a forerunner to the "humanist" Marxist tradition, inspired by the publication in 1932 of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx 1844f, 1844g), championed by crucial figures such as Henri Lefebvre, opposed by Althusser's "scientific" Marxism, and then fostered most recently by the Humanist Marxist Organization (see www.marxisthumanists.org and the online journal *The International Marxist-Humanist*). Lunacharsky's move is all the more remarkable, since he did not have access to these works by Marx.

By far the most significant feature of this work is the way it foreshadows Ernst Bloch's lifelong utopian project in so many ways (Bloch 1972, 1968, 1995, 1985a, 2000, 1985b). I have not been able to determine whether Bloch knew of Lunacharsky's text (if so, it would be a minor reference, buried in a passing allusion, rather than a clear acknowledgment of his forerunner), but the anticipation is striking. I have mentioned the fact that we may see Lunacharsky's contribution in terms of what Bloch termed the "warm stream" of Marxism, for Bloch too sought out the emotional, enthusiastic, and aesthetic appeal of Marxism as a counterbalance to its coldly rational dimension. Both Bloch and Lunacharsky shared similar, almost romantic personalities, able to feel the experiences of life deeply, apt to be carried away by a poem, fairy tale, song, drama, or nursery rhyme.[55] To that may be added a crucial motivation that Bloch shared with Lunacharsky: In order to win over the peasants and common workers, as well as (for Lunacharsky) the intelligentsia, Marxism needed far more than hard reason and political action, for it also needed to touch the worldview in which peasants lived, if not the many workers who had so recently left the land for the factories.[56] That worldview, as I argued in the previous chapter on Lenin and the Gospels,

was structured in terms of biblical narratives, quotidian religious practices, and theological beliefs.

Like Lunacharsky, Bloch sought to break the dam holding back this warm stream by delving deeply in literature (particularly Goethe's *Faust*), art, and music, but above all religion, focusing on his favorite text, the Bible. Here were to be found the prophetic tradition of condemnation of the downtrodden, paradigms of collective life, the argument for the rising up of the *homo absconditus* (in place of the *deus absconditus*), utopian dimensions, and even the political ambivalence of Christianity, all of which may be appropriated so powerfully for Marxism.

For Bloch, the images of collective life are found above all in the countertraditions of the Bible, especially the rebellions against authority and power. Here the downtrodden would voice their dissatisfaction and resistance, opposing together the impositions from above and thereby providing glimpses of the new Eden, the New Jerusalem. Steering more closely to Lunacharsky, Bloch argued that the "exodus out of Yahweh," the "atheism" that lies within Christianity, would lead to the full realization of human potential (Bloch 1972, 1968). Rarely if ever does a day or a life end with a sense of fulfillment, much remains undone and wished for, a feature that not only gives voice to the utopian urge within us all, but will also be realized when human beings become aware that we are the ones who can achieve what we have traditionally regarded as the prerogative of the gods.

As I have argued elsewhere (Boer 2007, 51–52), Bloch wrests the theological doctrine of transcendence away from God and returns it to human beings, so much so that transcendence is no longer a divine attribute but a human one. Like Lunacharsky before him, Bloch bravely states that the only means for human beings to achieve their potential is to banish God from existence. Nonetheless, Bloch's deployment of this theme is arguably more sustained than in Lunacharsky's hands, especially when he steps beyond human beings and identifies this process in matter and nature (Bloch 1972, 229–31; 1968, 303–5). Transcendence now becomes a transformed world, that is, utopia itself.

The utopian drive of religion also links Bloch to Lunacharsky, except that Bloch would make utopia the consistent search of his life's work. As we saw, for Lunacharsky, socialism signals the forward push of humanity, which is expressed in the arts, music, beauty, and religion. Above all, the deepest longing for a qualitatively different future is focused on the communist revolution, the decisive moment of God-building. In Bloch's hands, utopia becomes the universal term for socialism, a desire and hope found in the myriad moments of the full range of human and natural existence, from glimpses in everyday life, through festivals and myths and literature, to the revolution itself. Yet, Bloch gives this search a decisive twist: If revolution is the act of the oppressed against their masters, then utopian glimpses of that revolution will be found in many stories of rebellion. One finds them in what are now narratives and myths of "sin," of resistance to the white-guard god of the despots. In the Bible, these include the story of Eden, with its oppressive God who treats the first humans as children only to find that they rebel in league with an intriguing serpent; in the fatal conflict of Cain and Abel, where another face of God appears, the one who protects Cain with the well-known mark; in Jacob's wrestling with God (El in this case,

not Yahweh) in Genesis 32; in the rebellion of the tower of Babel in Genesis 11; in the Nazirites, those enigmatic figures who vow not to cut their hair, not to drink strong drink, and call the people back to their desert, Bedouin-like life in the wilderness; in the oppressive deity of Moses and Aaron, who seeks to punish the people's constant murmur of rebellion in the wilderness; in the insurrections of Miriam, Moses's sister, and Korah against that authority; even in the two figures of Moses, who is both liberator of the slaves and theocratic tyrant in the wilderness; in the protests of Job against his inhuman treatment by this same Yahweh; in the prophetic denunciations of economic maltreatment and religious hypocrisy; in Jesus's stringent criticisms of the quislings who would accommodate the Roman colonizers; and in the fiery revolutionary protests of the Apocalypse against empire and its gods. At times, the bloodthirsty, vengeful God has the upper hand, but at others (admittedly less frequently) the rebels win out through cunning and ruse.

All of these bring us to the political ambivalence of Christianity, of which Lunacharsky became fully aware. In an unwitting echo of Lunacharsky, Bloch observes in relation to the Bible that it is "often a scandal to the poor" but also "the Church's bad conscience" (Bloch 1972, 25, 21; 1968, 53, 41). In order to trace how this tension works itself out in biblical materials, Bloch identifies the crucial dialectic whereby the very myths of oppression and punishment for "sin" are the means by which moments of rebellion are preserved. That is, both elements are inescapable dimensions of the biblical heritage, a situation that demands the most astute discernment of myths. The Bible has often been and continues to be read as a friend of the rich and powerful *and* it has been and continues to be an inspiration for revolutionary groups seeking to overthrow those same powerful fat cats. Throughout his great works on utopia—*The Spirit of Utopia* and *Principle of Hope*—this ambivalence, or rather multivalence, shows its face time and again. However, in the much neglected *Atheism in Christianity*, it is at the forefront of Bloch's thought, particularly in relation to the Bible.

At times, Bloch goes too far, identifying a constant thread of both demonical rulers and resistance throughout the Bible, resistance that often ended up, he suggests, in militant sects that were systematically wiped out, such as the Ophites who saw the true God in the serpent of Eden and regarded the creator God as a vile demiurge. I would prefer more scattered and disconnected resistances, local and by no means necessarily connected. At this point, Bloch's valuable strategy of discernment comes into its own: A process of dialectical judgment as to what is liberating and what seeks to crush such hopes. Even God is split and ambivalent—does he not have many names and identities, such as El, Yahweh, Adonai, El Elyon, El Shaddai, El Berit, El Olam, El Roi, Abir, Pahad, Shebaot, Adon, and even Baal? God may appear as vengeful and terror-full, but then this same God turns out to be a champion of those who protest, fall, and protest again. In the latter case, one may identify an incipient atheism, a protest against the alignment of the divine with abusive human power. And that protest leads to human beings finally being able to stand on their own feet, no longer scraping the ground in abject obeisance. Bloch too, it seems, was a God-builder, carrying on the tradition and enriching it, even if he may not have been aware of Lunacharsky's text.

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However, we need to return to Lenin and his response to Lunacharsky's God-building. Before doing so, I would like to offer some assessment of God-building itself, in the hands of both Lunacharsky and Bloch. To begin with, Lunacharsky has indeed recovered the oft-forgotten fullness of theology, which is often caricatured as other-worldly, concerned more with the supernatural world and its working than the natural one. By contrast, theology is incredibly rich, dealing with very human and this-worldly matters: It concerns the nature of mythology (the central stories with which theology deals), nature and the environment (creation), with the human condition (anthropology), why the world is the way it is (harmatology or the doctrine of sin), the problem of suffering (theodicy), the nature of the human subject (via Christology), how human beings might live together (ecclesiology), and the nature of history and hopes for the future (eschatology). In other words, theology deals as much with immanence as transcendence, with history, the human condition, social interrelations, and nature, as it does with the gods. Even the divine—no matter how self-sufficient it may in some traditions be argued to be—is known only through its interaction with the mundane. Or, to use terms I have deployed before, theology is as much a secular as an antisecular program, focused on this world and this age (the meaning of *saecularum*) as with one that is beyond this one (Boer 2009a, 29–30, 250–51). To his credit, Lunacharsky has recovered the very this-worldly nature of theology.

Furthermore, the fact that Lunacharsky and Bloch following him found it necessary to import religious themes into Marxism indicates that Marxism is not the secularized religion it is so often assumed to be.[57] Usually propagated with a polemical edge (you may think you are atheistic, but you are really religious deep down), this assertion has gained the authority of a million repetitions.[58] Critics may point to the rituals of socialist states, without noting that ritual is a common feature of human activity and thereby not necessarily religious. Or they may suggest that the fervor, utopianism, and capacity for martyrdom are drawn from religious commitment (Bergman 1990, 221). Or they may follow Nikolai Berdyaev, earlier a Marxist but later a theologically inspired anticommunist, or Karl Löwith or Alasdair MacIntrye (Berdyaev 1937; Löwith 1949; MacIntyre 1971, 111),[59] who variously argue that like Christianity, Marxism offers a historical narrative that runs from weakness to strength, with human beings finally recovering the moral purity once lost so that we may live once again in a state of grace that transcends historical time. Or even more pointedly, Marxism offers a secularized Jewish-Christian eschatology, in which the redeemer figure now becomes the proletariat, which overcomes the fallen state of humanity (economic exploitation and class warfare) in order to usher in the millennium. Marx and Engels may have written much on religion, but on this matter, as I have argued at length elsewhere (Boer 2011c), a close reading of their texts shows that such a parallel is far from the truth, for Marx and Engels decisively set themselves against such eschatological narratives (thus, the proletariat is not the savior of history at all, for the lever of history becomes something entirely different, namely, contradiction). On this matter, Lunacharsky and Bloch may easily be misread: Their efforts to introduce biblical and theological themes into Marxism are too often read as

"evidence" that Marxism has always been as they describe it, a secular Gospel. Retrospective readings become the norm, without considering the specific acts, at particular political conjunctures, of the desire to bring theology and Marxism into contact. The fall-back position—at a structural rather than a textual level, Marxism offers a narrative that resembles the Christian narrative—may seem to carry some weight. Yet, as soon as one realizes that the same may be said for liberalism, or feminism, or gay activism, or anarchism, or indigenous rights, then the position loses its specificity and becomes a comment on the nature of historical narratives in general. Add to that the point that any effort to find the origin of such narratives in theology becomes itself a theological position, for it grants theology an absolute status as the source of all perceptions of history. Against such absolutizing, the need for relativizing the claims for theology becomes apparent: Theological language thereby becomes one mode for speaking of history, or indeed, as I pointed out earlier, of the human condition, suffering, subjectivity, and collectives. Other modes have existed and continue to exist, without any need to refer to theology, thereby relegating theology to a viable place alongside many other discourses. Indeed, Lunacharsky himself recognizes this relative status of theology, suggesting that Christianity's approach is "only a form, one of the many forms that social-economic progress can take" (Lunacharsky 1911, 163). Its proponents may protest from time to time, but in that more humble location, its value may be appreciated far more—as Lunacharsky and Bloch do.

On a more negative note, however, the claim that the gods represent the ideal to which human beings aspire has attracted a long tradition of theological, philosophical, and political suspicion, in which the elevation of human beings above or in place of the gods becomes the justification for myriad despotisms, in which the human beings in question believe that they are omnipotent and omniscient, let alone capricious and arbitrary. In short, it fails to include a strong (materialist) doctrine of evil, for the very best of intentions and hopes can quickly turn sour, being brought to bear to justify new forms of oppression—as the Strugatsky brothers' novel, *Hard to Be a God*, illustrates so well (Strugatsky and Strugatsky 1973). All too often, the claim to divine sanction, if not divine status—from Roman emperors to absolute monarchs to cult leaders—by human beings has been used to justify very earthly power. These comments should not be taken as a wholesale criticism of Lunacharsky's or indeed Bloch's efforts at building up of human beings, which may be read positively as an attempt to provide emotive resources for those downtrodden to stand up for themselves, but that they should be tempered with a strong doctrine of evil that would make us wary indeed of the temptations I have just outlined.

This awareness of the negative possibilities even in the midst of (Christian) communism appears in a singularly insightful reflection by Lunacharsky on representations of Jesus:

> Christ had two faces. As a communist, as a teacher of humble wisdom, of living happily for God, with direct faith in the existence of the highest form of goodness, which leads everyone to good deeds, he was a model of meekness and forgiveness. As one who unmasked the existing governmental order, as one who made a spirit of

> revenge boil up in the masses, he terrified the world and made it more somber. He was a great scold, ready to set the whip in motion, although the threat of it was a sufficiently cruel fantasy. (Lunacharsky 1911, 139–40)

At a first reading, this seems to be another statement concerning the political ambivalence of Christianity, now embodied in the way Jesus is represented and appropriated. On this score, the whip may fire up the masses and terrify the world,[60] but the meekness becomes a tool in the hands of the ruling classes to justify exploitation and resignation to that lot. However, we need to read more carefully: The dialectical twist is that the "model of meekness and forgiveness" is part of Jesus's communist side. In making this argument, Lunacharsky invokes the distinction between communist and revolutionary features of Christianity (as we saw earlier), but now he explores a potential negative dimension to this opposition. Left to its own, the communist emphasis on goodness, wisdom, and good deeds may well lead to all manner of legitimizations of oppression! All too easily, Jesus becomes the crown prince of God, the son of the Tsar in heaven before whom all should bow in meek subservience. Does it then require the more revolutionary dimension of the whip to counterbalance this negative dimension of the representation of Jesus's communism? Lunacharsky suggests so, but may this not also be appropriated by the rulers who claim to speak on behalf of the common people from whom they now require subservience? In other words, Lunacharsky unwittingly opens up the possibility for a stronger notion of evil even within communism.

Soft Spot versus Guilt by Association

> Lunacharsky writes . . . about "scientific mysticism." Get hold of it and give him a public fatherly trouncing. (Lenin 1912n[1], 294/75)

How did Lenin respond to Lunacharsky's proposals? Personally, Lenin always felt a special bond with Lunacharsky, finding in him a kindred spirit, full of optimism for the cause, a source of inspiration when he felt low. Despite all their differences, Lenin wrote to Gorky regarding Lunacharsky:

> An exceptionally gifted person. I have a soft spot for him. "A soft spot"—damn me, what a silly thing to say. I'm really very fond of him, you know. (Lenin quoted in Tait 1984, 1)

They had come from similar backgrounds, from provincial parts (Lenin from Simbirsk and Lunacharsky from Poltava in the Ukraine), with fathers in the civil service who held liberal to radical views but died young. Both were radicalized in their teens, spent time in prison and exile, were largely self-educated since their radicalism barred them from completing conventional university studies, and both suffered early deaths from overwork and lack of sleep. They finally met one another in 1904, when Lenin came to Paris to catch up with Lunacharsky:

> One early spring [!] morning in 1904 there came a knocking on the door of my room in the Hotel Lion Doré near the Boulevard Saint Germain in Paris. I got out of bed. The stairs were still in darkness. Before me stood a person I didn't know in a flat hat and with a suitcase at his feet. To my quizzical look this person responded, "I am Lenin. What a time for the train to get in." "Yes," I said in some confusion. "My wife is still asleep. Why don't you give me your suitcase? We can leave it here and go and get a coffee somewhere." (Lunacharsky quoted in Tait 1984, 76–77)

Lenin was 34 and Lunacharsky had just turned 29; the outcome was that the younger man wholeheartedly joined the Bolsheviks. Like Lenin, he attacked the Mensheviks mercilessly in print and—given Lunacharsky's noted oratorical skills—in speech, yet often keeping up personal connections with many of them. The two worked very closely together, inspiring each other in the tough work of immigrant politics. After moving to Geneva and close to Lenin, Lunacharsky gave his first lecture in December of the same year. The next day, Krupskaya wrote in a letter: "He is a splendid speaker and is creating a furore." And again:

> But now we are all in a better mood thanks to the arrival of a new comrade—a brilliant orator and talented writer. He has literally electrified the public. The Mensheviks are tearing their hair and raising a row... The Old Man [Lenin] has perked up and actually seems younger these last few days. (Quoted in Yermakov 1975, 27)[61]

For the next few years, they remained close, working together—along with Bogdanov (Lenin 1905l[3], 1905i[1]) and others—on the new journal *Vpered*, taking breaks when one or the other burned out.

This harmony came to an end with Lunacharsky's *Religion and Socialism*, although it is worth noting that the bulk of his response was to the first volume. Lenin should have seen it coming, for Lunacharsky had certainly not hidden his views before then. Politically, Lenin was direct, persuading the editorial board of the journal *Proletarii* to condemn God-building, along with otzovism (Lenin 1909m).[62] He also wrote two of his articles on religion—"The Attitude of the Workers' Party to Religion" and "Classes and Parties in Their Attitude to Religion and the Church" (Lenin 1909a, 1909c)—in direct response, using the occasion to reflect more broadly on religion. Now his argument, that one may certainly join the RSDLP if one is a believer, or even a God-builder, but that one may not seek to propagate one's religious views within the party, gains a distinct and contextual edge.[63]

Theoretically, Lenin's response took a very different if not strange path, attacking not God-building directly but indirectly, through a critique of the philosophical school of empirio-criticism. Hence, he wrote the trenchantly critical and undialectical work, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Lenin 1908a).[64] For Lenin, the basic problem of God-building is found in the radically materialist empiricism, based on sense-perception, of Mach and Avenarius, which, he argues, inevitably leads one to mysticism, fideism, and clericalism. Why did Lenin make this move?

The reason lies in a complex knot, tied by Lenin himself from some very disparate and oddly shaped threads—of political, organizational, personal, and theoretical colors.[65] It includes the political and organizational connections among God-builders, otzovists, ultimatumists, and even—by means of some deft moves by Lenin—Mensheviks and liquidators.[66] The fact that the people who shared these views—Lunacharsky among them—also seemed to act together, to the point of organizing two party schools, one on the island of Capri in 1909 and another in Bologna in 1910–11, was enough to raise Lenin's suspicions of a deeper common ground. Added to the knot are personal friendships between some of these people, especially Alexander Bogdanov and Lunacharsky (who had married Bogdanov's sister). And then, Lenin could not help noticing that both men shared an interest in the philosophy of Mach and Avenarius. In light of all these connections, we cannot blame Lenin for assuming that here lay the core of their deviation from proper materialism and the Bolshevik line. The problem is that not only was there no necessary connection between God-building and otzovism, but there was no line linking God-building and empirio-criticism either.

In order to get to that point, some complex untying is needed in order to separate the odd-fitting threads of this knot. In what follows, I shall deal with the political, organizational, and personal threads, before picking up the theoretical thread, which will lead us to Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. As for the collaboration among God-builders, otzovists, ultimatumists, liquidators, and Mensheviks, we can safely leave the last two aside, for the description of otzovists and ultimatumists as "left liquidators" is not at all persuasive. The otzovists (and the minor variation of ultimatumists), as we saw in the chapter on Lenin and the Bible, sought to disengage from any legal activity at all, most notably by withdrawing the RSDLP members from the Dumas, while the liquidators took a diametrically opposite position, namely, to put aside illegal activity for the sake of legal work alone. Lenin's argument is perhaps a little too ingenious: Since both sides refuse the interplay of legal and illegal activity, they are really on the same side, the otzovists becoming "left liquidators" (Lenin 1914i, 266/119), all of which may then be traced back to a common Menshevik root (Lenin 1909l, 457/48). Ingenious this argument may be, but it is hardly persuasive.

Of more import is the connection between oztovism and God-building, upon which Lenin insists time and again. How does Lenin arrive at this connection? Is there a deep logical connection between the two? Or does the connection lie elsewhere? It would seem to be of a purely organizational and political nature. In the midst of the counterrevolutionary period after the 1905 revolution—from 1907 to 1911—they shared the desire to push for immediate revolutionary agitation. In other words, these energetic, enthusiastic, and restless young men all tended to be to the Left of Lenin, who, wisely in hindsight, saw this as foolhardy, bound to fail and thereby leading to even more reaction. The fact that the otzovists and God-builders came out of the Bolsheviks and worked together under Bogdanov's leadership, at the party schools on Capri and in Bologna and then on the journal *Vpered* (Lunacharsky, Bogdanov, Gorky, Alexinsky, Lyadov, Desnitsky, and Volsky), suggested to Lenin some intimate connection between the two approaches. Lunacharsky had gone to Capri in 1909, soon after the publication

of the first volume of *Religion and Socialism* and at Gorky's invitation, in order to give lectures to 13 students recruited from local committees in Russia. Despite being invited, along with other Bolsheviks and even Mensheviks, Lenin himself refused to take part. He viewed the school as an effort to establish the more radical Bolshevik line of otzovism under Bogdanov's guidance.

Lenin's immediate response to the Capri school was practical (see especially Lenin 1909k, 1909f, 1909j, 1909e, 1909q, 1909y, 1909x). He fired off letter after letter from Paris, splitting away five of the students (including Malinovsky, the informer) and persuading Gorky and another lecturer, Vilonov, to lean more toward his own position.[67] He also established a counter, "orthodox" school at Longjumeau, near Paris. These interventions also exacerbated personal differences, so much so that—through their wives—Gorky on the one side and Lunacharsky and Bogdanov on the other became and remained estranged from one another. The effort at a second school, again presenting itself an interfactional, in Bologna in 1910–11, saw Gorky avoiding any association, but Lunacharsky and Bogdanov lectured there together.

Despite the apparent common ground between the various otzovists and God-builders, to the point of editing together the journal *Vpered*, they obviously revealed far less commonality than Lenin assumed. So why does Lenin insist on seeing otzovism and God-building as part of the same knot? Two other reasons present themselves, one linguistic (or rather, syntactical) and the other personal. On the linguistic level, a good example of Lenin's approach is found in a brief article, "M. Lyadov's Letter to *Proletary*" (Lenin 1909n). He begins by speaking of "otzovism and god-building," linking them by the spatial and—I would suggest—intellectual separator of the conjunction, "and." However, by the end of the article, the conjunction disappears; so now the connection becomes a much closer, adjectival one: They are the "god-building otzovists" and then "godly otzovists"—now in scare quotes (Lenin 1909n, 467/58). With this syntactical connection established, Lenin is not afraid to repeat it on occasion, whether "godly otzovists" (Lenin 1909e, 436/19), "godly otzovist gentlemen" (Lenin 1909s, 86/132), or "new god-building-otzovist faction" (Lenin 1909j, 478/202). As should be obvious, a linguistic connection for polemical reasons is not a theoretical connection.

The personal connections fall into two groups. Bazarov, Gorky, Krasin (who will become important in chapter 6), and Lunacharsky espoused God-building. Gorky soon left it behind,[68] while Bazarov and Krasin were not major thinkers in this area. The other group comprised the long-time friends, Lunacharsky and Bogdanov. They had first met in 1900 in Kaluga, a town 115 km to the southwest of Moscow, a place of temporary "exile" whence Lunacharsky had chosen to go while awaiting sentencing after his arrest in Moscow the previous year. By the time he was sentenced, two years later, he had already followed Bogdanov to Vologda, where the latter had himself been sent for exile. By various means—illness, obstinacy, and patience—he managed to stay in Vologda for the next two years, despite having his place of exile nominated as Totma, some distance to the north and off the railway line. What was the attachment to Bogdanov that induced Lunacharsky to follow him in various country towns, even to marry the former's sister? Men of very different temperaments, they seemed to complement

one another. Bogdanov, who had studied medicine and natural science at the university in Moscow, was by nature a systematic scientist. But he was also a practical party organizer, urging the value of communicating to the masses in understandable terms (he had already written two works for popular reading, *A Short Course of Economic Science* [1897] and *Key Elements of Natural Studies* [1899]). Here was a man who shared Lunacharsky's enthusiasm for the cause, except that he combined that with a rigorous and systematic approach to science and philosophy. He thereby sought to curtail Lunacharsky's ecstatic flights, casting a skeptical eye on his interest in religion, and providing a model for combining the intelligentsia with the revolutionary-by-trade. And Bogdanov was the key figure who introduced Lunacharsky to the Bolsheviks, told Lenin about the talented young revolutionary, and urged him to join the editorial staff of Lenin's new journal, *Vpered*. The two men remained close friends for more than a decade. Indeed, this intimate association between Lunacharsky and Bogdanov would continue, off and on, until after the October Revolution, most notably in the idea of "proletarian culture," or "proletcult." Expressed first in the revived *Vpered* of 1915, it was later formalized in the Proletcult organization after October, which was merged with the Commissariat of Enlightenment.[69] The difference now, however, was that Bogdanov was himself no longer involved in politics, having returned to Russia in 1913 in order to devote himself to research on philosophical and medical questions (he died while self-administering a blood transfusion).

Despite this long friendship and even meeting of minds, we are faced with a distinct problem, for Bogdanov was not in the least interested in God-building, let alone religion. But he *was* very interested in empirio-criticism, as was Lunacharsky. Here at last we may have reason for Lenin's belief that the source of God-building lay in empirio-criticism.

Materialism and Empirio-criticism

> However good your intentions may be, Comrade Lunacharsky, it is not a smile, but disgust your flirtation with religion provokes. (Lenin 1908a, 187/195)

> As for myself, I too am a "seeker" in philosophy. Namely, the task I have set myself in these comments is to find out what was the stumbling block to these people who under the guise of Marxism are offering something incredibly muddled, confused and reactionary. (Lenin 1908a, 20/11)

Lunacharsky first encountered Avenarius, the energetic champion of empirio-criticism, when he went to Zurich to study, exaggerating to his mother the barriers to study in Russia in order to escape. Avenarius may have been a star at the time, but as is so often the case, from the perspective of the broader history of philosophy, the star of today turns out to be a minor figure. As students did at the time, Lunacharsky compiled his own curriculum, piling his desk high with books on history, sociology, law, anatomy, physiology, political economy, religion, and philosophy. He attended lectures on nearly all of these subjects, but the most lasting impression was left by the lectures and seminars of Avenarius on psychology, philosophy, and biopsychology, focusing on the professor's book, *Kritik der*

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reinen Erfahrung (*A Critique of Pure Experience*, 1888–90). For Lunacharsky, this seemed to provide a systematic philosophical basis for Marxism, enabling one to understand sensual, utilitarian, aesthetic, ethical, and political evaluation on the basis of a single biological evaluation, all of which came down to the nerve cell's ability to register positive and negative sensations, pleasure and disgust. These would then have ramifications all the way through to ethical decisions for good and evil, to what he calls "biological aesthetics" and to the positive and negative features of religion (Luncharsky 1908b, 10–13). He felt that he was able to approach his "faith," scientific socialism, from such a viewpoint, sensing "that it was inextricably linked on the level of evaluation and the ideal with the entire religious development of mankind, that it was the ripest mature fruit from this tree which has sprung up from the same root of primal suffering and pleasure" (Lunacharsky 1970, 550–51).[70]

At this theoretical level, Lenin thought he smelled a rat; so he read deeply in the philosophy of Avenarius and Mach, seeking the root of the connection between empirio-criticism and God-building within the system. The immediate trigger to all this activity was a collection of essays, published as *Studies in the Philosophy of Marxism* (Bazarov et al. 1908), to which Lunacharsky and Bogdanov contributed, and which sought to explore the possible connections between empirio-criticism and Marxism. This work brought to the forefront the philosophical questions that had, until now and by mutual consent, been relegated to a secondary status.[71] The work also signaled for Lenin the increasing influence of Bogdanov and his group among the Bolsheviks (Lenin 1907d[1]). So he decided to act. Thus, in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Lenin leveled much of his polemic against Bogdanov, to whom he had earlier sent a "declaration of love" on this matter and whom he saw as the leader of the group and the most significant intellect among them (1907d[1], 449/142). But my interest here is what Lenin's reply means for Lunacharsky.

In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*,[72] Lenin focused on the core empirio-critical argument that sought to establish a framework for the rational organization of empirical observations. For Lenin, the crucial point was that they argued—like all phenomenalists—that the existence of things outside our perception is unverifiable. Perception and cognition are therefore the bases of epistemology, not matter, for the assertion of a material world beyond our senses is actually a metaphysical postulate. Lenin's answer took both philosophical and historical lines, which he felt would reinforce one another. Historically, he sought to show that some of those who had held to similar views, stressing the central role of sense-perception all the way back to Bishop Berkeley, had also believed in God. These include Locke, Kant, Hegel, and Poincaré, as well as the lesser lights of James Ward the spiritualist, A. Rey, and Duhem (Lenin 1908a, 212–13/208, 217/227, 277–82/293–99, 291–95/308–13, 311/330). He sums up: "They all have only one thing in common, namely, that they all—more or less consciously, more or less decisively, either with an abrupt and precipitate slant towards fideism, or with a personal aversion to it (as in Bogdanov's case)—are vehicles of philosophical idealism" (Lenin 1908a, 303/321). It is easy to dispense with Lenin's historical argument, since many who took such a philosophical position were not in the least interested in theology, Hume and Bogdanov among them. One could then

use such a collection of examples to show that empirio-criticism is not necessarily religious.

But what of Lenin's philosophical argument? On this matter, he took a "common-sense" realist position, following Engels very closely (Lenin 1908a, 99–107/98–106). But it is the Engels of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and *Anti-Dühring*—precisely those works that Lunacharsky found so troublesome, purveying a coldly rational Marxism. Here is Engels the popularizer of Marx,[73] asserting that all philosophy may be determined according to the opposition between materialism and idealism. Materialism means the existence of an external world and that our sense-perception is gradually working toward a fuller appreciation of that world. That is, although we may come to know, by "reflection," the way things exist independently of our minds, our ability to perceive that external world is held back by our own limitations so that our knowledge "reflects" external reality only approximately.[74] Relativity is thereby restricted to the approximate nature of our own knowledge, but the external reality to which we seek to draw nigh is an unconditional truth (Lenin 1908a, 136–37/138–39). However, materialism and idealism are not merely philosophical positions but are also based on class. Materialism is Marxist and proletarian; idealism is bourgeois and therefore anti-Marxist. Given the class alignments with these two positions, all who are not materialists in this sense are by definition idealists, even if they claim to be materialists, like the empirio-critics:

> Behind the epistemological scholasticism of empirio-criticism one must not fail to see the struggle of parties in philosophy, a struggle which in its last analysis reveals the tendencies and ideology of the antagonistic classes in modern society. Recent philosophy is as partisan as was philosophy two thousand years ago. The contending parties are essentially . . . materialism and idealism. The latter is merely a subtle, refined form of fideism, which stands fully armed, commands vast organisations and steadily continues to exercise influence on the masses, turning the slightest vacillation in philosophical thought to its own advantage. The objective, class role of empirio-critics consists entirely in rendering faithful service to the fideists in their struggle against materialism in general and historical materialism in particular. (Lenin 1908a, 358/380)

Now comes what Lenin regards as the clinching argument: following Engels, he argues that idealism is the necessary basis for mysticism, fideism, and clericalism (Lenin 1908a, 173–77/179–84).[75] Therefore, if the empirio-critics are idealists, they are also de facto fideists. Lenin defines fideism as "a doctrine which substitutes faith for knowledge, or which generally attaches significance to faith" (Lenin 1908a, 19/10). In other words, if one accepts the objective reality of the world, one automatically comes to an atheistic position, and if one does not, one cannot avoid fideism, even if one claims to be a materialist. That is, the external world created by phenomenalism is actually a code for the creation of divine beings; that phenomenological projection is of the same species as theological transcendence.[76] Here is the basis, suggests Lenin, for doctrines such as the immortality of the soul and the idea of God, all of which would make empirio-criticism an ideal philosophy for a theological seminary (Lenin 1908a, 175–77/181–84, 186–87/194–95,

226–32/237–44). Thus, "supported by all these supposedly recent doctrines, our destroyers of dialectical materialism proceed fearlessly to downright fideism (in the case of Lunacharsky it is most evident, but by no means in his case alone!)" (Lenin 1908a, 19/10).[77] This was why, in Lenin's mind, Lunacharsky could develop his God-building, since he was also interested in the work of Mach and Avenarius.

The problems with Lenin's arguments are many, but I focus on four. First, the empirio-critics argued that the assumption of an external world was metaphysical; one may just as easily postulate God as that external world. Lenin tries to argue the obverse, that the denial of an external world leads one to the existence of God. Apart from his historical argument and even his effort to divide all philosophy into materialism and idealism (following Engels), the only basis for such an argument may be found in Berkeley, who argued that the external world is known only through sense-perception. How do we know it continues to exist when we do not perceive it? God perceives the whole and thereby maintains its existence (Lenin 1908a, 23–32/14–24). Despite Lenin's insistence, this was not the ingenious argument maintained by the empirio-critics. In fact, a radical phenomenalism cannot permit the existence of God, for that would entail reducing God to a sense-perception (Harding 2009, 179–80). One may of course pursue this option (pantheism perhaps), but that would be a very different God than the common theological position that God is a being who exists beyond the world and thereby beyond any sense-perception. This was precisely the response offered by Bogdanov, who protested, justly, that Lenin's efforts in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* to link him with God-building were simply wrongheaded, indeed that empirio-criticism actually cut the ground from under the feet of any theological move.[78] I would add that Lenin's own assertion, repeated throughout the book, that an external world exists independent of the observer in no way negates the possibility that such a world was created by God—it has been a standard position in theology for quite some time.

Second, as Žižek points out in moment of insight, Lenin's position is implicitly idealist: "its very compulsive insistence on the independent existence of material reality outside consciousness is to be read as a symptomatic displacement, destined to conceal the fact that *consciousness itself* is implicitly posited as external to the reality it 'reflects' " (Žižek 2002a, 180). The problem for Lenin is that the only way one may perceive external reality is by being outside that reality, being removed from the object perceived. This is the fiction maintained by scientific, if not all academic method, that one may stand back and analyze a situation "objectively" in calm rationality. Žižek goes on to anticipate Lenin's rediscovery of Hegel—even though Žižek for some reason argues that Lenin does not give up his reflection theory even when reading Hegel—and suggests that such a situation is simply impossible. Instead, consciousness is actually part of the reality it perceives, is caught up within it, so much so that what separates us from a properly objective knowledge of reality is our inclusion within it.

Third, Lunacharsky offers his own astute reply to Lenin in the second volume of *Religion and Socialism*, which appeared after *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Given Lenin's heavy reliance on Engels, with the assumption that Marx and Engels offer a seamlessly coherent position, Lunacharsky points out that they do indeed

differ. He quotes the famous text by Engels concerning the great divide between idealism and materialism in philosophy (Lunacharsky 1911, 287), but then counters it with an observation by Marx that one may distinguish between two traditions of materialism itself (1911, 290–92). The one is mechanical materialism, indebted to Descartes, while the other derives from Locke and is a materialism of common sense. Crucially, it is the latter that leads into modern socialism. At this point, he holds back for a moment, before returning to Engels (1911, 347–59). But now, he points out that Engels's materialism differs from Marx's specifically in the sense that Engels offers a materialism of nature and its laws. Marx of course offers a more holistic and encompassing historical materialism. This is, in Lunacharsky's assessment, "Engels's sin" (1911, 350). The implication here is of course that Engels has slipped closer to the mechanical materialism that Marx himself had castigated as not leading to socialism. This argument is quite extraordinary, especially in the context of international socialism in the early twentieth century. In that context, not only were Marx and Engels assumed to speak as one, but Engels's *Anti-Dühring* was also the central text read by all socialists, due to Engels's clarity and communicative skill. Both this text and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* are the two key texts that Lenin also uses as his theoretical framework. So here Lunacharsky charges Lenin—indirectly—with falling into the same trap, the same sin, into which Engels had fallen.

Finally, it is rather easy to show that empirio-criticism is not the real basis of Lunacharsky's thought. The key, as we saw earlier, is the emotional, enthusiastic, and ethical dimension of socialism. That is, he seeks the warm stream of Marxism as a counter to the cold theory of Plekhanov and others. By contrast, empirio-criticism is yet another cold theory, at odds with Lunacharsky's project. Any reader soon notices the way empirio-criticism appears like an alien body within the argument of *Religion and Socialism*, an extra dimension of the superstructure rather than the basis. Yet, he offers no clear argument for the role of empirio-criticism in religion (Lunacharsky 1908b, 10–11, 52–53; 1911, 138, 284, 287, 291, 371).[79] All of these bring me back to the initial motivation for writing *Religion and Socialism*, namely, to oppose the rationalism and mechanism of Plekhanov and even Engels, let alone the dominant assumption of Second International socialism. It would be strange indeed to find him succeeding in constructing a system of thought on the basis of that which he opposed, despite his best intentions (see also Tait 1984, 62–63).

Conclusion

> Things are hard for us now, we have to go up to the neck in blood and filth, but after our Revolution, as after every great revolution, a wave of creative power will come a new, beautiful, fragrant art will blossom. (Lunacharsky 1981, 29)

I have followed a long path, via Christian revolutionaries, such as Gapon, Tolstoy, and peasant socialism, to a full engagement with the struggle among Lunacharsky, the enthusiastic God-builder, and Lenin. While Lenin was more open to the

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Christian revolutionaries, he sought to close down the God-builders in the period of reaction and emigrant struggles. Much had to do with the rising influence of those to the Left of Lenin, the otzovists led by Bogdanov, and Lenin's intervention was—inevitably—as much political as it was philosophical. My interest, however, has been in the struggle between the close friends, Lunacharsky and Lenin. And I have devoted a good deal of space to Lunacharsky, since he is a real and delightful discovery, unjustly neglected. The facts that Lunacharsky and Bogdanov were also close and that the unsystematic Lunacharsky sought to link empirio-criticism and God-building led Lenin to seek a connection between those two positions. I have found Lenin wanting on that count, let alone the philosophically problematic nature of his argument as a whole. Yet, that is not where I leave the debate by any means, with Lenin tactically victorious but philosophically wanting. The next major stage will turn out to be Lenin's in-depth reengagement with Hegel at the outbreak of the First World War, but that is the topic of the next chapter, which also functions as an opening to the whole issue of dialectics and then the miracle of revolution.

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CHAPTER 4

Returning to Hegel: Revolution, Idealism, and God

> Hegelian dialectics—that pearl which those farmyard cocks . . . could not pick out from the shit-heap of absolute idealism.
>
> —Lenin 1908a, 243/256

I have reached a point where Lenin has developed a dubious and rather undialectical argument in order to counter the position of God-builders such as Lunacharsky, as well as the growing theoretical and political influence of Bogdanov. If that was all there was to the story, then it would form a relatively minor incident of prerevolutionary struggles that reflects none too well on Lenin. But the story is by no means complete, for it has three further, fascinating episodes. The first episode is Lenin's intense reengagement with Hegel six years later. After the outbreak of the First World War, Lenin found himself cloistered in the library in Berne, where he read Hegel's core text, *The Science of Logic.* I am interested in a couple of elements in Lenin's engagement with that text: One was a recasting of the relation between subjective and objective approaches that would lead to a renewed sense of subjective revolutionary intervention; the other was a direct encounter with the core of Hegel's idealism, an encounter that had a direct bearing on his perceptions of God-building and even the revolutionary possibilities of varieties of religion outside the mainstream.

The second episode involves setting this intense period within the wider context of Lenin's encounters with Hegel and his understanding of the dialectic. On this matter, we face a pair of competing narratives. One argues that up to 1914, Lenin held to a mechanistic, vulgar, and evolutionary notion of the dialectic, dependent on the late Engels, Second International socialism, and Plekhanov; but after truly encountering Hegel for the first time, he finally appreciated the depth and ruptural complexity of that dialectic. The other narrative holds that throughout his life, Lenin fully appreciated that depth and deployed it in varying ways. Given these two narratives, a careful assessment of all of the relevant texts is in order. The result is that the time in the Berne library becomes less an

isolated occurrence than a rediscovery and deepening of his understanding of Hegel's dialectic on a materialist register. In particular, we find that Lenin's writings show both earlier appreciations of what may be called a ruptural approach to the dialectic and a continuation of the more vulgar reading after the time in the Berne library. All of these lead to the conclusion that Lenin maintained, before and after 1914, a perpetual tension between the vulgar and the ruptural dimensions of the dialectic.

This leads to the third episode, in which I trace the profound ramifications of these engagements with Hegel for Lenin's response to Lunacharsky's continued God-building after the revolution. In a detailed treatment that brings to a close the discussion of Lunacharsky begun in the preceding chapter, I analyze the apparently contradictory approaches to Lunacharsky's God-building and religion itself, especially after the October Revolution. Lenin both sanctioned attacks on the privileges of the mainstream church and yet tacitly and actively supported alternative forms of religion, including Lunacharsky's revamped God-building.

Hegel in Berne

The work that could be done in Berne was mostly theoretical. (Krupskaya 1930, 314)

The pleasurable seclusion in the Berne library happened in response to one of the greatest crises in the international socialist movement. In August 1914, the German Social-Democratic Party, the largest such party in the world at the time, voted in favor of war credits so that Germany could go to war. When Lenin first heard about it (as well as the news that Plekhanov supported the Russian war effort), he would not believe it, thinking the news to be a hoax. When it finally registered, he wrote in the strongest language of the "horrors of the treachery shown" by the leaders of international socialism and the "burning shame" it brought on the socialist movement (Lenin 1914n, 20/8; 1914c[2], 31/19; see also Lenin 1914k, and the full and careful assessment in Lenin 1915b). After all, the position of the Second International had been that socialists would oppose any imperialist war, refusing to commit workers to enter into battle against one another (Lenin 1914t[1], 18/6; 1914c[2], 34/22–23; 1915c). But now the Germans had done precisely that. Other national parties followed and the international movement was in disarray.

What did Lenin do? Did he work overtime to counter this move? Did he seek face-to-face meetings with the various Social-Democratic parties in order to berate them? No, he retreated to the Berne library and read Hegel. It was, as Stathis Kouvelakis points out, a crucial period of solitude, a taking of space and time that not only marks the decisive break itself but also enables new initiatives to emerge (Kouvelakis 2007, 167).[1] Less a contemplative retreat with its monastic associations, it was more a removal from the immediacy of political conflict in order to reconsider action from the ground up. All that had gone before had now turned to dust; so Lenin resorted to an apparently unlikely source of renewal: Hegel's *The Science of Logic*.[2] In these months, late in 1914 and into 1915, he also read other works by Hegel, Aristotle, the Pre-Socratics, material on the natural sciences, and some secondary literature. But the key may be found in his reading notes of Hegel's *Logic*.[3]

Hegel was at the time a strange choice, for his dialectic had been largely neglected by Second International Marxism. Mediated via the late Engels and then propagated in Russia by Plekhanov, the dialectic was instead understood in "materialist" sense, with strong evolutionary and determinist emphases. Indeed, Hegelian dialectics were regarded as far too idealistic, an embarrassment within Marx's own work, and were therefore rejected as harmful idealist remnants. As Bloch writes, "Hegel was never so pushed aside as in Germany after 1850" (Bloch 1985c, 382).[4] Given that nothing within Germany would have led to a revival of Hegel, Bloch gives Lenin full credit for such a revival, thereby renewing authentic Marxism. The reason for Lenin's interest is that he realized, as Michael-Matsas points out, that the "materialist reversal of Hegel, the transcending of his dialectic on materialist lines, is *the self-genesis and founding act of Marxism*" (Michael-Matsas 2007, 106). Yet, as will become clear later in this chapter, this was not the first time Lenin had dealt with Hegel's complexities, for he invoked Hegel regularly before 1914. Indeed, as Krupskaya points out in her *Reminiscences of Lenin*, he had avidly read Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, along with Kant and the French materialists, while they were in exile in Shushenskoe in the late 1890s (Krupskaya 1930, 40, 180).[5] So the period in the Berne library was very much a return and a rediscovery, albeit with a deepened understanding of that philosophical founding act of Marxism.

Re-creating the World

> Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it. (Lenin 1914–16, 212/194)

To work one's way patiently through the notes on Hegel is to gain a sense of Lenin's thorough absorption and excitement as he reads. The quotations, comments, squares, circles, lines, and underlines are sprinkled liberally with "NB," "!!Ha-ha!," "very profound and clever!," "bien dit!," "sehr gut!!," "très bien!," "very good! (and graphic)." And, as he works his way into Book Three of the *Logic*, "En lisant . . . These parts of the work should be called: a best means for getting a headache!" (Lenin 1914–16, 176/158).

It is not my task here to deal with every aspect of this reading, for I wish to focus on two dimensions; one lays the groundwork for an extensive consideration of the dialectic in Lenin's thought, which then leads onto my treatment of miracle (in the next chapter), while the other provides grounds for Lenin's curious reversal of his opinion on the God-building that he had sought to demolish in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Thus, I deal both with the role of subjective revolutionary intervention and with the specific question of idealism and God, which has a direct bearing on the very nature of the interaction between religion and Marxism.

As for subjective intervention,[6] Lenin brings to Hegel a resolutely materialist focus (as did Marx) and thereby a resistance to Hegel, a resistance that leads him to a startling conclusion. He is not interested merely in the idealist logic of Hegel's thought, but rather in the implication for revolutionary practice, labor, and the

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role of knowledge in transforming reality. The crucial term is reflection or consideration (*Reflexion*), the basic term of his earlier *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. In that text (and indeed elsewhere, as we will see), reflection is a copy of external reality, a knowledge about the external world that moves ever closer to a true appreciation of it. Nature is thereby primary and human will and mind are secondary, so much so that the "latter must *necessarily* and *inevitably adapt themselves* to the former" (Lenin 1908a, 188/196). In the notebooks, however, this position is turned on its head. Now, reflection becomes a mediation, a process in which externality and internality are reciprocally entwined, in which externality is drawn within internality, is immanent so that what is external is actually an internal mediation. That is, the subjective, inner logic becomes even more important than objective logic.[7] Thought thereby becomes not an incremental approach to the concrete, but an increasing abstraction (such as the laws of nature as abstractions), which in its turn leads to more profound practice and thereby truth.[8]

We need to be careful at this point, for this process is itself fully dialectical: The very process by which consciousness becomes more abstract, by "stepping back" from external things, is the very moment when it is fully aware that it cannot step outside that world. That is, the act of abstraction is the act in which consciousness begins to realize that it is immanent in the world. This is what Lenin resisted in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, where the fictional external observer moves not further away, but desperately attempts to draw closer to the world. Now he realizes that the obverse applies, that one must push resolutely in the other direction, for only in this way does the more radical integration of consciousness and world take place. In Lenin's formulation:

> The formation of (abstract) notions and operations with them *already in*cludes the idea, conviction, *consciousness* of the law-governed character to the world. Consequently, Hegel is much more profound than Kant, and others, in tracing the reflection of the movement of the objective world in the movement of notions. Just as the simple form of value, the individual act of exchange of one given commodity for another, already includes in an underdeveloped form *all* the main contradictions of capitalism,—so the simpler *generalisation*, the first and simplest formation of *notions* (judgements, syllogisms, etc.) already denotes man's ever deeper cognition of the *objective* connection of the world. Here is where one should look for the true meaning, significance and role of Hegel's *Logic*. This NB. (Lenin 1914–16, 178–79/160–61)

Now Lenin moves on, bringing to bear his materialist resistance to Hegel. Only through this process, in which abstraction becomes a deeper cognition of the objective connection with the world, does thought become a moment of practice, the aim of which is transformation of the world: "But the human notion 'definitively' catches this objective truth of cognition, seizes and masters it, only when the notion becomes 'being-for-itself' in the sense of practice." That is to say, "the practice of man and of mankind is the test, the criterion of the objectivity of cognition" (Lenin 1914–16, 211/193). And the concern of practice is creation, or rather, re-creation of the world. Thus, in his famous statement, "Man's consciousness not only reflects the objective world, but creates it," and, as a clarification,

"i.e., that the world does not satisfy man and man decides to change it by his activity" (Lenin 1914–16, 212–13/194–95).[9] Creation as the inherent feature of practice is, of course, revolutionary, for the revolution re-creates the world itself. The implicit revolutionary dimension of "creating" the world appears more forcefully in a statement that soon follows. Human activity, which has constructed an objective picture of the world for itself, now "*changes* external actuality, abolishes its determinateness," thereby removing from that external actuality various features of "Semblance, externality and nullity." This revolutionary act of creation abolishes the determinateness, the very coordinates of external reality, the foundations of the world as it is. Or in Hegelese, it "makes it as being in and for itself," that is, "objectively true" (Lenin 1914–16, 217–18/198–99). Truth is thereby constituted by the conscious act of revolution, in which the given coordinates of reality are abolished and re-created.

We should not lose sight of the fact that all of this is undertaken by the conscious agent, the one who engages in this process. Rather than the iron laws of revolutionary progress, moving through its various stages, a revolutionary agent must act to (re-)create the objective world. We may trace a direct line from this insight to Lenin's insistence—initially resisted—that the Bolsheviks should seize the moment after February 1917 and take power, that is, act to create a new world. Or, as he would exclaim (among many exclamations), "Breaks in gradualness: leaps, leaps, leaps" (Lenin 1914–16, 123–24/112); that is, leaps to "the 'break in continuity,' to the 'transformation into the opposite,' to the destruction of the old and the emergence of the new" (Lenin 1914–16, 358/317).[10] As we shall see in the next chapter, for Lenin, this is a crucial feature of the definition of "miracle."

Where Is God?

Dark waters . . . (Lenin 1914–16, 114/104)

The second feature I wish to emphasize is Lenin's direct engagement with idealism and thereby religion. As we saw, in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (and indeed elsewhere), he held to the late Engels's distinction between two great philosophical camps, materialism and idealism, which may then be identified in terms of their class affiliations. If one is not a materialist, then one must be an idealist. And that can harbor only a religious position. With this in mind, Lenin is apprehensive as he begins his reading of Hegel's masterpiece of idealist philosophy. He is sure he will find God, so he signals his resistance: "Nonsense about the absolute," he writes in a box. "I am in general trying to read Hegel materialistically: Hegel is materialism which has been stood on its head (according to Engels)—that is to say, I cast aside for the most part God, the Absolute, the Pure Idea, etc" (Lenin 1914–16, 104/93). This suspicious resistance is difficult to dispel, for we find Lenin asserting that for Hegel, knowledge is knowledge of God and that his tributes to mysticism are nothing less than idealism.[11] "Away with heaven," he exclaims (Lenin 1914–16, 103/92).

Yet, as his reading progresses, Lenin finds the very opposition of idealism and materialism problematized, noting how unsatisfactory the given definitions of

"materialism" really are. He comments that Hegel sounds at times "very materialistic," that the "difference of the ideal from the material is also not unconditional," that Hegel actually comes to the "transformation of objective idealism into materialism," that he argues from a standpoint of "*more consistent* idealism," that we can in fact find the "germs of historical materialism in Hegel" (Lenin 1914–16, 106/95, 114/103, 169/104, 170/151, 189/286, 190/287). Lenin has indeed entered "dark waters . . . " in which the clarity of his previous distinctions begins to blur (Lenin 1914–16, 114/104).

Then, after having worked his way through Hegel's text and devoted particular attention (and many pages) to the crucial section on the "Absolute Idea," Lenin comes to realize that the idea in question is not some dogmatic content, an abstraction that may be designated as Hegel's "system." Rather, the Absolute Idea follows the same logic as that of the external and internal, in which the former becomes a dimension of the latter, is drawn into and becomes immanent within internality. That is, the dialectical process folds back on itself, becoming one of its own moments. With this discovery—that within the theory is already a unity of theory and practice—Lenin writes in some surprise:

> It is noteworthy that the whole chapter on the "Absolute Ideas" scarcely says a word about God (hardly ever has a "divine" "notion" slipped out accidentally) and apart from that—*this NB*—it contains almost nothing that is specifically *idealism*, but has for its main subject the *dialectical* **method**. The sum-total, the last word and essence of Hegel's logic is the *dialectical method*—this is extremely noteworthy. And one thing more: in this *most idealistic* of Hegel's works there is the *least* idealism and the *most materialism*. "Contradictory," but a fact! (Lenin 1914–16, 233/215)

The philosophical structure that Lenin propounded with such polemical vehemence in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* has met its dialectical other. At the heart of Hegel's *Logic*, where he expected to find idealism aplenty and God in all his strength, he finds neither. Instead, he finds the dialectical method. But then, he realizes what this means for his earlier bifurcation of idealism and materialism into two great and hostile camps: In Hegel's most idealist work of all, the one that had been so neglected, is to be found the least idealism and the most materialism. A thoroughly idealist system, one in which idealism is pushed through until it is puffing and sweating and exhausted, is the most materialist of all. And the fears he might have had for idealism's quick step to God finally dissipate: This chapter on absolute ideas says "scarcely a word about God," and that is by no means accidental.

I will explore later what this may mean for the God-building debate, but first let me consider whether Lenin sensed the effect on some of his more vulgar formulations in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (and elsewhere). In three aphorisms, he subjects nearly all the Marxism of the previous decades to a scathing criticism. The first aphorism accuses Plekhanov of missing dialectical materialism and taking a vulgar materialist approach, especially in his critique of Kant.[12] The bite of this criticism is both that Plekhanov had positioned himself as a champion of dialectical materialism and that Lenin himself had relied heavily on Plekhanov

in his earlier work. The self-critical nature of this first aphorism is sharpened by a crucial marginal comment: "Concerning the question of the criticism of modern Kantianism, Machism, etc" (Lenin 1914–16, 179/161). Was this not precisely the battle that Lenin had waged so enthusiastically in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, attacking the Machists and Kantians in the name of a vulgar materialism? The second aphorism continues in the same vein: "Marxists criticised (at the beginning of the twentieth century) the Kantians and Humists more in the manner of Feuerbach (and Büchner) than of Hegel" (Lenin 1914–16, 179/161). Who are these Marxists at the beginning of the twentieth century? Plekhanov, of course, but also *Lenin himself*. How do we know? Lenin had invoked Feuerbach again and again in his earlier works, describing him as "consistently materialist" and placing him in a trinity, an "*entire school*" that is made up of Feuerbach, Marx, and Engels (Lenin 1908a, 155/159, 204/213). Indeed, he wrote then that Marx and Engels deploy "the *same* materialism," one "growing out" of Feuerbach (Lenin 1908a, 329/350, 336/356–57). It was precisely from Plekhanov that Lenin had derived this position. The third aphorism now broadens this self-criticism.

Lenin concludes:

> It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!! (Lenin 1914–16, 180/162)

Half a century takes us back to 1864, still during Marx's lifetime! "None of the Marxists" thereby includes even some of Marx's own contemporaries, let alone Lenin himself.[13]

Breaks in Gradualness: Hegel, Backward and Forward

> In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics, but it requires explanations and development. (Lenin 1914–16, 222/203)

Given Lenin's enthusiasm, especially his exclamatory declarations in the notebooks, it is tempting to see this period as a radical break. In the thrill of the moment, Lenin himself gives some credence to what may be called a narrative of rupture. Those who follow him here seek to fill out that narrative in terms of the passage from *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* to the notebooks on Hegel, which thereby manifest a relatively clear transition from a mechanistic, even "vulgar" understanding of dialectics to a much more sophisticated, complex, and thereby true approach not merely to Hegel but to Marx's work as well. Here may be found the thorough reorientation that turned Lenin into the revolutionary and leader of 1917. Of course, the way I have represented that narrative loads the terms in favor of the later Lenin, after he had engaged with Hegel in Berne, but I have done so for a specific reason, for that loading is usually found in philosophers who noticeably cringe at the earlier Lenin. Paradoxically, those who cringe so and

adhere to this narrative of a radical discovery of the depths of the dialectic have also written some of the best works on Lenin's philosophical encounter with Hegel in 1914 (Löwy 1973; Liebman 1975, 442–48; Bensaïd 2007; Kouvelakis 2007). By contrast, a very different narrative maintains that Lenin had a thorough understanding of the depths of Hegelian dialectics from the time he read *Phenomenology of Spirit* while in exile in Shushenskoe in the late 1890s, indeed that his whole approach to philosophy and politics was imbued with such a dialectic, albeit in light of the materialist "reversal" of Marx (Lukács 1970; Michael-Matsas 2007). The notebooks on Hegel become a signal moment of that longer awareness.

How does one respond to these competing narratives, between radical rupture and continuity? Do we opt for one or the other in the ideological struggle over the "philosopher Lenin"? The following discussion challenges both readings. A close reading of Lenin's engagements with Hegel and the dialectic, both before and after 1914, reveals a much more complex situation.[14] I suggest taking the two nodes of our analysis thus far—*Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and *The Philosophical Notebooks*—and describing these two dimensions as vulgar and ruptural approaches to Hegel's dialectic. When we situate the experience of 1914 within the context of Lenin's lifelong interest in Hegel, it soon becomes clear that Lenin had insights into the ruptural dimension of the dialectic before 1914 *and* that he maintained a "vulgar" approach after the immersion in Hegel's *The Science of Logic*. Both before and after this engagement, he held to a developmental, objective, and bluntly political approach to the dialectic, as well as a contradictory reading full of leaps and breaks. In this light, I suggest that the motif of "breaks in gradualness" is a better way to understand not merely the dialectic itself, but also Lenin's own relation with Hegel, which is another way of saying that an immanent analysis, deploying Lenin's own reading of Hegel to understand his approach to the dialectic, is the best way to read this complex pattern.

The treatment of Lenin's encounters with Hegel is inescapably detailed, for it is both a necessary discussion in light of debates over the legacy of Hegel through Lenin, and it sets the scene for a fuller appreciation of Lenin's apparently contradictory responses to Lunacharsky's God-building in his later years, as well as his simultaneous attacks on religion and the fostering of marginal, radical religious groups.[15] Thus, on the one hand, Lenin persists in condemning religion and even comes to advocate a consistent campaign in favor of atheism after the revolution; on the other hand, he reconciles with Lunacharsky, who maintained all of the main tenets of God-building. Even more, Lenin permits, if not fosters certain forms of religious expression, especially by those with either proto-communist tendencies (such as the Old Believers and other "sects") or openly pro-communist positions.

Before 1914

> The history of ideas is that of the succession, and *consequently*, of the *conflict* of ideas. (Lenin 1914d, 260/112)

Lenin's first reasonably full treatment of Hegel, in the early 1890s, is not the most auspicious for my argument, for here the idealist philosopher is somewhat of an

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embarrassment for Lenin. That initial engagement takes place in an early text, published illegally when Lenin was in his early twenties but recovered partially (the second part of three is still missing) only after his death: "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats" (Lenin 1894b, 163–74/163–75, 183/185, 379/395, 394/411). But why was Hegel an embarrassment? Critics of Marx had for some years attacked the Hegelian dimensions of Marx's thought, a position taken also by some of those Lenin criticizes in this early work. Their attack on Marx was relatively simple: Marx bases his economic and political theory on Hegel; Hegel is full of mysterious, maze-like, idealist, and thereby theological nonsense (especially the Trinitarian pattern of thesis, negation, and negation of the negation—the "triad"); therefore, Marx's work is rubbish.[16] According to these critics, Marx thereby developed an iron law of history, based on the thoroughly idealist threefold schema of the dialectic.

In response, defenders of Marx sought to distance themselves from Hegel and his perceived idealist residue in Marx's thought. Lenin's reply—specifically to a certain Mikhailovsky (whom Marx had also criticized)—echoes the position of the Second International. Although the Hegelian dialectic may have provided a certain theoretical framework for Marx's approach, it is by no means the basis that provides the "iron laws" of history,[17] but rather a corollary that emerges *after* he has made his strictly scientific, economic analysis. Instead, the crucial criterion for Marx's approach was its "conformity to reality" (Lenin 1894b, 163/163, 178/179–80). The secondary status of Hegel in Marx's texts is therefore a manifestation of Marx's materialist "reversal" of Hegel's idealist system, in which one moves from economic life (the base) to ideas (superstructure). Lenin has clearly sided with the vulgar Marx on this occasion. But now, Lenin goes a step further, arguing that Hegel's presence is not merely a secondary corollary, but actually a "relic of the Hegelianism out of which scientific socialism has grown, a relic of its manner of expression" (Lenin 1894b, 164/164). Corollary, relic, manner of expression—Hegel's virtual departure from Second International socialism is embodied in these characterizations. But this argument is not Lenin's own, for it is drawn from the one who enabled this embarrassed distancing from Hegel, namely Engels. This is the somewhat flat Engels of the late and influential *Anti-Dühring*, from which Lenin makes extensive quotation in order to refute the modern-day Dührings such as Mikhailovsky. Indeed, Lenin's justification for drawing upon Engels is that their opponents simply take the same positions: Mikhailovsky is no different from Dühring, and so one may deploy the same arguments Engels launched at the latter. The result is a distinct marginalization of the Hegelian dialectic in this early engagement by Lenin, or at least a certain formulation of it as a "triad."

Two further points are worth noting: Marx himself is not guilt-free on this matter, for Lenin draws on an afterword by Marx to the second edition of *Capital* (Marx 1867) in which Marx suggests, somewhat mischievously, that he "coquetted" with Hegelian modes of expression (Lenin 1894b, 167/167–68). Of course, Marx himself was not averse to more vulgar, even mechanistic statements concerning not merely his relation to Hegel, but also the interaction between base and superstructure. Furthermore, the terrain of debate was focused largely on

the objective factors of history, specifically the process of contradictions within a mode of production such as capitalism, contradictions that would lead to its unraveling. Muted are precisely the subjective factors that would become important elsewhere in Lenin's work, for here "subjective" is tied in with "psychological," "metaphysical," and thereby "idealist" formulations (see also Lenin 1894b, 143–46/141–44).[18]

Thus far, the engagement has been solidly on the side of a vulgar reading of the dialectic, consolidating the retreat from Hegel begun by others. However, as will become characteristic of Lenin's struggle with Hegel, this is by no means the whole story. A tension between that mechanistic, objectively "scientific" reading and one that is more dynamic and ruptural appears in a crucial definition of the "dialectical method":

> What Marx and Engels called the dialectical method—as against the metaphysical—is nothing else than the scientific method in sociology, which consists in regarding society as a living organism in a state of constant development (and not as something mechanically concatenated and therefore permitting all sorts of arbitrary combinations of separate social elements), an organism the study of which requires an objective analysis of the production relations that constitute the given social formation and an investigation of its laws of functioning and development. (Lenin 1894b, 165/165)

This text is a curious combination of the fluid and the firm. Society, or more specifically a "social formation," is not a "mechanically concatenated" object but a living organism, never at rest but constantly changing and developing. Yet, it requires objective analysis, a search for laws that provide us with an insight into the secret, the motor that drives all of this perpetual change. In this formulation we find not only a tension between flexible and fixed perceptions of the dialectic, but also the hints of an insight Lenin would recover at various moments in his writing, especially in 1914. Thus, drawing on Marx, he writes of the need to reject "the very idea that the laws of economic life are one and the same for the past and the present." Indeed, "every historical period has its own laws" that one must discern (Lenin 1894b, 167/167). In other words, the objective "law," the search for constancy amid perpetual change, is actually generated out of the perpetually changing social organism it seeks to understand. Conversely, precisely that invariable motor becomes the very source of the ongoing transformation of the object of study—which is captured in Marx's phrase, "all that is solid melts into air."

On this occasion, Lenin does not develop that last point to the full, leaving only a suggestion of this ruptural role of the dialectic. We will soon find that he does expand on that dimension of the dialectic, but we equally encounter moments when he prefers the "objective" and "scientific" method in sociology. Here, Marx again supports Lenin's position, although it is the somewhat vulgar Marx we have already encountered. From that same afterword to the second edition of *Capital*, Lenin identifies the champion of a "rigid scientific investigation" of "the necessity of the given order of social relations" and thereby seeks the "law of change" from one social formation to another (Lenin 1894b, 166/166). Marx even provides

Lenin with a comparison with evolutionary biology, which is, he argues, analogous to historical materialism (Lenin 1894b, 167/167). Indeed, this evolutionary, developmental interpretation, so characteristic of Second International interpretations of Hegel, would become a staple in Lenin's descriptions of the dialectic, both before and after 1914. For instance, the fundamental thesis of Hegelian philosophy is that "the universe is undergoing a constant process of change and development." While Marx and Engels rejected the preconceived idealist view, they retained Hegel's "idea of the eternal process of development." Thus, the explanation of mind must be derived from nature, from matter, for "just as material causes underlie all natural phenomena, so the development of human society is conditioned by the development of material forces, the productive forces" (Lenin 1895b, 21/8).[19]

Is there a direct line from this early understanding of the dialectic to *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*? At first sight, this seems to be the case. Here Hegel is the idealist and thereby mystical, if not religious philosopher par excellence, at one with phenomenalists such as Berkeley and the Machists (Lenin 1908a, 73/69–70, 100/99, 192/200, 226–28/237–39, 232/244, 337/358). Indeed, Hegel's Absolute Idea "gathered together all the contradictions of Kantian idealism and all the weaknesses of Fichteanism" (Lenin 1908a, 232/244). Marx and Engels, it is true, had to pass through Hegel on their way to dialectical materialism, but it was with the guiding hand of Feuerbach. That dialectic may be defined as follows:

> Dialectics—as Hegel in his time explained—contains an element of relativism, of negation, of scepticism, but is not reducible to relativism. The materialist dialectics of Marx and Engels certainly does contain relativism, but is not reducible to relativism, that is, it recognises the relativity of all our knowledge, not in the sense of denying objective truth, but in the sense that the limits of approximation of our knowledge to this truth are historically conditional. (Lenin 1908a, 137/139)[20]

This version of dialectics is merely another prop for the "reflection" theory of knowledge Lenin hammers home in this text. Dialectics designate the path to the truth of the external world in a process of increasing exactitude, but it remains "relative" only insofar as our knowledge of that world remains limited. This definition of dialectics—or rather the "dialectical materialism" Lenin mentions ad nauseam, all the while assuming we know what the term means and filling it out with examples from physics and chemistry—is a far cry from what Lenin encountered in his reading of Hegel a few years later.

At the same time, Lenin uncannily points out—in the midst of this notorious text—that Hegel's dialectics may contain far more than this definition would suggest. Now we find that Hegel is the most thorough of idealists, even glimpsing materialism (Lenin 1908a, 127/128–29), so much so that the Hegelian dialectic is the "*valuable* fruit of the idealist systems," that "pearl which those farmyard cocks . . . could not pick out from the shit heap of absolute idealism" (Lenin 1908a, 243/256).[21] Valuable fruit, even a true pearl—at this moment, it must be admitted, Lenin believes that Engels had picked the fruit and sold all he had in order to find the pearl. If we accept the narrative that juxtaposes the vulgar materialism

of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* with the notebooks on Hegel, then these moments can only be read as prophetic, anticipating the experience of 1914 in the Berne library when Lenin was able "*to grasp* the great and true kernel of Hegelian dialectics" (Lenin 1908a, 310/329).

The problem with such a narrative is that it holds to a simple notion of prophecy, a foretelling of things to come. By contrast, a more complex perception of prophecy is needed, in which it is an act that looks backward and forward, a prophecy *ex eventu* and one that anticipates what is to come.[22] Thus, Lenin may unwittingly have foreseen his grasping of the great and true kernel of Hegel's dialectic in Berne, but on more than a few occasions before that time he had already seized it.

Dialectics of Capitalism

I have already identified two glimpses of such occasions in both the text from 1895 and even in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, but more sustained insights appear in the landmark early work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (Lenin 1899b), and the cluster of texts following in the wake of the revolution of 1905. In the first, the central question is the contradictory, crisis-ridden nature of capitalism, while in the second, a number of topics emerge, which may be classified in terms of revolution itself, subjective intervention, the tension between revolution and counterrevolution, the relation of part and whole, and then the praxis model (the constant interaction between theory and practice that leads one to the distinct moment of revolution).

The argument from the detailed 1899 work on capitalism in Russia, begun in prison and completed in exile in Shushenskoe village, contains both the standard stages-theory of capitalist development and some profound insights into its deeper contradictions.[23] On the first count, capitalism is a necessary stage on the path to communism, for it achieves the much-needed breakup of ossified feudal relations, especially in the countryside, destroying all in its restless path of growth and development, improving education, providing a higher standard of living, mobility of the population, and growth of the towns (Lenin 1899b, 313–18/310–15, 359/357, 382–83/382–83, 434–35/433–34, 541/541, 547–49/548–50, 596–600/597–601; 1905c[3], 76/134; 1908o, 261–62/266; 1901b, 164–66/161–64, 177–80/175–78, 195/193, 205–6/204–5; 1912l, 76–77/310; 1912f, 146–48/383–36; 1913c).[24] In short, "It was a very good thing that it did" (Lenin 1899b, 316/313). Only then does a working class develop in the large-scale industries that are part of such development, only then may communist organization gain some traction, and only then do the internal contradictions of capitalism work toward its self-destruction (Lenin 1899f, 210–11/182–83; 1902a, 146/346–47; 1910i, 261–62/307). Lenin's argument is as much conventional Marxist theory of the time as it is a critique of Narodnik arguments that Russia might avoid the capitalist stage and move straight to socialism through a romanticized image of the communal *mir* or *obshchina*, the village-commune, which was really another mode of exploitation through its small-scale production (Lenin 1894b, 176/176, 494–95/520–21; 1897a, 238–39/232–33, 245/240, 264–65/261–62; 1908k, 34–35/21–22; 1908e, 1910c).[25] His argument also resolutely sought to counter assumptions of Russian

exceptionalism, arguing that Russia is no different in its path of economic and social development than the Western world.

However, in the midst of this argument of necessary stages, Lenin also pinpoints the crucial contradictions at the heart of capitalism: It is nothing less than the best and worst of all possible worlds. Life is both much better than under feudalism and much worse, for exploitation is even more brutal (Lenin 1899b, 237–48/232–43, 293/290, 414–15/413–14, 418–20/417–19, 430–31/429–30, 442–43/441–42, 527/527–28, 539/540; 1907c, 194/245, 201–16/252–68; 1907b, 280/257, 296–97/273–74; 1914p).[26] Industrial development, Taylorization of work practices, and large-scale farming (his focus is on agriculture, an abiding interest) may be significant advances, to be deployed by any communist society that follows (Lenin 1914u[1]), and yet they enable—under capitalism—infinitely more refined patterns of oppressing workers and peasants. In short:

> Recognition of the progressiveness of this role is quite compatible (as we have tried to show in detail at every stage in our exposition of the facts) with the full recognition of the negative and dark sides of capitalism, with the full recognition of the profound and all-round social contradictions which are inevitably inherent in capitalism. (Lenin 1899b, 596/597)

Or as Lenin states a decade later in a text that anticipates in many ways the reading of Hegel in 1914:

> Again, a constant source of differences is the dialectical nature of social development, which proceeds in contradictions and through contradictions. Capitalism is progressive because it destroys the old methods of production and develops productive forces, yet at the same time, at a certain stage of development, it retards the growth of productive forces. It develops, organises, and disciplines the workers—and it crushes, oppresses, leads to degeneration, poverty, etc. Capitalism creates its own grave-digger, itself creates the elements of a new system, yet, at the same time, without a "leap" these individual elements change nothing in the general state of affairs and do not affect the rule of capital. (Lenin 1910e, 348/65–66)

Not only do we find the famous "leap" that has gained much attention from the philosophical notebooks, but alongside the slow evolution of capitalism (as in life) appear "rapid leaps, breaks in continuity" (Lenin 1910e, 349/66). Lenin did not need to wait until 1914 to understand the ruptural dimensions of dialectics.

Centrality of Revolution

Once we turn to the texts following the 1905 revolution, a definition of the "revolutionary dialectics of Marxist realism" becomes the anchor of all analysis: It "emphasises the urgent tasks of the advanced class, and discovers in the existing state of things those elements that will lead to its overthrow" (Lenin 1905m[2], 149/137). Here we find already the crucial interplay between objective and subjective factors in revolution. Thus, the "existing state of things" touches on the objective dynamic of the contradiction between forces and relations of production, which are both formative of a mode of production (the proverbial creative

tension) and yet which also lead to the collapse of that same system. In that situation, the "advanced" working class plays a crucial and subjective role, identifying the specific workings of that tension, forcing those links in the chain, and seizing the opportunity when the crisis "matures."[27]

Subjective Act

Should I wish to find a fuller statement of the subjective revolutionary act, I need only turn to a piece written at the same time, in June–July of 1905. In "Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution" (1905r^{3}), Lenin stresses the need to move beyond analysis of the objective and rapidly changing conditions to conscious intervention in them. Thus, the new Menshevik-controlled *Iskra* may emphasize the objective conditions of a bourgeois revolution, describing and explaining the struggle they see unfolding before their eyes. Yet, in doing so, they side with but one side of Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, in which the philosophers merely interpret the world in various ways. Missing is an awareness of the vital need to change that world. An astute exegesis follows Lenin's citation of Marx: The Mensheviks are "good marchers but poor leaders," for "they disparage the materialist conception of history by ignoring the active, leading, and guiding part which can and must be played in history by parties that have realized the material prerequisites of a revolution and have placed themselves at the head of the progressive classes" (Lenin 1905r^{3}, 43–44/31). Active, leading, guiding—are these adjectives not appropriate to the subjective revolutionary act, which would become crucial in Lenin's reading of Hegel? That engagement would provide this element of dialectics a greater depth; but the inescapable role of subjective intervention, so much so that its creative role was constitutive of revolution as such, was certainly not foreign to Lenin's thought in the immediate aftermath of the 1905 revolution.[28]

Revolution and Counterrevolution

A third feature of this cluster of dialectical reflections on the revolution of 1905 is a sustained analysis of the tensions between revolution and counterrevolution. On this matter, Lenin's skills at political analysis gain a significant dialectical edge. Over the course of 1905 and then into the following years, his analysis moves from tracing the delicate "equilibrium" between revolution and counterrevolution and the eventual, if temporary, victory of the latter. Thus, after the spark of January 1905 and in the midst of the waves of strikes and armed uprisings, a new space of creative possibilities had opened in which everything seemed possible, a period of "maximum freedom, maximum independent activity of the masses, maximum breadth and momentum of the workers' movement on ground cleared of monarchist-constitutional institutions, laws and snags by the assault of the people" (Lenin 1907a, 21/7). Yet, by October 1905, a delicate equilibrium had set in between the wounded autocracy and the newly militant workers. The Tsar's forces may be weakened, the armed forces may be wavering, but the revolution is not yet strong enough for the final push. Then again, the counterrevolution is too weak to attack and win back lost ground; therefore, it bides its time, waiting for a slackening of the revolutionary upsurge before striking (Lenin 1905m,

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447–78/73–74; 1905t[2]). Lenin describes this liminal, unstable period as an interregnum (Lenin 1907a, 21/7), in which "two conflicting forces stand facing each other like rival armies, now resting from the struggle for a time in order to recuperate, now hurling themselves anew into the battle against the hated enemy" (Lenin 1906r, 185/384). Two possibilities lie before the revolution: One is to move to a higher level of revolutionary activity, for "if we do not manage to launch an independent offensive, if we do not smash the forces of tsarism, do not destroy its actual power, then the revolution will stop half way, then the *bourgeoisie will fool the workers*" (Lenin 1905p, 414/5). That higher level goes beyond the general strike and even uprising to the seizure of power itself, but the other possibility is the victory of counterrevolution, which is now supported by a bourgeoisie frightened by what has been unleashed, timidly retreating from an apparent common front with the proletariat and thereby betraying the revolution.

At this point, the dialectic gains further complexities. On the one hand, he identifies the way in which workers should support the bourgeois revolution, since it succeeds in sweeping away all the accretions of the feudal past. Reciprocally, the bourgeoisie for its part supports the revolutionary push of the workers, using the latter's energy to topple the autocracy in the name of freedom and democracy, but then betrays the full proletarian revolution, when its own desires have been achieved in the bourgeois revolution, by supporting repression of any further revolutionary activity (Lenin 1905q[2], 293/20; 1905l, 511–12/270–71; 1905r[3], 48–50/35–37, 99–100/88–90, 112–13/102–3, 124/114–15; 1906w[1], 161–62/236–37; 1906n[1], 170/242; 1905n[2], 527/229; 1907d, 1905t[3], 1905e[1], 1905v; 1905x, 260/244; 1905b[2], 1905k[1]; 1905x[3], 304/277–78; 1908e, 52–53/39–40; 1915g).[29] The reason lies, Lenin argues, in a contradiction at the heart of the bourgeois approach, which is to oscillate between calls for freedom and resort to techniques of repression to achieve its aims, a contradiction that is due to the contradictions of capitalism itself.[30] In other words, "scratch a Russian liberal bourgeois and you will find a police sergeant in a brand-new uniform" (Lenin 1905s[3], 243–44/228–29). Lenin draws this insight from Marx's analysis of the 1848 revolutions, in which the bourgeoisie refused to grant the promised freedom to that class which had supported it until now (Marx 1850a, 1850b). The catch with Lenin's reading of the situation after 1905 is that he is still tied to the necessity of a two-stage theory. In light of this position, he argues that the way to prevent the bourgeoisie from betraying the proletarian revolution in terms of its own, limited bourgeois revolution, is to ensure that the proletariat seizes the leadership of that initial revolution so that it may both deny the bourgeoisie control and continue the push to its own revolution (Lenin 1905r[3], 99–100/88–90). However, as we saw earlier, by 1917, this argument would fall away with his push for subjective intervention that abolished the conditions for the two-stage theory itself.

On the other hand, Lenin explores the contradictory path in which one must always expect counterrevolution, but that the magnitude of its repression enhances the strength, determination, and creativity of revolutionary forces, pushing them to the higher stage, which was in the end not attained in the aftermath of 1905 (Lenin 1905r[3], 57/45; 1906v[1], 109/171–72; 1906w, 172–73/370–71; 1906r, 185–86/384–85; 1907v[1], 114/381).[31] For now, after 1905, the higher stage of the seizure

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of power was not to be achieved, for counterrevolution gained the upper hand and decimated the socialist movement for many years (Lenin 1905m, 447–48/73–74; 1906w, 172/371). Yet, during these tough years, Lenin maintained his optimism that the dialectic of reaction and revolution would eventually lead to the victory of the latter, for a failed revolution is the trigger for its eventual success (Lenin 1905k).[32]

Part and Whole

As a further instance of an understanding of the complexity of the dialectic, Lenin offers (now from an article published in October entitled "The Latest in *Iskra* Tactics" [1905f¹]) a detailed insight into the relation of part and whole in the revolution. This argument is targeted at the Plekhanovite approach to dialectics, which indicates not only that Lenin was already aware of the limits of such an approach before 1914, but also that the critique of Plekhanov in the Hegel notebooks was not the first time Lenin voiced his opposition.[33] The narrative of a Plekhanovite Lenin—at least philosophically and in relation to the dialectic—before 1914 begins to break down even further.

The position Lenin tackles seems perfectly reasonable on the surface: One should discern the spontaneous seeds of new forms of economic and social life within the old, and nurture them so that they grow and develop into a revolutionary opportunity. Examples include a revolutionary self-government (the favored item on the agenda) and consumers' societies, although Lenin adds restive priests, labor exchanges, and revolutionary schools. According to this approach to dialectics, these nuclei penetrate into the heart of capitalism, eventually purging capitalism and giving it a new, socialist content. Notably, dialectics becomes evolutionary, a natural process, but it also becomes fluid, with no sharply defined boundaries. Thus, what one might perceive to be prologue and epilogue may be turned on their heads; they may be intertwined, with the epilogue preceding the prologue. All of which is the "substitution of dialectics *à la* Plekhanov for Marxist dialectics" (Lenin 1905f¹, 370/369).

What is a genuine Marxist dialectics, at least as Lenin viewed it in 1905? It is obviously not one that follows a Plekhanovite, Second International, late-Engels-derived position that concerns evolutionary change, a focus on the objective unfolding of events and a perception of the dialectic as flux. Instead, it pinpoints the moment of turning, *Aufhebung* in Hegelese, revolution in Marx's terms, and views the dialectic from that perspective. Missing this crucial dimension of the dialectic means that the parts become confused with the whole; thus, one makes the mistake of regarding revolutionary schools as the actual basis for an uprising, or unrest among the clergy, or consumers' societies, or labor exchanges, or indeed revolutionary self-government. By contrast, if one views the revolution as the key, then all of these fragments become not precursors to the uprising, but "will inevitably merge in an integral and complete 'epilogue' to the uprising, whereas if the uprising is not victorious these fragments will remain fragments, paltry, changing nothing, and satisfying only the philistines" (Lenin 1905f¹, 373/371). But Lenin goes a step further and sharpens the difference: It is not merely a problem of focus concerning the dialectic; one side prefers the parts, the other the whole, so all

that is required is a little fine-tuning to make the dialectic work properly. No, the problem is that by focusing on the part, by confusing the part for the whole, and thereby identifying the part with the whole, one has distorted and mutilated the whole, if not missed it entirely (Lenin 1905f[1], 373/371).[34] And if one misses the whole, one misses the revolution, with deleterious effects.

Praxis

This argument has direct practical concerns. Such distorted attention to the patchwork of fragments has the effect of diverting "fighters from the truly revolutionary path, the basic requisites for a real revolution" (Lenin 1905f[1], 373/370). They devote energy to futile projects that do not lead to revolution at all. This eminently practical concern—as is well known—infuses Lenin's writings, so much so that he is often accused of being a man of action, an intuitive politician with little concern for theory or a consistent philosophical position.[35] The trap with the usual response to this accusation—that Lenin creatively combined his theoretical and practical concerns—misses the point that the combination is itself a theoretical position. Of course, this theoretical position was itself generated out of the tough experiences of the 1905 revolution, when the proletariat sensed the need before its leaders of a transition from strike to uprising: "As is always the case, practice marched ahead of theory" (Lenin 1906w, 172–73/371). Here we broach the final dimension of Lenin's appreciation of dialectics before 1914, namely, the praxis relation, the integral intersection between theory and practice. So he writes in 1906 that one cannot engage in theoretical deliberation concerning the revolution without strict "historical examination of the question of the forms of struggle," for otherwise one misses the basics of dialectical materialism. That is, "at different stages of economic evolution, depending on differences in political, national-cultural, living and other conditions, different forms of struggle come to the fore and become the principal forms of struggle; and in connection with this, the secondary, auxiliary forms of struggle undergo change in their turn" (Lenin 1906s, 214/2).[36] Hence, one returns to the situation with a thoroughly rethought theory, which is itself constantly interacting with these changing conditions and forms of struggle. All of these make sense of Lenin's constantly changing positions, his apparent switches and contradictions, especially in the rush of events surrounding the revolutions of 1917. The reading of Hegel may have deepened his appreciation of this dimension of the dialectic, so that his ability to read the contradictions of the rapidly changing situation was sharpened, but this appreciation does not seem to have been an entirely new discovery in 1914.

The evidence is pointing more and more to a conclusion that Lenin showed genuine awareness of the ruptural complexity of Hegel's dialectic, as well as its development by Marx in a materialist direction, before 1914. That evidence undermines the narrative in which he single-mindedly followed a Plekhanovite, Second International approach to the dialectic—as largely evolutionary and objective—before that immersion in Hegel's *The Science of Logic*. As argued earlier, Lenin had already seen the shortcomings of that approach, judging by his explicit observations and counterarguments by 1905. This is not to say that he did not continue to find the more vulgar dimensions of Marxist analysis and action quite useful, but

that he did so with a simultaneous appreciation of the deeper twists and contradictions of that same dialectic.[37]

After 1914

> Of course, this study, this interpretation, this propaganda of Hegelian dialectics is extremely difficult, and the first experiments in this direction will undoubtedly be accompanied by errors. (Lenin 1922h, 233/30)

Do these emphases on a ruptural dialectic, especially with regard to its materialist, revolutionary focus, continue after the immersion in Hegel in 1914? In various observations from 1915 through to 1923, once again the concern with praxis and the part–whole relation appears, but now with an emphasis on the role of discernment. Above all, we encounter the dialectic in action with the October Revolution and the efforts at constructing communism after the seizure of power.

Praxis, Discernment, and Revolution

I begin with some of the items discussed in relation to the period before 1914 and then consider the concentrated presence of the dialectic in the October Revolution. As far as praxis is concerned, in a late argument with Kautsky, Lenin writes that Kautsky and others may be theoretically aware of the need for a complex and flexible appreciation of the theory–practice interaction, that they had learned "Marxist dialectic and taught it to others," but that they "proved to be so *un*dialectical in practice, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid acquisition of new content by the old forms" (Lenin 1920i, 102/87–88). The upshot is another instance of the confusion of the part for the whole, although now in terms of being hypnotized by a particular form of the working-class movement and of socialism, thereby neglecting to notice that this form was very one-sided. By fixing on and ossifying this specific form, they are unable to see how it would break up under new conditions. By contrast, "our work today . . . can *and must* manifest itself in any form, both new and old; it can and must regenerate, conquer and subjugate all forms, not only the new but also the old—not for the purpose of reconciling itself with the old, but for the purpose of making all and every form—new and old—a weapon for the complete and irrevocable victory of communism" (Lenin 1920i, 103/89). In this text, other dimensions of the dialectic show their faces, such as intersections between new and old, or indeed the completely new relation between reform and revolution after the revolution itself (Lenin 1921b, 115–16/228–29), which we will encounter at greater length in the next chapter. But here, as we saw before 1914, the dialectic has become an extraordinarily practical tool in the postrevolutionary situation.

To the fore in this critique of Kautsky is another factor that became more important after the saturation in Hegel: The need for discernment in the ever-shifting conditions of revolutionary agitation, a discernment that may be read as a manifestation of the role of subjective intervention. Five years earlier (1915) than the

texts I have just considered, flushed with Hegel in the context of the collapse of the Second International during the First World War, Lenin's target is Kautsky once again. Here, Lenin attacks his misuse of dialectics, particularly via the suggestion that there are no "pure" phenomena—thus, according to Kautsky, the war is not "purely" imperialist but also includes the possibility of worker participation against other states. Sure, says Lenin, there are no "pure" phenomena, in society, economics, or nature, but that does not mean that one can take any position one likes. The key is to discern the crucial contradiction at a particular moment, which in this case concerns the objective conditions of an imperialist war and the subjective situation of justifications for such a war to fool the masses. The proper response, then, is not to take sides with the bourgeoisie, pitting workers in one country against another, but for the masses to oppose the war and focus on the real enemy (Lenin 1915b, 236–37/241–42). This argument overlaps with the one we encountered earlier, in which Lenin deploys the initially unpopular but deeply dialectical argument of turning the imperialist war into a civil one, as a crucial step to revolution.

Not unexpectedly, revolution is still very much the key to this dialectical process of discernment in the midst of ever-changing and contradictory conditions. Like the pre-1914 writings on dialectics, revolution is the touchstone, a position embodied most clearly in the well-known text, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" (Lenin 1918p). Now the initial moment of 1917 has passed, although the revolution's unfolding after that event remains at the forefront of Lenin's mind. In that light, Kautsky's toying with dialectics becomes "eclectics" (a common refrain—Lenin 1921i, 91–100/286–96[38]), a repudiation of truths and absolutes. Hence, Kautsky (and Vandervelde, another interlocutor) confuses "transitional stages" with the revolution, thereby missing the latter: They "say nothing about the fact that the transitional stage between the state as an organ of the rule of the capitalist class and the state as an organ of the rule of the proletariat is *revolution*, which means *overthrowing* the bourgeoisie and *breaking up*, smashing, *their* state machine" (Lenin 1918p, 323/336). Here, part and whole, practical strategy, and discernment all come together, for once we view the transitional stages from the perspective of the revolution, they become outworkings of that revolution. The logic here is remarkably similar to Lenin's criticism of the Plekhanovite deployment of the dialectic by the Mensheviks considered earlier. In that case, they confused the various nuclei of change—revolutionary self-government, consumers' societies, revolutionary schools, labor exchanges, and restive clergy—for the revolution. But now, after 1917, Kautsky and Vandervelde make the same mistake, focusing on transitional stages, which sit perfectly well with bourgeois programs of reform, over against the revolution and thereby failing in dialectical discernment. By contrast, with the revolution at the forefront, the smashing of the bourgeois state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the withering away of the state, all become various "transitional stages" of that revolution. Dialectics, therefore, "are concrete and revolutionary" and concern the whole picture (Lenin 1918p, 323/336). Anything else evades and denies the revolution itself.

Rupture and Revolution

> But only he who never does anything never makes mistakes. (Lenin 1922h, 233/30)

Of course, it was in October and afterward that the centrality of a ruptural dialectic was to be manifested. Here, the founding philosophical moment of Marxism is subsumed (*Aufhebung*) within Lenin's approach to revolution, to the open-mouthed shock of even his closest comrades. Lenin never produced a finished tome on Hegel—the brief outline "On the Question of Dialectics" hardly constitutes such a work (Lenin 1914–16, 355–61/316–22)—but the results appear in resolutely political works.

The ruptural dialectic appears in Lenin's slogan for the conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war, in terms of both the national liberation movements among oppressed people in the colonies and the communist revolutions in the colonizing nations. That is, war does not become interstate conflict in which the colonized places participate, but an antagonist process, which must then be turned into a struggle against the enemy within (Krupskaya 1930, 301, 315–16; Haupt 1980, 137–66; Anderson 1995, 98–101; 2007, 128–37; Balibar 2007).[39] Once again, one may identify not so much a sharp break with his formulations before 1914 as a continuity with his earlier statements concerning the needs for soldiers to point their weapons not at each other but at the landlords and capitalists who oppress workers throughout the world (Lenin 1914t[1], 18/6; 1914c[2], 34/22–23; 1915c, 1915a, 1915d; 1915i, 315/327–28; 1916f).

Furthermore, a series of apparently contradictory assessments and moves after the revolution—which have led many to suggest that Lenin was an unprincipled opportunist—make sense in light of the complexity of the dialectic. For instance, in assessing why the communist revolution had been able to seize power and undertake the arduous task of building communism, Lenin invokes the Hegelian argument that Russia's very backwardness had enabled it to leap over the more "advanced" capitalist countries with their entrenched bourgeoisies (Lenin 1919d[1], 307–11/304–7; 1920i, 90/75). As another example, in the debates over employing generals and tacticians from the old Russian army in the new Red Army, or in the struggles over employing—even with higher wages—bourgeois specialists for industry or in the state apparatus, Lenin argues *both* for the contradictory need to make use of the old to construct the new *and* for the need to avoid either a doctrinaire resistance to such a move (even though the communists had been working for decades to overthrow the bourgeoisie) or the bureaucratism that may result from that move. All of these were embodied in the New Economic Policy's slogan of "using capitalism to build communism" (Lenin 1917h[2], 389; 1917k, 273/40; 1917q; 1918e[1], 476–80/283–87; 1918k; 1919u, 395–96/417–18; 1919p, 424–25/448–49; 1919s, 24/6–7; 1919a, 68–74/51–58; 1919i, 152–56/138–43; 1920a[1], 1920f; 1920e[1], 284–89/301–6; 1921u, 334–53/211–31; 1921g, 1921f; 1922a, 269–71/76–78). As a third example, the act of establishing the Comintern was not merely an effort to oust the moribund Second International. It was much more: A way of attempting an *Aufhebung* of the profound contradiction between the need to protect the fledgling Soviet state within the limits of the old Russia

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and the need to foster a world revolution.[40] That tension also gave rise to the dialectical relation between a workers' state and the need for one-party rule to ensure that state survived and flourished (Liebman 1975, 445–46).

More significantly, the impact of a thorough appreciation of a ruptural dialectic may be seen in "Letters from Afar" and the famous "April Theses," where Lenin argues that the bourgeois democratic revolution of February 1917 must immediately be turned into a communist revolution—a position that confounded his fellow Bolsheviks upon his arrival at the Finland station (Lenin 1917j[1], 1917l[2]).[41] Here is subjective revolutionary practice, one that abolishes the very coordinates of the world and thereby re-creates it, which emerges from the immanence of contradictions of the revolutionary process (Anderson 1995, 123–70; Kouvelakis 2007; Bensaïd 2007). On this matter, Lenin blew apart the position of the Mensheviks and a goodly number of Bolsheviks (Anweiler 1974, 65–67, 129, 155), namely, that the revolution should proceed along a well-established "objective" path: The bourgeois revolution should first be allowed to mature until the time was ripe for the proletarian revolution, for conditions in Russia were by no means at that point. Even in the midst, they argued, of the collapsing state apparatus and economic disarray, brought about by disastrous tsarist policies and the First World War, proper revolutionaries should not give into the temptation to undertake a "premature" putsch, for that would lead to utter chaos and reaction. Instead, the Mensheviks wished to hand Soviet power to a reluctant bourgeoisie, helping them achieve a fully "democratic" revolution (Cliff 2004, 93; Harding 2009, vol. 2: 144–49). Earlier, particularly after the 1905 revolution, Lenin had shared this view, albeit with a twist. Then he argued in favor of a bourgeois revolution as a necessary step to the higher stage of a socialist one, even in terms of an "uninterrupted revolution" (непрерывная революция—*nepreryvnaia revoliutsiia*) that echoes Kautsky and Trotsky (Lenin 1905x[2], 236–37/223; Donald 1993, 77–93), but that the RSDLP should be at the forefront of that bourgeois revolution in order to force the pace over against a tardy and timid bourgeoisie (Lenin 1905l, 511–12/270–71; 1905r[3], 48–50/35–37, 99–100/88–90, 112–13/102–3, 124/114–15; 1905b[3], 307–8/282–83; 1905k, 339–41/242–45; 1905h[1], 379/379; 1905p, 414/5; 1906o[1], 143–45/218–20; 1906k[1], 113/176; 1906n[1], 170/242; 1906b[2], 266–67/342–43; 1907i[1], 405/277; 1907r, 456–58/330–32).[42]

But after February 1917, Lenin's response was quite different, for conditions had changed: The unique conjunction of events had made a socialist revolution possible, and so the revolutionary agent (the "subjective consciousness") should instead act now, at this "premature" moment.[43] The dialectical point is, as Žižek puts it, that "this very 'premature' intervention would radically change the 'objective' relationship of forces itself, within which the initial situation appeared 'premature' " (Žižek 2001a, 144). That is, the criteria by which one determines prematurity and ripeness themselves are actually part of the old order that needs to be abolished. We might put these two different perspectives on revolution in terms of the contrast between *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* and *The Philosophical Notebooks*. At this moment in 1917, the Mensheviks and a reasonable number of Bolsheviks held to a "reflection" theory of revolution. Communism was thereby the material world "out there," which one approached gradually, through objective and

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necessary stages, which is really a version of mechanistic fatalism.[44] Lenin offered not a variation on this approach—the two stages must be collapsed into one, moving straight from the bourgeois revolution to the proletarian revolution—which would still accept the underlying position, but a challenge to the very assumption of stages. He does so through a dialectical engagement with subjective and objective factors. Subjectively, communism is not "external" to the revolutionary agent, but created by that agent. The "external" reality of communism is actually immanent to the subjective consciousness of the revolutionary, who thereby creates that world in the practical act of revolution. That also means, of course, that the agent is not external to communism, perceiving it objectively and thereby acting in order to bring it about, but is part of the reality perceived, deeply involved in the nature of a communism created through his or her own act. Objectively, the very conditions of the "old" order themselves had begun to shift in a way that led to the revolution. With the rapidly changing conjunction of events, in a Russia uniquely placed between "advanced" bourgeois countries and "backward" colonial countries, the old forms had begun to crumble so that it was no longer possible to think in terms of stages. This was the moment to act (Lenin 1923c).

Between Ruptural and Vulgar Dialectics

> They have completely failed to understand what is decisive in Marxism, namely, its revolutionary dialectics. (Lenin 1923c, 476/378)

Thus far, my analysis of Lenin's texts from 1894 to 1923 may, with some modification, support the narrative of a clear break in that library in Berne. According to this revised narrative, Lenin may have had an occasional insight before 1914, but with the deep immersion in Hegel's *Logic*, he attained a hitherto unreachable depth of understanding, all of which then unfolded in practical terms with the October Revolution. The initial problem with this revised version of the narrative is that the pre-1914 appreciations of Hegel are quite extensive. Furthermore, the narrative falls to pieces in light of the fact that Lenin maintained a vulgar approach to the dialectic after that time. And just as before 1914, that vulgar reading sits cheek by jowl with a ruptural reading. He may have pointed out in 1922 the extreme difficulty of Hegelian dialectics (Lenin 1922h, 233/30); yet he also continued to make use of the vulgar version of dialectics.

The best expression of that tension between two different, albeit related, approaches to the dialectic appears in a piece written at the time he was immersed in Hegel. Simply entitled "Karl Marx" (Lenin 1914s) and originally written for the *Granat Encyclopaedia*, it begins with a biographical sketch of Marx before dealing not with Marx's political activities, but with his "doctrine." This detailed section is broken into two parts, one concerning "philosophical materialism," the other "dialectics," which in its Hegelian form is the "greatest achievement of classical German philosophy" (Lenin 1914s, 53/53). In other words, Lenin is keen to emphasize the importance of Marx's philosophical grounding in Hegel, albeit with a materialist turn. But what do we find? Is it a Marx who is far from the "vulgar" approaches of Second International Marxism, of the late Engels and

Plekhanov? Not at all, for we encounter a curious juxtaposition of precisely those "vulgar" positions along with clear awareness of the dialectic's inner complexity. Lenin draws upon statements from both Marx and Engels, citing a favored text from the former, who could outdo the best of the vulgar Marxists. It comes from Marx's afterword to the second edition of *Capital*, where he writes that in contrast to Hegel's demiurgos, "the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought" (Lenin 1914s, 51/51). From Engels, Lenin offers long quotations from *Anti-Dühring* and "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy" (Engels 1886a, 1886b). From these texts, old favorites appear, such as the separation into two great philosophical camps of materialism and idealism (the latter of which leaves the door open for agnosticism and religion), the concern of dialectics with flux, development, and evolution (in the continual process of passing from the lower to the higher), nature itself as the greatest proof of dialectics, embodied in the grand process of coming into being and passing away, and thereby the position that dialectical philosophy is nothing more than the reflection of this process in the human brain. Laws of motion, evolution, natural and historical development, reflection of the external world in the brain—these are the standard elements of the vulgar positions taken by Lenin before and after 1914.

Side by side with these statements appears the observation that Marx and Engels broke with the old materialism, since it was too "mechanical," was unhistorical and undialectical, and neglected the importance of changing the world, of revolution. Above all, the following text stands out:

> Still, this idea, as formulated by Marx and Engels on the basis of Hegel's philosophy, is far more comprehensive and far richer in content than the current idea of evolution is. A development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher basis ("the negation of the negation"), a development, so to speak, that proceeds in spirals, not in a straight line; a development by leaps, catastrophes, and revolutions; "breaks in continuity"; the transformation of quantity into quality; inner impulses towards development, imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies acting on a given body, or within a given phenomenon, or within a given society; the interdependence and the closest and indissoluble connection between *all* aspects of any phenomenon (history constantly revealing ever new aspects), a connection that provides a uniform, and universal process of motion, one that follows definite laws—these are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of development that is richer than the conventional one. (Lenin 1914s, 54–55/55)

While this exposition may well be seen as a summary of Lenin's notebooks on Hegel, the former vulgar position seems to come straight out of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Is the text I have quoted at length a foreign body, inserted late into this article for the encyclopedia, the first signs of the impact of Lenin's time in the Berne library? Those who hold to the narrative of a radical awakening in 1914 must argue so. Thus, Anderson is forced to argue that, in this piece, we can begin to see the insights (of the passage quoted earlier) as a result of reading Hegel (Anderson 1995, 23–25). As evidence, Anderson mentions the

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slightly earlier article from 1913, "The Three Sources and Three Components of Marxism" (Lenin 1913r[1]), where one does indeed find many of the more vulgar, mechanistic elements noted earlier. However, Anderson's suggestion that Lenin's letters to the publishers of the encyclopedia (Lenin 1914z[1], 1915k) reflect Lenin's desire to revise completely the section on dialectics in light of his reading of Hegel in Berne is pushing the evidence a little. In the first letter, Lenin merely regrets the fact that he had to cut, due to requirements of length, many quotations from Marx along with references, and that some passages needed rewording in order to pass the censor. The second letter, however, does mention a desire to make some "corrections" to the section on dialectics, or rather to "add something" since he had been working on the question for the last six weeks.[45] However, once one assumes the narrative to which Anderson is beholden, this material may seem to reinforce that narrative. But if we bring to bear the material I have traced in some detail from before 1914, it becomes clear that this text on Marx exhibits not so much the first signs of his new discovery of the Hegelian dialectic, but rather the persistent tension between vulgar and ruptural approaches to that dialectic. The possible revisions Lenin may have entertained would not have altered that fundamental tension. All of these are captured in a beautiful sentence from the same piece that displays both elements: "They thought that any other formulation of the principle of development, of evolution, was one-sided and poor in content, and could only distort and mutilate the actual course of development (which often proceeds by leaps, and via catastrophes and revolutions) in Nature and in society" (Lenin 1914s, 53/53–54).

With this perception of the continued tension in Lenin's thought, it becomes much easier to make sense of later arguments in which he juxtaposes both positions. For instance, in *The State and Revolution*—a prime exhibit of the way Lenin subsumed dialectics into his political analysis—we find materialist dialectics defined as "the theory of development" (учение о развитии—*uchenie o razvitii*) (Lenin 1917h[2], 476/98). The issue at stake is the development of communism out of capitalism, a development in which an incomplete form of communism would eventually give way to its full expression. However, just when Lenin has deployed a vulgar, developmental, if not evolutionary, approach, he offers an assessment that comes straight out of the other dimension of the dialectic. What does it mean for communism to develop out of capitalism? Communism in its first phase actually retains bourgeois law, especially in regard to consumer goods, and thereby it retains the bourgeois state as an apparatus in order to observe the law. Now Lenin pushes the dialectic: "It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie!" Fully aware of what he has just written, he observes: "This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical conundrum of which Marxism is often accused by people who have not taken the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content" (Lenin 1917h[2], 476/99).

One final example, now from 1922, indicates that Lenin had by no means relinquished his interest in Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*. In this late text, Lenin writes to natural scientists—precisely the discipline that fascinated Engels so much and which had led to the Second International's mechanistic

approach to the dialectic, full of eclectic examples that were supposed to confirm the dialectic as they understood it. But now, Lenin urges the scientists as part of their program of research and publication to add to their knowledge of Engels's works and engage in the "the systematic study of Hegelian dialectics from a materialist standpoint, i.e., the dialectics which Marx applied practically in his *Capital* and in his historical and political works" (Lenin 1922h, 233/30). This will involve publishing excerpts from Hegel's major works and then showing how Marx deployed the dialectic in a materialist fashion. Most tellingly, he suggests that they also provide examples from beyond the natural sciences, examples that may be drawn from the areas of economic and political relations, with specific focus on the modern imperialist war and revolution (Lenin 1922h, 233–34/30–31). These are of course two of the topics of his own research and political engagement.

By now the conclusion to this careful attention to Lenin's texts on dialectics both before and after 1914 should be clear. The best way to understand this tension in Lenin's thought is in terms of his marginal comment in the Hegel notebooks: "breaks in gradualness." Thus, insights into and awareness of the ruptural complexity of Hegel's dialectic were certainly not foreign to Lenin before that time in the Berne library, even though that experience may have renewed and sharpened his understanding. Yet, after 1914, the vulgar approach did not disappear, recurring especially in his late texts. That is, Lenin continues in many respects Marx's own juxtaposition, or rather dialectical interaction, between both vulgar and ruptural approaches. In this light, we may make sense of the fact that Lenin was quite sanguine about the revised edition of *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in 1920.

To Oppose or Foster? Idealism, God-Building, and Radical Religion

> In this *most idealistic* of Hegel's works there is the *least* idealism and the *most materialism*. "Contradictory," but a fact! (Lenin 1914–16, 233/215)

At last I return to the implications for Lenin's appreciation of God-building and religion after the initial and less than inspiring engagement in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. The seeming detour through a full assessment of Lenin's encounters with Hegel now turns out to provide the necessary background for a proper appreciation of Lenin's subsequent responses to God-building and marginal forms of religion. On the matter of God-building, I suggest a comparable tension between ruptural and vulgar dialectics, along with a notable shift. I deal with the shift first, which concerns the explicit and repeated connection Lenin had made between idealism and religion, the latter being a subset of idealism and thereby a natural implication from it. As I pointed out with *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, a fundamental assumption is that once Lenin locks someone into an idealist position (with however many twists), he can then pin a fideist or at least an agnostic position on them. Indeed, idealism amounts to an advocacy and a defense of religion. After this work from 1908, a string of similar comments appear, along with polemical critique of Gorky's dabbling with God-building and even God-seeking (Lenin 1908k, 33/19; 1909a, 409–10/422–23; 1913r[1], 24/43; 1913x[1], 80–81/118; 1914l[1], 129/346; 1914s[1], 195/40, 202/47–48; 1914e, 456/321;

1914b[2], 489/355; 1913t[1], 84/189; 1913u[1], 122–23/227–28; 1913v[1], 127–29/230–33). The last text in which Lenin makes the idealism–religion connection appears just before he began reading Hegel in Berne, that is, June 1914.

However, after he finished with Hegel, these statements disappear! Thus, they are contained within the period from 1908, with the attack on Bogdanov and Machists, along with Lunacharsky and the God-builders, to the middle of 1914, when he began reading Hegel. It is quite clear that Lenin's delving into Hegel, especially the last section of *The Science of Logic* to which he devotes most of his energy and where he feared he would find God at the pinnacle of Hegel's idealist system, rendered the idealism–religion connection no longer tenable. If Hegel's dialectical idealism led him to the edge of materialism rather than religion, then religion is cut free from the cord that had seemingly tied it to idealism. Here indeed is a distinct shift in position as a result of the Berne seclusion.

Against the Religious Curse

Nonetheless, this shift does not mean that Lenin abandoned his critique of religion after that time. But now that critique jostles for space with granting religion some space, so much so that a tension emerges between a continued attack on religion and yet allowing it some room (here I develop the preliminary points I made in this regard at the close of chapter 1). As with the tension between vulgar and ruptural approaches to the dialectic, this tension appears in Lenin's later texts and acts. On the negative side, in the article "On the Significance of Militant Materialism" (Lenin 1922h), Lenin berates his comrades for the slackness of their propagation of atheism. As we saw in my discussion of Lenin's explicit texts on religion in chapter 1, the dilemma facing Lenin is that religion has persisted after the revolution. The first strategy for dealing with religion had been deployed, namely the revolution itself, which was meant to remove the material causes of religion (economic and social suffering), but now they are left with only the second strategy, education. So Lenin encourages the new government to redouble its efforts against the resilient forms of religion. Republish the old eighteenth-century criticisms of religion, he suggests, even if they require some editing and explanatory commentary to bring the texts up to date with the latest research. After all, it engages the mind and heart far more than the dry communist propaganda we are using now. And it is certainly better than some other recent works—which try to show the ridiculousness of religion or argue against the existence of Christ, but then end up advocating a new and purified form of religion. In texts such as this, we find the seeds and subsequent justification for the official policy of atheism in the USSR, the educational programs against religion and in favor of atheism (which have a significant residue in Russia today). But they also risk foregrounding an issue that was always regarded as secondary to the main struggle of the revolution.

At the time of this article, systematic attacks on the Orthodox Church were also taking place (Stites 1989, 92–109; Gabel 2005), clearly indicating that the Bolsheviks, and especially Lenin, had by no means relinquished their opposition to religion. And at the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution, Lenin

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claims that the new government had cleansed, among many other piles of shit, the "Augean Stables" of religion (Lenin 1921a, 52–53/145–46).[46] Here the reason is at least more obvious, for the Orthodox Church, or at least major sections of it, opposed at every step of the way their loss of power, influence, and privilege, which were tied up so closely with the old order that had been swept away. As enemies of the new government, they manifested the oppressive side of the political ambivalence of Christianity that I explored in my earlier treatment of Lunacharsky.

Yet, this opposition is by no means the whole story, for along with Lenin's explicit attacks on religion (with all their ambivalences), we encounter a very different approach at one and the same time. That tension is embodied in two statements from the period after the October Revolution. In the first, Lenin states that he is in favor of expelling party members who take part in religious rituals (Lenin 1919f[1], 239/330), but then he turns around and instructs Molotov not to pursue that "tactless" approach of exposing religion as a falsehood, indeed "absolutely to avoid any affront to religion," especially during Easter (1921b[1], 120/140). In light of that latter statement, I focus on three instances that show a Lenin much more open to the liberating, communistic side of both God-building and marginal religious groups.

God-Building Commissar

The first is personal, directly in relation to Lunacharsky. Despite the many differences between Lenin and Lunacharsky, despite exasperated statements that Lunacharsky "should be flogged for his futurism" (1921y, 139/179), despite the fact that Lunacharsky had only recently been readmitted to the Bolshevik Party, when it was time to appoint the Commissars of the new government after the October Revolution, it was Lunacharsky who was appointed to the important post of Commissar of Enlightenment. The announcement received widespread applause. So why did Lenin persist with a man who had been so wayward in his views for more than a decade? Lenin advised those less disposed to Lunacharsky, such as Viktor Shulgin:

> I advise you also to be fond of him. He is drawn towards the future with his whole being. That is why there is such joy and laughter in him. And he is ready to give that joy and laughter to everyone. (Quoted in Fitzpatrick 1970, 10)

One may, of course, find many reasons for this enthusiasm for Lunacharsky, but I would suggest that a crucial reason may well lie in the effect of Lenin's engagement with Hegel. It was now possible to see that Lunacharsky was not slipping God back into Marxism, that his avowals of atheism were genuine, that Lunacharsky's break with Plekhanov's cold theory (which Lenin found problematic, even if for other reasons more related to the dialectic) was on the right track, and indeed that idealism could be thoroughly materialist.

In my earlier treatment of Lunacharsky's position in *Religion and Socialism*, I deliberately included many references to his later works, particularly those written and spoken after the October Revolution. The reason: On numerous occasions in

these later works, he deploys the language of God-building. For instance, in his debate with Vvedensky, Luncharsky asks concerning Christianity:

> Is it democratic? Yes, it is democratic. Biblical Christianity has deeply democratic roots because it does not equate the last with the first, but puts the last first.
>
> Is Christianity revolutionary? Yes, it is revolutionary because it touches on the very Day of Judgement, saying without hesitation that one must not sin against one's neighbour. And finally, is Christianity socialist? Yes, it is doubly socialist. (1985, 179)[47]

And at the center of his education policy as Commissar of Enlightenment appears the very language of God-building. Let me quote once again a text I mentioned in chapter 3, drawn from the programmatic essay, "What is Education?" (Lunacharsky 1981, 45–58): "Our ideal is the image of man, of man like a god, in relation to whom we are all raw material only, merely ingots waiting to be given shape, living ingots that bear their own ideal within themselves" (Lunacharsky 1981, 57). Or, more fully:

> Our word for education (*obrazovanie*), like the German Bildung, comes from the word meaning *image* or *form* (*obraz*). It would seem that when our nation needed to define what every man ought to make of himself and what society ought to make of him, they had a mental picture of the image or form of a human being emerging from the material of some sort . . . You know how religious people used to say that man was created in the image of God, and that he had in him something of God . . . Ludwig Feuerbach . . . rightly remarked that it is not man who is created in the image of God, but God that is created in the image of man . . . If you look more closely at either the gods of Greece, who were dazzlingly beautiful, immortal, wise beings, or at the definitions Christianity makes of its gods when it says their gods or their God (the trinity, three-in-one) is all-beneficent, all-powerful, all-righteous, all-present—then you may think that man is far from being all-powerful and all-beneficent. The point is that the pagans in their gods and the Christians in their God were creating the *ideal* of man. (Lunacharsky 1981, 45–46)[48]

Since Lenin took the educational task of the revolution very seriously indeed (Lenin 1921c[l]), communicating almost daily with Lunacharsky, directly or via Krupskaya, one cannot imagine that Lenin was not unaware of such explicit statements. Add to this Lunacharsky's efforts to convert Moscow into a place where the architecture and the city planning would be conducive to citywide celebrations of the new communist religion, such as the Third International congress in 1921 or the "Comsomol Christmas" in 1923 (Lebedeva 2005), as well as his frequent talks on matters of religion, let alone the widely popular debates with Metropolitan Vvedensky, and we have a Lunacharsky deeply associated with all matters religious.[49] So we find a situation in which Lunacharsky went through the rare ritual of mentioning the "sins" of his youth, yet at the same time propounding many of the themes of God-building with Lenin's knowledge. One can only conclude that Lenin was now willing to leave space for God-building, particularly after his realization when reading Hegel that idealism and religion are by no means coterminous. Crucially, the mainstream church (apart from the Renovationists) was still

highly suspect, given its support of the Tsar and staunch opposition to the Soviet government. But those outside the mainstream, especially those that found their way through to communism, were to be fostered.

Sectarian Communists

The second example involves Lenin's continued interest in sectarian groups with communist tendencies (Etkind 1998, 631–74). Already in the early years of the new century, Lenin wrote, in light of RSDLP congress resolutions, that the Social-Democrats "demand . . . an amnesty for all 'political prisoners' and members of religious sects." "Until that is done," he continues, "all talk about tolerance and freedom of worship will remain a miserable pretence and discreditable lie" (Lenin 1903c, 348/125; see also 1901g, 281; 1903o, 473; 1903a, 33; 1903p, 57–58, 289–96).[50] Lenin's key informant and collaborator on sectarian matters was V. D. Bonch-Bruevich, who had a profound interest in sectarian groups, such as the Old Believers, Dukhobors, Molokans, Khlysty, and Mennonites. His text from 1903, "Schism and Sectarianism in Russia," captured Lenin's interest, so much so that the latter read it to the delegates at the second party congress of that year. It was agreed by the congress that one way to enlist the anti-tsarist sentiment among the sectarians was to publish a newspaper called *Among Sectarians*, under the editorship of Bonch-Bruevich. Six issues of what was eventually called *Dawn* (*Rassvet*) were in fact published.[51]

But why were Bonch-Bruevich and Lenin interested in the sectarians? It was not merely personal predeliction or default anti-tsarism that drew their interest, but the embodiment of what I called earlier Christian communism. That communism was a strong form, with devotion to an authoritarian leader who ensured that all were committed to the collective. I will return to this point in my discussion of the veneration of Lenin in chapter 6, but it is worth noting here that it was a tougher version of Christian communism than that found in the universal love and peaceful living of Tolstoy, or the rural village-commune so beloved of the Narodniks and SRs.

After the October Revolution, in the dire days of dealing with counterrevolution, and taking the first steps to constructing communism, these groups became even more interesting. In the Kremlin, Lenin loved to escape and browse through Bonch-Bruevich's now extensive ethnographic archive. He was particularly taken with the philosophical pamplets written by the sectarians. According to Bonch-Bruevich:

> On one occasion he was particularly drawn into this reading . . . and he told me: How interesting! This was created by simple folk . . . whereas our Private-Docents have authored a huge amount of talentless papers on all kinds of philosophical bullshit [*drebeden'*] . . . These manuscripts are a hundred times more important than all their scribble. (Etkind 1998, 649)

This enthusiasm was not only theoretical, for Lenin also saw their practical possibilities. Bonch-Bruevich had invited some Old Believers to establish a commune at some abandoned land in Lesnye Poliany, located close to Gorki, where Lenin would retire for a few moments of peace. The blessing for this venture

appears in a proclamation addressed to "Members of the Sect of Old Believers" (Žižek 2007, 96; Marie 2008, 392–93).[52] The proclamation quotes the founding text of Christian communism from the Acts of the Apostles: "No one said any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common" (Acts 4:32). Apart from the practical issue of food during the crisis of the "civil" war, Lenin's was closely interested since the commune promised an alternative to the compromise of the NEP. I would suggest that here again is the awareness of a more dialectical approach to religion and idealism. In the same way that Hegel, at his most idealistic, was thoroughly materialist, so also was it perfectly possible for such groups to come to a communist position through their religious commitments.

Christian Communist Peasants

The third incident comes from the same time. It too may be read as a manifestation of Lenin's deeper appreciation of the dialectic of idealism and materialism, indeed that unconventional religion did not pose the same problems as its more conventional forms. On March 1, 1921, Lenin wrote a letter to N. Osinsky (V. V. Obolensky), chair of the State Bank and of the Supreme Economic Council (Lenin 1921a[1]). Here Lenin mentions a certain Ivan Afanasyevich Chekunov, an activist peasant keen on improving the lot of toiling peasants. Having improved his own farm, he had toured other areas (around Novgorod and Simbirsk) and tells Lenin that the peasants have lost confidence in Soviet power. Knowing fully well the vital role of peasants in building a new society and sensing Chekunov's enthusiasm, Lenin urges Osinsky to appoint Chekunov to the role of representative of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, with a view to establishing a non-Party Peasant Council. Now comes the vital point: Chekunov "sympathises with the Communists, but will not join the Party, because he goes to church and is a Christian (he says he rejects the ritual but is a believer)" (Lenin 1921a[1], 91/85). Standing before him is a Christian peasant with communist leanings whom Lenin is eager to enlist in the broad front of communist reconstruction. But this is only the first step, for in developing the basis for a Non-Party Peasant Council, Lenin suggests that it should begin with an old farmer who favors the peasants and workers, along with another person from an area not producing grain. Crucially, not only should they be experienced, but "it would be good for all of them to be *both* non-Party men *and* Christians" (Lenin 1921a[1], 91/86). The reason is not given, but it is clear that only such an organization would gain the confidence of peasants, showing both support for the communist government from outside its own ranks and revealing that Christians may not be the threat to the success of the revolution that many believed they were. In other words, given the deeply held beliefs of peasants, it is vital to show that Christians too may have communist preferences, indeed, that being a Christian and communist peasant is not a contradiction in terms.

In order to make sense of this tension in Lenin's thought and practice after the revolution, I would suggest he deploys in these cases—atheistic education and attacks on the Orthodox Church alongside the significant room permitted

Lunacharsky and the pro-communist religious groups—the dialectical discernment highlighted earlier in my discussion of his engagements with Hegel before and after 1914. To pick up a distinction Lunacharsky himself advocated, a religion like Christianity is politically ambivalent, able to support oppressive power with ease and yet provide resources for overthrowing that power. While the official church manifested in some (but by no means all[53]) respects the oppressive side of the political ambivalence of Christianity, some of the "marginal" forms of Christianity did manifest signs of more revolutionary and even communist dimensions, which one must discern in the midst of those repressive tendencies. Such discernment seems to have been Lenin's occasional skill.

Conclusion

> Believe me, the philosopher Hegel was right; life proceeds by contradictions, and living contradictions are so much richer, more varied and deeper in content than they may seem at first sight to a man's mind. (Lenin 1909v, 403/219)

I have reiterated the main points often enough throughout this chapter. Careful attention to Lenin's texts reveals a perpetual tension between vulgar and ruptural approaches to the dialectic, approaches that move back and forth across his writings, albeit with a sharper awareness of the ruptural side being gained with the direct engagement with Hegel's *The Science of Logic* in 1914. This tension may perhaps best be understood in light of Lenin's own brief definition of dialectics in the notebooks as the "doctrine of the unity of opposites" (Lenin 1914–16, 222/203). Not only does this make sense of the apparent contradictions in his writings in regard to Hegel and the dialectic, but also with respect to religion and especially Lunacharsky's God-building. These varying positions do indeed represent the "breaks in gradualness" that Lenin identified more than once as a useful characterization of the dialectic. Yet, the key always remained the revolution, *Aufhebung* on materialist register, which now leads into the question of the miracle.

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4/23/2013 3:48:21 PM

CHAPTER 5

Miracles Can Happen

> The history of our proletarian revolution is full of such miracles.
>
> —Lenin 1919r, 73/235

"In certain respects, a revolution is a miracle" (Lenin 1921q, 153/360). Revolution = miracle; революция = чудо: The permutations of this equation are the concern of this chapter. Although revolution is arguably the central theme of Lenin's extensive writings and political practice, my angle is different from the many others who have dealt with Lenin and revolution, for I am interested in its theological translation—hence miracle. What does it mean for Lenin to say that revolution is a miracle?

First, miracle is not so much a moment or an event that changes the very coordinates of existence (or in Hume-derived terms as an event that is inexplicable according to the "laws" of nature), but rather a point of contact between two seemingly incommensurable worlds. In theological terms, a miracle is a touching between heaven and earth, or rather (to gloss Negri), the moment when transcendence is bent toward immanence (Negri and Fadini 2008, 666–68). In Lenin's appropriation, the two worlds are no longer heaven and earth but those of spontaneity and organization, between the unexpected the expected. Time and again, he emphasizes and devotes immense energy to the need to organize in preparation for the revolution, whether in terms of party structure, publicity organs, propaganda, parliamentary involvement, agitation on the streets, or military training. Yet, the moment of revolution inevitably occurs without forewarning, a spark that turns instantaneously into a conflagration. Both January 1905 and February 1917 were precisely such events, let alone the myriad strikes that surrounded them. In the first part of the analysis that follows, I explore various manifestations of this tension at the heart of miracle-as-revolution—in terms of both sides of the tension, of the *Potemkin* revolt, of the "lightning" strike, and of its curious manifestation in the form of Lenin's texts. The second part focuses on a closely related theological term, *kairós*, which trails the New Testament senses of the time of crisis, the end time, and the right time. After exploring Lenin's

kairological tendencies, I compare his position with those who may be called the spontaneous philosophers of our own day. Not only do they compare unfavorably with Lenin (for they fall heavily on the side of a spontaneous revolution), but Lenin himself reveals another side to *kairós*—its true opposite, *ákairos*, what is untimely and out of place.

Third, the tension between transcendence and immanence embodied in the miracle also manifests itself in the struggle over working within and without the old order. This question became urgent with the Tsar's October Manifesto after the 1905 revolutionary wave, promising (but then unraveling) elements of a constitutional monarchy with a Duma. Should socialists concern themselves primarily with reform, working within and changing the system, or with revolutionary overthrow of that system? More specifically, should they participate in Duma elections and the parliamentary process or should they boycott them? Lenin offers us no easy answer to either question, working between the options available toward a more dialectical position.[1] So also with the complex matter of freedom, concerning which Lenin castigates the formal and limited "freedom" offered by the bourgeoisie for the sake of real freedom in which one keeps open the option of revolutionary transformation. Once again, he does not stop here, for the key to real freedom is an open, explicitly partisan (proletarian) freedom, which then becomes a genuine universal. The surprise with this move is that he thereby removes the basis for the distinction between formal and real freedom, for it was dependent on the system that is being abolished.

Miracles

Revolutions are not made to order. (Lenin 1918y, 44/30)

The quotation with which I began—"a revolution is a miracle"—is by no means an isolated occurrence in Lenin's texts.[2] So the first step is to trace the various usages of the term itself, which will enrich the definition of miracle. We may distinguish two broad usages of miracle, one concerning a magical occurrence that takes place entirely outside human agency, as with the apparent acts produced by the power of a saint's incorruptible remains. For this, often minor, event, one waits expectantly but somewhat fatalistically. Another meaning focuses on stupendous human effort, which may come from an unexpected quarter but is closely linked with the need for human agency. In other words, a momentous event takes place at the intersection between spontaneity and organization, between the unexpected and the expected. For Lenin, the former meaning is distinctly negative while the latter is positive.

In respect to these dimensions of miracle, a noticeable shift takes place in his usage after 1910. Before that time, miracle is generally although not universally a pejorative term in the sense outlined earlier. However, from 1910, Lenin appropriates the more positive sense of miracle, especially as he systematically assesses the aftermath of the 1905 revolution. Now he creatively refashions the term for his own purposes. We may identify the explicit shift to a more positive sense in

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an article written to commemorate the centenary of the birth of the "father of Russian socialism," Alexander Herzen (illegitimate son of a Russian landowner). Lenin seeks to draw out the socialist dimensions of Herzen's thought from their more liberal aspects and quotes from the famous work, *Kolokol* (The Bell): "The dead bodies of your martyrs will not perform forty-eight miracles, and praying to them will not cure a tooth ache; but their living memory may produce one miracle—your emancipation" (Lenin 1912r, 30/261). Against the popular belief in minor miracles caused by saints, miracle now becomes an explicitly emancipatory, revolutionary term. Lenin's mind was already moving in that direction, but Herzen's text provides him with the clarity of that shift. And in developing a positive meaning for miracle, Lenin presses heavily on his pen to emphasize both the unexpected moments of revolution and the extraordinary examples of almost superhuman effort, such as the efforts of the Red Army during the civil war, or of workers and peasants. Here, they become miracles of daring, commitment, initiative, self-sacrifice, and sheer grit against almost insuperable odds. Each of them provides a glimpse, a step on the way to the full realization of communism. Yet, even with this shift in Lenin's appreciation of the terminology of miracle, he does not abandon the earlier, negative sense. As we will see, it continues in a minor key in his writings and speeches until well after October. At times, he points out that communists do not believe in miracles if one understands them as occurrences beyond human agency, or as the results of a magical talisman, or a fatalism that awaits the unfolding of history in one's favor. This persistent negative thread throws into relief his distinctly affirmative usage and may be seen as a clarification of what he means by that usage.

Earlier, I defined a miracle as bending heaven to earth, or drawing transcendence to immanence. Lenin's exploration of the tension between spontaneous, unexpected revolution and the creative powers of human energy may be seen as another code for this intersection—given that neither code is an absolute that determines the other. In this light, I would also identify an analogy with the Orthodox approach to miracle. Rather than inexplicable occurrences that defy the "laws" of nature, miracles reveal "to nature a window that opens out onto its own most appropriate goal," providing "exceptional anticipations of the eschatological state" (Stăniloae 2000, 61). Here, one bends eschatological transcendence to the immanence of the present, when the two realms touch. The other side of Orthodoxy was, of course, the veneration of the magical powers of saints for all manner of minor "miracles"—curing a bad leg or a toothache, seeking a propitious day for sowing seed, and so on. I would suggest that in Lenin's own terms or code, he castigated the latter sense while developing a more sophisticated sense of the revolution as a miracle.

Let me trace Lenin's changing approach to miracle in a little more detail. In his earlier texts, he was not so enthused by miracles. Most often, he attacks his fellow communists for belief in such occurrences as a sign of blind faith in events beyond their control, or a fatalism that indicates weakness and futility. In these utterances, Lenin regards a miracle as too closely tied up with religious belief, which is itself a response to and ignorant of oppressive conditions. Marx is his guide on

this matter, who wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, "As ever, weakness had taken refuge in a belief in miracles" (Lenin 1905r[1], 296/329). For instance, the Menshevik-controlled *Iskra* or the Bund suffers from such weakness, believing that a miracle will achieve communist aims without an uprising, that it is possible to scale the mountain without a ladder. Indeed, belief in miracles is a signal of deceit, falsity, insanity, and utter ridiculousness (Lenin 1905r[1], 296–68/328–31; 1894a, 364/379; 1897d, 531/547).[3] Tellingly, Lenin also castigates belief in the miracle of a spontaneous uprising, or in the anarchist belief in the miracle-working power of direct action, for it is assumed that it will take place without the laborious planning and organization for which he was so keen (Lenin 1907g, 418/290; 1908f, 195/190–91; 1907e[1], 263/202). The catch is that it is precisely such a miraculous uprising that Lenin would come to evaluate more positively.

However, before exploring the various dimensions of that affirmation and reconfiguration of miracle, it should be noted that Lenin does not abandon its negative dimensions. He maintains his critique of the miracle as either a fatalism that simply waits for events to unfold in one's favor (Lenin 1917e[1], 203/406), or a near-magical occurrence that may as well have been enacted by a dead saint or at the behest of the Virgin Mary (Lenin 1920i, 115/101). For instance, in his gramophone address from 1919—"What is Soviet Power?"—he says: "Soviet power is not a miracle-working talisman. It does not, overnight, heal all the evils of the past—illiteracy, lack of culture, the consequences of a barbarous war, the aftermath of predatory capitalism. But it does pave the way to socialism" (Lenin 1919g[1], 248–49/239). This continued critique of talismans and of the magical dimensions of the miracle makes sense of the Soviet campaign of exposing the relics of saints to show that they had indeed decayed, contrary to popular belief that they had not done so.[4] That is not the miracle of which we are speaking, Lenin says implicitly. In that vein, he occasionally states directly that the victory of Soviet power against all odds is "not a miracle," for "intelligent people don't believe in miracles," but then he proceeds to outline the reasons for that victory in terms of enthusiasm, energy, and supreme effort—precisely the alternative definition of miracle that he develops at the same time (Lenin 1921r, 108/306; 1921p, 118/235; 1918d, 154/156; 1918q, 494/472).[5]

As far as that positive sense is concerned, Lenin no longer dismisses the inexplicability of revolution. With the upsurge in worker unrest and strikes in the early 1910s, he notes that such unexpected events are taking place. For instance, a simple decision by the Executive Commission of the St. Petersburg Committee, its printing and distribution by a couple of hundred people is transformed: "And suddenly, a miracle occurs!" 250,000 workers rise as one (Lenin 1913z, 225/303–4). Above all, if the February Revolution of 1917, in which the Tsar was overthrown, seemed inexplicable and unexpected to people in Petrograd and Russia more generally, then to Lenin in Switzerland, it seemed even more so. So in his notes for a lecture in Zurich in March 1917, he writes, "The world has changed in 3 days . . . 'a miracle' " (Lenin 1916d, 422/480). And in "Letters From Afar"—the full version of these notes—he turns once again to the language of miracle, asking how such a miracle could have happened, how a monarchy that had maintained

itself for centuries and that had endured the crisis of 1905–7 could now be overthrown. Here, Lenin is a little cautious in his terminology, feeling his way and qualifying his usage. “There are no miracles in nature or history,” he writes, but abrupt turns like revolutions involve the conjunction of unexpected combinations of events, forms of struggle, and the forces of the protagonists, which “to the lay mind . . . must appear miraculous” (Lenin 1917j[1], 297/11). In other words, should one be able to analyze all of these conjunctions, one would be able to identify patterns of cause and effect, and the role of organization and planning. Once again, we are back with the tension between the unexpected and the foreseeable, between spontaneity and organization that runs through Lenin’s reflections on the miracle in these later years.

Above all, Lenin’s overt usage of miracle lays its emphasis on human energy, effort, and enthusiasm, thereby bending heaven to earth so that “the miracle did not come from heaven” (Lenin 1921w, 220/63). Yet, it requires stupendous moments for such miracles to occur, moments that evoke almost superhuman efforts from those who did know they could do so—the revolution itself, the tremendous hurdles to be overcome in the postrevolutionary situation, such as “civil” war and economic reconstruction, which in many respects require even greater miracles. In a lyrical statement, Lenin writes:

> Revolutions are the locomotives of history, said Marx. Revolutions are the festivals of the oppressed and the exploited. At no other time are the masses of the people in a position to come forward so actively as creators of a new social order as at a time of revolution. At such times the people are capable of performing miracles, if judged by the narrow, philistine scale of gradual progress. (Lenin 1905r[3], 113/103)

Once again note the qualifier, “if judged by the narrow, philistine scale of gradual process.” But note also the echoes of Lunacharsky’s language, especially in the evocation of festivals of the oppressed and the terminology of creation. Soon, however, Lenin’s qualifications fade away, particularly in his unbridled enthusiasm when calling on workers to even greater effort. Now we find references to the conviction that will multiply a hundredfold the “revolutionary energy and revolutionary enthusiasm which can perform miracles,” references to “miracles of proletarian heroism,” to miracles of “daring, initiative and self-sacrifice,” and especially to “miracles of proletarian organisation” (Lenin 1905r[3], 103/93; 1917j[1], 306–7/21, 323/37, 330/44; 1917m[2], 355/72, 360/77; 1917l[1], 43–44/132–33; 1921w, 220/43; 1917y, 429/32).[6] In each case, the call to perform miracles comes in the wake of a preliminary revolution, whether January 1905 or February 1917, which functions as both the proof that such miracles of human energy are possible and as a call to enact yet another miracle and bring about the communist revolution itself. The last example—miracles of proletarian organization—was to become a key slogan in the heady days between February and October 1917:

> The slogan, the “task of the day,” at *this* moment must be: *Workers, you have performed miracles of proletarian heroism, the heroism of the people, in the civil war against tsarism. You must perform miracles of organisation, organisation of the proletariat and*

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> *of the whole people, to prepare the way for your victory in the second stage of the revolution.* (Lenin 1917j[1], 306–7/21)[7]

Both organization and spontaneity, it seems, may be described as miraculous, perpetually in tension with one another and dialectically turning into one another.

The miracle of the October Revolution was but the first and perhaps the easiest miracle. As Lenin was to emphasize many times after the revolution, the act of overthrowing and seizing state power is the easy part; the revolutionary task of building a new society is far more difficult (Lenin 1920i, 115/101–2). So we find the bulk of Lenin's recognition of and invocations to further miracles in his post-October writings. Miracles were occurring almost daily, it seems. Thus, the continued cheerfulness in and enthusiasm for Soviet power, in the face of economic ruin, hunger, cold, disease, and devastation, are miraculous, as are the achievements of steering the ship of state despite the chronic inexperience in doing so. Indeed, every time a new difficulty arises, the miracle of its overcoming becomes a proof of the workers' and peasants' firmness, self-sacrifice, and strength. That the Soviet state survived at all is a miracle (Lenin 1919x, 66/228; 1919r, 72–73/234–35; 1920f[1], 437/232; 1921n, 67/259). By far, the most persistent ascription of miracle is to the impossible success in the "civil" war. For four years, the superior forces of international capital, in terms of troops, equipment, logistics, and finance assisted the White Armies in their efforts to bring down the fledgling Soviet state, yet the under-armed and underfinanced Red Army was victorious. Particularly in his public speeches, Lenin repeatedly describes that victory as a stunning miracle of human grit, determination, discipline, and resourcefulness. Such miracles are not only tributes to the enthusiasm for and devotion to the new communist government, but also have the direct result of increasing tenfold their support among peasants and workers, let alone those in other countries and colonies who aspire to overthrow the oppressors (Lenin 1918z, 357/374, 363/380[8]; 1919y, 83/246; 1919b, 152/319, 153–54/320–21; 1919h, 171/343; 1919t, 208/388, 214/394–95, 230–31/412–13; 1920y, 382/168, 385–87/172–73; 1920j, 446/240, 447/241, 457/252, 488/285–86; 1920x, 496/293–94; 1920s, 169/116; 1920t, 325/352; 1921x, 487/44; 1919m, 411/3).[9] This was indeed "a miracle without parallel, in that a starving, weak and half-ruined country has defeated its enemies—the mighty capitalist countries" (Lenin 1921o, 117/234).

With this example behind them, Lenin then turns to calling for yet more miracles like those of the Red Army, only greater. The focus is now on economic reconstruction, whether in relation to the labor front, transport, fuel, agriculture, or industrial production (Lenin 1919h, 188/365; 1920a[1], 432/220; 1920z, 523/321, 525/323–24; 1920q, 164/86; 1921m, 291/152).[10] He is not averse to designating an individual a "miracle worker," such as Miron Konstantinovich Vladimirov, the Military Commissar Extraordinary of the Railways, who, if he can in the face of a chronic shortage of materials "perform a miracle" by repairing both the Povorino-Tsaritsyn line in addition to the Liski-Likhaya line, "will indeed be a miracle worker" (Lenin 1919b[1], 198/263).[11] All of these may be summed up: "The history of our proletarian revolution is full of such miracles" (Lenin 1919r, 73/235). No longer do the gods perform miracles, but human beings do so.

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Organizing for the Spontaneous

> Forward, then, comrades, to the organised, concerted, and staunch struggle for freedom! (Lenin 1905j[2], 439/209)

The miracle, it seems, is a crucial dimension of Lenin's approach to revolution. Thus far, I have argued that his appropriation of the terminology of miracles enacts a bending of transcendence to immanence, in which human beings become the prime agents of miracles. I would now like to explore in some detail other ramifications of that terminology, dealing here with the tension between the unexpected and the expected, or in Lenin's terminology, between spontaneity and organization. On this topic, I now move to the enriching possibilities that the translation of miracle into revolution (and vice versa) enables. Given that the semantic fields of the two terms do not manage a complete fit, but rather overlap and leave parts outside immediate contact, it becomes possible to expand the senses of each term by means of the other. That is, the full reach of the semantic field of revolution is now able to enrich that of miracle. The following discussion should be seen in that light: As with revolution, miracle too operates in terms of a tension between the unexpected and spontaneous (the more usual sense of miracle) and preparation.

Lenin tries to weave a delicate interaction between these two terms, between spontaneity and organization, an interaction that tends toward a dialectical approach in his more perceptive considerations. The basic problem to which Lenin returns time and again is the reality of spontaneous strikes, waves of unrest, and insurrection. How does one respond to these occurrences? One may, as many fellow revolutionaries believed, allow such unplanned events to occur, so much so that the successful revolution would ultimately happen in such a way. Or one may seek to respond as best as possible to these moments of sheer unexpectedness. Or one may attempt to organize, organize, and organize again in order to lay the groundwork for bursts of spontaneous insurrection. Lenin prefers both the second and third options, working himself into the ground to ensure that organizational structures are in place for agitation and that the party is placed as best as it could be to respond when a revolution spontaneously bursts forth. In what follows, I begin with spontaneity in Lenin's texts, including both strikes and revolutions, before passing on to focus on his strategies of organization (which includes military preparation) and closing with a reconsideration of the mediation between the two key terms.

Spontaneity

> Such intricate and incalculable events as those of the Russian revolution. (Lenin 1905k, 339/316–17)

Stikhiinyi (стихийный; noun: стихийность—*stikhiinost'*) is the central term used in a text that has become a standard reference for spontaneity, *WITBD*. However, as Lih persuasively argues,[12] the translation as "spontaneity" restricts and possibly shifts its meaning away from the Russian word. It means, argues Lih, an unstoppable natural force, and then in relation to revolution, a chaotic and disorganized

struggle. Lenin would also make clear during the heady days of 1917 that *stikhiinyi* is "deeply rooted in the masses" and for that reason is extremely tenacious (Lenin 1917d^2, 30–31/216–17). Spontaneity captures part of this sense, as does elemental in the biblical sense of the "formless chaos" (*tohu wavohu*) of Genesis 1:1.[13] Of course, we are faced with the standard problem of translation I mentioned a few moments ago, in which the semantic clusters of key terms in two languages overlap but do not match entirely. For that reason, I have used and will continue to use a variety of words to capture the sense of spontaneity, such as inexplicable, unexpected, unplanned, but also elemental and disorganized.

I begin with a key statement from *WITBD*, a statement that captures the tension at the heart of *stikhiinyi* and thereby of the miracle:

> The spontaneity of the masses demands a high degree of consciousness from us Social-Democrats. The greater the spontaneous upsurge of the masses and the more widespread the movement, the more rapid, incomparably so, the demand for greater consciousness in the theoretical, political, and organisational work of Social-Democracy. (Lenin 1902p, 396/52)[14]

Here it is quite clear that Lenin does not disparage the immediacy and unexpected nature of mass uprisings. Yet, he is the last one to bow to spontaneity alone, to give this chaotic force an absolute priority.[15] Instead, while such events inevitably occur, they require consciousness from the Social-Democrats, a consciousness that must respond to the degree of inexplicability of popular action. "Consciousness" (сознание—*soznanie*) betokens the awareness, planning, and organization on which Lenin was so keen. But the text makes it clear that such organization should not be the sole emphasis.[16] Both spontaneity and consciousness act together and dialectically, the latter called upon to anticipate and respond to the intensity of that elemental force: The greater the force of the latter, the greater must be the former.

Lenin would emphasize now one, now the other side of this tension. At times, the inexplicable dimension comes to the fore, as with his assessments of the Paris commune, which "sprang up spontaneously." One may identify all manner of factors that led to the uprising, such as the unsuccessful war with Germany, the desperate situation during the siege by the Germans, the devastation of the middle class, unemployment among the workers, and moves of unrest and dissatisfaction among the masses who were dismayed by the incompetence of the ruling class and who sought for a different social system. Yet, "no one consciously prepared it in an organized way," for it was an "event unprecedented in history," a movement that sought "to destroy the very *foundations* of the contemporary social order" (Lenin 1911g, 139–40/217–18). Or, after Bloody Sunday, he is quite open in stating that the Social-Democrats were not sufficiently organized or prepared, so much so that through the general strike and uprising, history was being made by the working classes "without Social-Democracy." And so he asks the question, "Will Social-Democracy be able to gain the lead of this spontaneous movement?" (Lenin 1905p^2, 112–13/218).[17] Twelve years later, he was still examining this question, especially in the famous lecture of 1917, in which he seeks to analyze the

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"awakening of tremendous masses," of the "widespread ferment" that snowballed beyond anyone's imagination (Lenin 1917b[1], 238/310–11). Of course, with the February Revolution in 1917 and the abdication of the Tsar (a month after Lenin had given the aforesaid lecture), the question became even more urgent. As Cliff observes: "The revolution was completely spontaneous and unplanned" (Cliff 2004, 89). Throughout those bewildering months between February and October, the Bolsheviks worked themselves to the bone to organize and gain the leadership, agitating in factories and the armies, pushing their agenda ever more energetically. Yet, moments would arise that they had not anticipated, such as the strike and protests against the war policy of the government on April 20–21, the Kronstadt mutiny in May, and the protest and attempted seizure of power at the beginning on July 3–4 (Lenin 1917c[1], 236/34–35, 241–42/67–68; 1917t[2], 1917p). By 1918, with rich revolutionary experience, he simply told an audience, "Revolution can never be forecast; it cannot be foretold; it comes of itself" (Lenin 1918b[1], 83/70).

Organization

> Lenin's concept of party organization presupposes the fact—the actuality—of revolution. (Lukács 1970, 26)

At other times, he would emphasize the need for meticulous preparation. Here we need to make an important distinction between organization in relation to *stikhiinyi* and conspiracy. In a significant analysis of crucial outbursts of strikes and protests throughout 1917, Lenin undertakes a comparison between those moments and the attempted Kornilov coup in August–September (Lenin 1917d[2], 29–35/215–21). The former—in April and July—were "very spontaneous outbursts," characterized by their deep roots in the working class, their revolutionary nature and aims, their rapid growth, and their tenacity.[18] By contrast, the Kornilov coup was a secret and deceptive "military conspiracy," an attempted putsch in the hands of the landowners and capitalists led by the Cadet party.[19] Without any base among workers or peasants, it sought to impose its will by deception, force, and old patterns of deference, first on parts of the army so that the conspiracy could achieve its aims and then on the people. In other words, class is the crucial issue: Lenin seeks to give the unstoppable spontaneity of the masses a clear class identification. Therefore, if spontaneity belongs to the laboring classes, then it cannot apply to the landowners and bourgeoisie. The key issue in this analysis is the distinction between secret conspiracy and organizational consciousness-raising, for, in the following discussion, I focus on the latter. But I would also identify a number of underlying reasons for this argument. To begin with, Lenin seeks to counter accusations (even from the Mensheviks and SRs) that the Bolsheviks were engaged in all manner of Blanquist conspiracies, stirring up the people to anarchy and civil war. We are not engaged in conspiracies, replies Lenin, for that is the province of the Kornilovites. But the text I have just quoted, coming from September 29, 1917, also indicates a reassessment of the Bolshevik efforts to dampen enthusiasm on these earlier occasions. Particularly in July of that year, they had argued against the mass protests, but then, at the last moment, joined with them. Now we find

Lenin returning to an older theme, namely, that the Bolsheviks had not been sufficiently prepared for such a tenacious and spontaneous rising.

Of course, the very fact that Lenin seeks to analyze these outbreaks is a signal of his own deep desire for organization; so let me for a moment trace this dimension of the dialectic of the revolution-as-miracle. Organizing for the spontaneous requires, as we have already seen, consistent agitation and organization, both politically and militarily, with Lenin pointing out to people that such organization is absolutely necessary since struggle is inevitable.[20] But the desire for organization runs deeply indeed in Lenin's work, as any reader soon notices. "I advocate the ABC of organisation" (Lenin 1919j, 373/368), he writes, and we see it in endless documents concerning congresses that sit snugly alongside long studies that delight in presenting and analyzing complex tables of statistical data. The congresses, initially of the RSDLP itself, but then also meetings of the Central Committee and of editorial boards, evince preparatory documents, reports on discussions and resolutions, post-congress analyses, and, especially after October 1917, myriad matters relating to the "civil" war and then social and economic reconstruction.[21] In terms of his own research, Lenin would insist on "facts, facts, facts," no matter how "dry" or apparently trivial they may be,[22] keeping card systems for all these data, compiling detailed, handwritten tables, and then offering extended explication of the tables—whether of agricultural matters; the development of capitalism; strike statistics; distribution statistics for rival socialist newspapers; electoral results; the production rates of postrevolutionary industry; the comparative weights of cows and horses; long and detailed treatments of butter, cream, and cheese; and the measurement of horse-shit in "poods" (Lenin 1898a, 44/33–34; 1907c, 1907b, 1908e, 1913e, 1913k[1], 1914o[1], 1913m, 1913k, 1913a[1], 1913o[1], 1914d[2], 1914h[1], 1914r, 1915f, 1916c; 1917b[1], 239/311–12; 1917i[2], 1915–16).[23] He was enthused and fascinated by what he called the "language" of figures (Lenin 1913u). So meticulous was Lenin that he actually sent instructions to presses indicating what type-faces should be used in different parts of his texts. Liberally interspersed between and overlapping with these texts are those concerning party organization, especially in the situation of exile for many among the Social-Democratic leadership. That organization had myriad facets: relations between intellectuals and workers; internal struggles and drives to unity; party discipline and authority of its decisions and structures; writing for, publishing, and distributing (from exile) the party organs, using for that purpose whatever means were available, from false-bottomed suitcases to Lithuanian religious groups who were also distributing contraband literature; parliamentary and extra-parliamentary activities; and the all-important development of a military wing.[24]

On the matter of military organization, Lenin found himself digging deep into Engels's insightful and oft-neglected texts from the 1850s and 1860s, especially after the *Potemkin* revolt (see in the following discussion). In his texts, Engels showed extraordinary skill in reporting on campaigns, battles, and wars (especially the Crimean War and then the Hungarian Revolution), offered assessments of the history of military items, such as uniform, rifle, cavalry, and infantry, and argued that the structure of the army was an excellent insight into social relations

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(Lenin 1906w, 176–77/374–75).[25] As for Lenin, he realized that the army and the navy were not neutral; so he urged a consistent campaign to build up the Red detachments, which would then stand over against the "Black" detachments in the crucial moment of revolution (Lenin 1905f, 465/57).[26] Furthermore, the role of the Red Army after the revolution was to support a revolutionary government, which Lenin saw as the other side of the same coin: Both revolutionary government and Red Army would ensure the continuity of the communist government and thereby the freedom of the masses (Lenin 1905p², 99/203; 1905o², 568/344; 1905x¹, 26/68).

However, let me return to those militant cells within the socialist movement, in order to make two pertinent points. First, they provided the seeds of what would become the full, postrevolutionary Red Army, specifically in terms of its basic structure. This was drawn from Engels's argument concerning the relation between the nature of the army and social relations: A properly communist society would have a militia rather than a professional standing army, in which citizens themselves would participate. Thus, for Lenin, the key to building up a military wing of the socialist movement was to train ordinary members in military techniques, tactics, and the handling of arms, a wing that would develop into the arming of the proletariat, merge with the Red units in the regular army, and then, after the seizure of power, absorb all the institutions of state power.[27] This is not to say that the process was a smooth one, for at times, a chasm opened up between theory and practice. Theoretically, "The bomb has ceased to be the weapon of the solitary 'bomb thrower', and is becoming an essential weapon of the people" (Lenin 1905y, 284/269). Practically, however, Lenin occasionally found the military preparations hopelessly disorganized: "It horrifies me—I give you my word—it horrifies me to find that there has been talk about bombs for over six months, yet not one has been made!" (Lenin 1905o³, 344/336).

Eventually, the military wing of the movement did grow, which brings us to the second point, for now Lenin urges the utmost flexibility, mobility, and absence of bureaucratic procedures for such groups. But how were such units to work? They may be as few of three or four, but no more than ten, thoroughly mobile, trained in the arts of guerrilla warfare, able to respond immediately to a situation, rising on the eve of the struggle, even on the spot where combat is to take place.[28]

> They must arrange matters so as to be able to get together at the *most critical moments*, when things may take the *most unexpected turns*... It must not be forgotten that the chances are 100 to 1 that *events will take us unawares*, and that it will be necessary to come together under terribly difficult conditions... attacking, *whenever a favourable opportunity* presents itself, policemen, stray Cossacks (as was the case in Moscow), etc., and seizing their arms. (Lenin 1905f³, 420–21/339–40)

In other words, the spontaneous and the unexpected are the key to these units. Here we face the dialectic I have been tracing at a new level, for what he seeks is disciplined training for the unexpected; or, organizing for the spontaneous. Even those formulations separate the two elements too much, for the very nature of that organization is geared toward spontaneity.

So I return to the realization on Lenin's part of the necessary tension, for organization embodies a dialectic of both directing and emerging from an uprising, of both gradual and spontaneous processes. Or, as Lukács observes, organization should foster rather than restrict the spontaneous revolutionary creativity of the masses (Lukács 1970, 27). While such direction entails the spread of information, preparation for political action, and a revolutionary army, the response that emerges from an uprising requires that one is constantly on the move, perpetually studying and enacting new methods and forms of struggle in light of new conditions and their potential dangers (Lenin 1905g^3, 250–51/235–36; 1917h^2, 467–68/90–91).[29]

From Potemkin to the Lightning Strike

> No, *not for one more day* are the people willing to suffer postponement. (Lenin 1917u^2, 139/286)

As a way of drawing this discussion of spontaneity and organization to a close, I offer three examples where the interplay between them is tight—much like Lenin's proposal that the military units should be organized in light of spontaneity. The first example concerns the *Potemkin* mutiny. During massive strikes and protests in Odessa, the crew of the *Potemkin* decided to join the revolutionary side on June 27 (14 on the new calendar), 1905. Despite plans for a navy uprising in autumn of that year, the Social-Democratic organizers within the navy were caught unprepared. Unable to be deployed to any effect, the ship sailed about aimlessly, seeking supplies and fuel. Efforts to fire on and seize the ship by the Black Sea fleet came to no avail, since the crews on those ships refused to obey orders, some of them mutinying as well. After 11 days, short of fuel and food, the ship docked in Romania, where the vast majority of the crew opted to remain while the ship itself was returned to Russia by the Romanian authorities.

The event was a watershed for Lenin and the Social-Democrats, for they became acutely aware of the need for a military wing of the party and the need to agitate among the armed forces to win over substantial portions to the cause.[30] Not only was the mutiny an "attempt to form the *nucleus of a revolutionary army*" (Lenin 1905o^2, 561/337),[31] but it was also an unexpected uprising. Lenin reflects: "The *Potemkin* events have proved rather that *we are unable to prevent premature outbreaks of the uprising that is being prepared.*" Now he casts it in terms of an unplanned and unprepared outbreak, for the sailors on the *Potemkin* were far less prepared than those on other ships. How does one deal with this situation? On the one hand, Lenin suggests that the Social-Democrats need to find means of preventing such unexpected and premature events, especially when they threaten the planning underway for an uprising. This would be a constant problem, most notably during the "July Days" of 1917, when an uprising was crushed and an arrest warrant for Lenin and other key Bolsheviks issued (Lenin was urged not to give himself up for arrest and so he fled to Finland). On the other hand (and more significantly), Lenin points out "that the uprising now developing spontaneously is *outstripping* the purposeful and planned work we are doing to prepare it." Indeed, "We are

unable now to restrain the insurrectionary outbreaks which occur here and there sporadically, disconnectedly, and spontaneously" (Lenin 1905g[3], 250–51/236; see also Cliff 2004, 251–61). These occurrences will and do happen; so the response is not so much to attempt to contain them but to step up the activity of organization, in terms of the spread of information concerning what is required for a successful uprising and strengthening the structural elements of the movement so that it is in a better position to make the most of spontaneous events. In short, this is the point he had already made in *WITBD*, that spontaneity requires a concomitant level of organization, that the two are inseparably and intimately connected.

A second example of this tension appears in Lenin's analyses of the strike. A full treatment of Lenin's deliberations concerning strikes is beyond my remit here,[32] for I wish to focus on the way strikes inescapably involve spontaneous moments—the wildcat strike—and systematic preparation and organization. Is this not what one would expect, given the way strikes provide the basis for and first steps toward revolution?

Once again, we find a deep awareness of the elemental, chaotic nature of the strike, which bursts on the scene like a "thunderclap," the rumblings of which "reverberate" throughout Russia, rousing with "unparalleled rapidity" myriad "proletarians to titanic battle" (Lenin 1905k, 336/313). Or, in terms of another dimension of this metaphor, they are "the first flashes of lightning in a thunderstorm and they have lit up a new field of battle" (Lenin 1905d[2], 347/345). Indeed, the "lightning" has become a preferred epithet, along with "wildcat," for the immediate, spontaneous strike in response to an incident on the shop floor. A similar image may be found again and again when Lenin speaks of revolution itself, and occasionally he extends it to become a full parable (see chapter 2). However, the strike in its own right, especially in its political form, is also a spontaneous event. The secret to its success is its suddenness, which thereby catches the government, police, and army unawares. And as a mark of the strike's spontaneity, the proletariat invariably senses the moment for a strike, as also the situation in which a transition is needed from a strike to an uprising. Far from denigrating the workers, Lenin reiterates his point that practice marches ahead of theory. In short, the strike is a moment that erupts from a small incident to a nationwide general strike—an invention of the Russian workers (Walling 1908, 357; Lenin 1917b[1], 239/311)—and, before one is aware of what is happening, to revolution (Lenin 1906m, 120–21/316–17; 1905w, 427–28/27–28; 1906w, 172–73/370–71).[33]

At the same time, strikes call from Lenin both detailed analysis, of their conditions and developments, and the need for organization. Thus, in the wake of 1905, he traces carefully the economic conditions under which strikes happen (division of labor, class conflict, and exploitation), the exacerbation of economic and political tensions that lead up to strikes, the nature of individual strikes and how far they progress, and the steps through which they move—from sporadic occurrences, to widespread general strikes, to armed combat with the police and army (which in turn betokens more systematic preparation), and thence to insurrection (Lenin 1899d; 1905d[2], 347–48/345–46; 1906w, 172–73/370–71). Not all strikes follow this path to its climax; so Lenin studies why they do not do so and what is needed to help them attain the next level. This study, often with detailed statistical

analysis of the frequency of strikes and the numbers of those involved, leads him to argue for organized restraint during "premature" strikes, for training in military techniques and strategies, for the construction of bombs, and for the acquisition of weapons (Lenin 1910q; 1906m, 118–19/314; 1912j, 1912e[1]). In the texts that follow the 1905 revolution—which gave him an immense amount of immediate practical experience upon which to work[34]—we see him still tied to a stages theory of revolution, albeit now with specific reference to strikes. As I argued in the previous chapter, later experience and his deep attention to Hegel would push him to a greater dialectical appreciation of the fact that the conditions under which stages may be discerned may themselves be rendered inoperable in the very act of revolution. For now, however, he deploys the dialectic in a different fashion, arguing that strikes themselves force the hand of the authorities. They must respond by mobilizing the army to close down strikes, but the effect of that is to expose more and more people, especially the soldiers, to the grievances of the workers. This in turn sets the stage for winning over sections of the army and for training workers in what is needed for more effective resistance. In other words, through his analysis of the wave of strikes and unrest, Lenin produces a theory of constituent resistance, to which power always must respond in ever new ways, well before Negri did so.[35]

Form

> I move that the following resolution be adopted . . . the Conference urgently requests the Central Committee to take all measures to lead the inevitable uprising of the workers, soldiers and peasants. (Lenin 1917i[1], 146/348, 148/350)

Let me close by noting that the tension is not merely a matter of content, which I have emphasized thus far, but also one of form. In many of the congress resolutions, we find an effort to provide a formal dimension of organization (apart from the very act of a congress itself) by producing numbered and logical resolutions concerning revolution. Two of the best examples will suffice. First, as matters were becoming urgent in early October 1917, and as Lenin was urging his fellow Bolsheviks to seize power, he analyzes the revolutionary situation in a series of logical points and then proposes a couple of carefully worded resolutions on revolution—"I move that the following resolution be adopted," he writes. Here the desire for formal structure is manifested not as a heated battle cry in front of a mass protest but as a structured resolution, to be debated and voted upon at crucial meetings in the first half of October, especially the all-night meeting on October 10 (Lenin 1917n[2], 1917i[1]; 1917o[1], 190/393; 1917p[1], 193–94/396–97). For the second example, let us go back to 1905. Now the formal manifestation of the tension between the unexpected and the expected appears in two resolutions:

> (a) that it is necessary to disseminate among the working class *a concrete idea of the most probable course of the revolution* and of the necessity, at a certain moment in the revolution, for the appearance of a provisional revolutionary government;
> (b) that *subject to the relation of forces, and other factors which cannot be exactly determined beforehand*, representatives of our Party may participate in the provisional revolutionary government. (Lenin 1905r[3], 24/11)

The first resolution produces a match between form and content, for this numbered and much-argued resolution specifies the need to provide information to the working class concerning the "most probable course of the revolution." But in the second resolution form and content part: It speaks of unspecified "other factors which cannot be exactly determined beforehand." Both phrases—concerning other factors and the inability to determine them—leave room open for the inexplicable features of the miracle known as revolution. Yet, the formal presentation of that awareness attempts to organize precisely those factors.[36]

At first sight, it may seem that I have strayed far from the category of miracle, using it as a catch-all for Lenin's treatment of revolution. So let me invoke again the issue of the translatability of terms that I have already broached. In the overlap of the semantic clusters of miracle and revolution, the items that initially seem outside the scope of the translation are now drawn in—those on the edges and initially outside the overlap. To put it another way, the extended field (or set) enabled by the initial overlap enables a mutual enrichment of either term. In this way, the question of spontaneity and organization in the revolution enhances the sense of miracle that Lenin took over and sought to expand and redefine. But what are the implications for the traditional category of miracle itself? We may put it in terms of the tension between the inexplicable dimension of the miracle and the known context in which it arises. A miracle is neither one nor the other, but takes place at the intersection between them; so also with the interaction between the spontaneous and prepared.

Kairós

> We must be prepared at any moment to hear the call: "Lead us whither you have called us!" It will be a fearful thing if that moment takes us unawares, just as divided and unprepared as we are at present. (Lenin 1903b, 306/90)

I would now like to bring another theological term to bear on this discussion of revolution-as-miracle, namely, *kairós*. Once again, the argument is not that Lenin derives his approach from a theological spring, thereby rendering all he does a version of secularized theology (as Schmitt would have it), but that another possible theological code for revolution is *kairós*. A few words of explanation on the sense of *kairós* understood here: It designates both a point in time as well as a period of time. This temporal sense dominates the New Testament approach to *kairós* (Barr 1969; Kittel et al. 1985, 389–90). Here *kairós* may mean the period when fruit becomes ripe and the harvest is ready (Mark 11:13; 12:2; Luke 20:10), a season such as autumn or spring (Galatians 4:10), the present (Luke 12:56; 18:30; Romans 3:26; 8:18; 2 Corinthians 8:14), a designated period that is more often signaled by the plural, *kairoí* (Matthew 16:3; 21:41; Acts 1:7). But the term also identifies a specific moment, often in the dative "at the right time," which may be opportune or favorable, or it may be dire and risky (Luke 4:13; 12:42; John 5:4; Romans 5:6; 9:9; Galatians 6:9). Increasingly, the word takes the definite article, "the time" (*o kairós*), and in this form, its sense is the time that is fulfilled, or of crisis or the last times. Indeed, *o kairós* is one of the New Testament's

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major eschatological terms, specifying variously the time of Christ's appearance (Mark 1:16) or his own death (Matthew 26:18; John 7:6, 8), the fulfillment of his words (Luke 1:20), eternal life after death (Mark 10:30), the time of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2), the longed-for, albeit troubled, time of final conflict, the end of history, the reign of the Evil One, and Christ's return to vindicate the faithful (Matthew 8:29; 13:30; Mark 13:33; Luke 19:44; 21:8, 24; Romans 13:11; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 7:29; Revelation 1:3; 11:18; 12:12, 14; 22:10). In all this, a crucial distinction operates within the biblical sense, between the unexpected and the expected. The New Testament stresses again and again that *o kairós* will occur at a moment we, from our perspective, do not expect. Yet, when seen from God's perspective, that time is specifically appointed, occurring at the right and proper time that God has designated.

In many respects, here is a closely analogous term to miracle, one that plays off the tension between the unexpected and the expected moments of revolution in Lenin's thought. As we saw earlier, when Lenin deals with the roles of mobile and flexible military units, he emphasizes that such units must gather "at the most critical moments," for events may take the "most unexpected turns." Indeed, the chances are that "events will take us unawares," so these detachments must seize the moment when "a favorable opportunity presents itself" (Lenin 1905f[3], 420–21/339–40).[37] How does one deal with those unexpected turns, apart from being ready at every moment? Preparation, preparation, preparation:

> Therefore, each group must work out beforehand ways and means of joint action: signs in windows, etc., so as to find each other easily; previously agreed upon calls or whistles so that the comrades recognise one another in a crowd; previously arranged signals in the event of meetings at night, etc., etc. Any energetic person, with the aid of two or three comrades, could work out a whole series of such rules and methods, which should be drawn up, learned and practised beforehand. (Lenin 1905f[3], 420/339; see also Lenin 1905t[1], 468–74/235–41; 1905f[3], 424/343; 1906b[1], 1906c[2]; 1906d[1], 91–93/288–90; 1905f[1], 367–69/365–67; 1905m, 453–54/79–80).

The parable of the wise and foolish young women and their oil lamps immediately comes to mind here (Matthew 25:1–13; see also Luke 12:35–40), with its warning, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour."[38]

Yet *kairós* also embodies a slightly different tension between the spontaneous and the organized, for it is both an unexpected and an appointed time. In the biblical material cited earlier, that distinction usually takes the form of a divine–human divide. God knows the appointed time, but mere mortals do not and God is not about to reveal this innermost secret. However, Lenin presents what may be called an immanent version of that opposition between unexpected and appointed. Thus, in "The Dissolution of the Duma and the Tasks of the Proletariat," from 1906, he points out that the next struggle is most likely to arise as spontaneously and as unexpectedly as that of 1905. In that case, "we shall not have to decide the question of the time for action," although it will require preparation in terms of agitation and organization. At the same time, the leadership of the party may well be able to "appoint the time for action" and if that is the case, then the strike

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and uprising should occur at the "end of summer or the beginning of autumn, towards the middle or end of August" (Lenin 1906m, 129/325).[39] This is precisely the dichotomy between the sheer capriciousness of *kairós*, which I noted earlier in the biblical material, and its sense, not only of an appointed time (Lenin's term as well), but actually of specific seasons of the year.

The most intense period of *kairós* was to be 1917, especially in its latter half as conditions became ripe for the seizure of power. Reading through the three volumes (24–26) of Lenin's *Collected Works* that cover this period, one gains a contradictory sense of how concentrated the time was and yet how incredibly long it must have seemed, how little the key people slept, how frantic they were—in short, a stretched-out time of revolutionary possibility. Events would take abrupt and unexpected turns, tactics would be revised and slogans recast,[40] but above all, there was an overwhelming sense that the time was right. Through late September and into October, Lenin repeatedly urges, cajoles, and threatens his Bolshevik comrades, warning that they are in a "highly critical time," that the "time is fully ripe," and that delay would be criminally fatal for the success of the revolution. Texts such as "The Crisis Has Matured" from September 29 voice that sense of *kairós* in almost every second word: "The crisis has matured. The whole future of the Russian revolution is at stake. The honour of the Bolshevik Party is in question. The whole future of the international workers' revolution for socialism is at stake" (Lenin 1917m, 82/280). In the minutes of that vital meeting on the night of October 10, Lenin's arguments are full of "the decisive moment is near" and "politically, the situation is fully ripe for taking power" (Lenin 1917o[1], 188/391, 190/392).[41] And in the last letter sent on the night of October 24, before he donned a disguise, left his hiding place, and set out for Smolny, he writes:

> I am writing these lines on the evening of the 24th. The situation is critical in the extreme. In fact it is now absolutely clear that to delay the uprising would be fatal. With all my might I urge comrades to realize that everything now hangs by a thread . . . We must at all costs, this very evening, this very night, arrest the government, having first disarmed the officer cadets (defeating them, if they resist), and so on. We must not wait! We may lose everything! . . . the matter must be decided without fail this very evening, or this very night. History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything . . . The government is tottering. It must be *given the death-blow* at all costs. To delay action is fatal. (Lenin 1917d[1], 234–35/435–36)

Lenin even gives voice to the eschatological sense of the crucial New Testament term *o kairós*, the time. Often, toward the close of a newspaper piece addressed to workers, he utters near prophetic calls to the "great and final struggle," the "decisive battle" when the hour of insurrection has struck. With the extraordinary events of 1917, whole articles focus on the "impending catastrophe" and the ways the Bolsheviks should respond (Lenin 1917y, 1917x). In that battle, the fallen will be followed by yet more resolute fighters, and peasants will join workers and provide an onslaught that the "tsar's hordes will be unable to withstand," an

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onslaught that no power on earth will be able to resist. "To work, comrades!" he writes. "Let each stand at his post! Let every workers' circle bear in mind that any day events may require that it take a leading part in the final and decisive battle" (Lenin 1905y, 285/271).[42]

Finally, *kairós* embodies a distinct intensification, during a strike, during armed combat on the streets, and above all during revolution itself. Events are concentrated as never before. What took ten years of ordinary, somnolent life to learn is now concentrated into a few months, if not weeks and days. As Lenin points out during the 1905 revolution, it is "progressing at astonishing speed, unfolding an amazing wealth of events, and if we wanted to give our reader a detailed account of the last three or four days, we should have to write a whole book" (Lenin 1905b, 392/1).[43] At that moment, he opts to leave the task of a detailed history to future generations (how many have not heeded that call?).[44] Indeed, given this intensification, it was not for nothing that Lenin would insist after a series of revolutionary experiences, especially those of 1917, that "revolution teaches," and that the shock of revolution is profoundly educational. It enlightens more rapidly and profoundly than years of propaganda, shakes up the most inveterate pedants, shocks one out of what seems like a sleepwalking life, forces back on the revolutionary track those who have gone astray, and corrects all theoretical errors and tactical deviations. In short, "a bad doctrine is splendidly rectified by a good revolution" (Lenin 1905g, 202/191; see also Lenin 1905g, 203/192; 1905d[2], 351–52/349–50; 1907v[1], 115/382–83; 1906b, 310/395; 1905r[3], 17/3; 1905m[2], 1905h[1], 384/384; 1905m, 449/75; 1906y, 211/17; 1908d, 268–69/272–73; 1905p[2], 97/201; 1917c[1], 229/55; 1918u, 27/12). At this point of intensification, in which *kairós* captures and presses together myriad experiences into a moment, we come back to the miracle, in which the dialectical interaction between elemental, unexpected forces and the call to greater organization achieves a new level of experience during the revolution.

Lenin among the Spontaneous Philosophers

> To wait would be a crime to the revolution. (Lenin 1917h[1], 140–41/341)

Toward the beginning of this exploration of the permutations of revolution-as-miracle, I promised an engagement with those Marxists of our own day who may now be called, in light of Lenin's interventions, the spontaneous philosophers. I mean those who emphasize the inexplicable event as a version of laicized "grace" drawn from Paul the Apostle (Badiou and Žižek, to some extent), or the unexpected rupture that breaks into our mundane lives (Benjamin and Jameson), or the moment of *kairós*, in which we seize an unexpected, eschatological opportunity out of the mechanical time of *chrónos-krónos* and bring it to fulfillment (Agamben), which thereby becomes the creative moment of being at the tip of the arrow of time (Negri). How do their proposals fare in light of Lenin's perpetual tension between the spontaneous and organized? I shall offer a brief exposition of their positions before engaging in a critical assessment in relation to Lenin.

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To begin with, for Walter Benjamin, *kairós* becomes *Jetztzeit*, the "now-time" of unexpected rupture (Benjamin 2003, 395). Despite his efforts to identify different and unpredicted ways out of the baleful myth and dreadful nightmare of capitalism, especially in the context of an apparently unstoppable fascism before the Second World War, these efforts are determined by the biblical heritage not merely of *kairós*, but also of *o kairós*, as both a moment and a period of imminent and final crisis. As far as the moment itself is concerned, he seeks his answer in one image after another, which may be seen as alternative ways to speak of revolution. It may be waking from a dream, with dialectical debts to the surrealists,[45] or the enigmatic dialectic at a standstill (Benjamin 1999, 431; 1982a, 575–76), or the flash of a camera, a "flash with the now" (Benjamin 1999, 432; 1982a, 576), or a "posthumous shock" that overcomes the merely temporal relation between past and present (Benjamin 1973, 132), or the explosive birth of a "monad," reduced and concentrated in the bowels of history, which must then undergo a violent expulsion from the continuum of the historical process (Benjamin 1999, 475; 1982a, 594; 2003, 396; 1982b, vol. 1: 703). All of these shocks, arrests, blasts, and explosions clearly opt for the inexplicable, elemental, and spontaneous side of revolution (see also Benjamin 1999, 859, 862, 863; 1982a, 1026–27, 1032, 1033).

Even more than Lenin, the biblical heritage of *kairós* weighs heavily on Benjamin's formulations (Boer 2007, 57–105), a heritage that becomes even stronger in his much-discussed (weak) messianic or fulfilled time, which now becomes *kairós* as a period of time. Messianic time is contrasted with deadening mechanical time: "the idea of fulfilled time is the dominant historical idea of the Bible: it is the idea of messianic time" (Benjamin 1996, 55–56; 1982b, vol. 2: 134). This explicit biblical sense is emphasized by Agamben's "time that is left us" (Agamben 2005b, 68), which seeks to expand and systematize Benjamin's scattered insights. But now, the Apostle Paul provides Agamben with a redefinition of the messianic era as an in-between time.[46] Here we are clearly in the zone of *o kairós*, which is a suspended moment between an instant of chronological time and its fulfillment. For Paul, this is the period between the first advent of the messiah ("Jesus Messiah" in Agamben's translation) and his final return. While the time of *chrónos*, the regular beat of ordinary chronological time, leaves us powerless and weak, messianic or "operational" time is that unexpected moment which we seize, thereby inaugurating a messianic period that we may then bring to a close.[47] On one matter, Agamben differs from Benjamin and draws closer to Lenin: Even though the moment of *kairós* may be unexpected, the act of bringing the in-between time to its fulfillment depends upon our response. Nonetheless, Agamben nowhere offers any strategy for doing so, any idea of preparation and organization that is so characteristic of Lenin's work.

For all his self-proclaimed and refound Leninism, Žižek is far more interested in a Benjaminian rupture in all its unexpected spontaneity: "one should bear in mind that revolution never arrives 'on time,' when the objective social process generates the 'mature' conditions for it" (Žižek 2008, 361). And like Agamben, he has been enthused by the possibilities of a leftist reading of Paul. However, he goes well beyond Paul, seeking insights from the Gospels and elements of the Hebrew Bible, especially the Law (Žižek 2000, 2001b, 2003, 2006; Kotsko 2008;

Žižek and Milbank 2009). Yet, the Bible and theology constitute one dimension of a search for a truly radical break, a genuine, ruptural *kairós* that brings him closer to Benjamin. So, like Benjamin, we find Žižek exploring multiple possibilities: The feminine formula of sexuation; the Jewish law that is deprived of the law's usual fantasmatic support;[48] a laicized Pauline grace (following Badiou) as an incalculable and undeserved irruption beyond human agency; the Christian realization of the Jewish rupture of the traumatic kernel through the cross (God really is impotent); and Lenin's assertion of actual and not formal freedom. The unique element of Žižek's approach to this Benjaminian rupture is that he also has his eye on revolutions that have actually gone beyond that initial moment, for they inevitably seem to have run into the mud.[49] So how does one avoid this postrevolutionary downturn? One approach I have already mentioned, namely, to undertake a perpetual search for a thoroughly genuine *kairós* that does not reinstate the same coordinates. The other is to entertain the option of refusism—"I would prefer not to"[50]—as the ultimate and very un-Leninist gesture.

In this wake of Benjamin belongs Fredric Jameson as well, who invokes a kairological rupture as a key to utopia, except that he keeps such a rupture relatively low key.[51] His examples include full employment or the abolition of money, which "marks the rupture and opens up a space into which Utopia may enter, like Benjamin's Messiah, unannounced, unprepared by events, and laterally, as if into a present randomly chosen but utterly transfigured by the new element" (Jameson 2005, 231). Jameson hopes that such relatively simple demands may lead to the complete reshaping of the whole economic system, opening up a period of *kairós* after its momentary break. Thus, with the abolition of money, the wage relationship would be replaced by labor chits and work certificates as well as alternatives to market exchange and consumption. And in regard to full employment, labor would be transformed gradually and thereby address a host of other issues, such as "crime, war, degraded mass culture, drugs, boredom, the lust for power, the lust for distraction, the lust for nirvana, sexism, racism" (Jameson 2005, 147–48), all of these being symptoms of unemployment or alienated labor. By this time, so many things will need to be changed that the system makes a qualitative leap and becomes something very different. At least here we have some concrete suggestions, some effort at organizational proposals, the lack of which Jameson feels keenly in current work on the Left. Yet, as Lenin would reply, they sound a little too much like the Mensheviks or the late reformist Kautsky: They miss the whole for the parts, in which the latter become the program itself rather than seeing them in light of revolution. In that light, they take on a completely different hue, following on from that moment of *kairós*.

By contrast, Badiou's rereading of *kairós* is much more spectacular and more obviously biblical (here he is closer to Agamben and Žižek), for the Apostle Paul provides an exemplary instance of the event and its procedures of truth (Badiou 2003, 1997, 2006a, 1988). Badiou seeks from Paul what he calls a "laicized grace."[52] That is, he emphasizes most emphatically the spontaneous and incalculable nature of that event, for it crashes into our mundane reality to rearrange the very coordinates of that reality.[53] One cannot earn an event through hard work and planning, predict it through careful calculation, assume it is inevitable, or indeed

that history will be on one's side. As if to exacerbate that incalculability, Badiou argues that an event can never be apprehended directly, for it becomes a truth only if it is named as such (although the two are inseparable and he does work to overcome this initial separation to some extent in *Logics of Worlds* [Badiou 2009, 2006b]). Thus, Paul comes after the "fact" of Christ's resurrection, identifies it as something unique and extra-numerary, and thereby establishes the truth-event. As with any event in the four zones of politics, science, art, and love, it leaves in its wake linguistic traces, or what Badiou calls procedures of truth. This means that the only role for organization within such an event is very much after the fact, in militant groups faithful to the event (the early Christians under Paul constitute such a group).

If on this matter we are far from Lenin and close to the spontaneity of economism and the Mensheviks in Lenin's time, then, on another matter, Badiou draws much closer to Lenin. Does not Badiou's description of the event sound very much like the miracle? Here *kairós* and miracle intersect. A closer look at *Being and Event*, especially the engagement with Pascal, reveals a Badiou who sees no problem using the terminology of miracle (he will later become more wary): "the miracle . . . is the emblem of the pure event as resource of truth" (Badiou 2006a, 216; 1988, 239).[54] Yet, when Badiou comes to Paul, he faces a problem, for the event in question is nothing less than a fable, the belief in which Badiou does not share (Badiou 2003, 4–6; 1997, 5–7). Needless to say, this creates somewhat of a problem for Badiou and distances him once again from Lenin. Badiou prefers a concrete event upon which a truth procedure is based, especially an event such as revolution (although it may also take place in science, art, and love). However, the resurrection is not such an event, coming closer to the pseudo-event or semblance of an event from which he tries to distance himself. One may cite Badiou's favored example of the Nazi seizure of power or the way in which the Right seized upon the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001 as instances of such semblances (Žižek 1999, 143–44; Surin 2009, 387–89). Does not the resurrection come closer to these moments, according to Badiou's overall system? At another level, it may well be possible to argue that the event and its truth procedures cannot escape the fabulous and the mythical, falling more into the category of political myth (Boer 2011d). But here we are even further from Lenin.

While Badiou has brought us back to the question of miracle (at least a little way and with significant problems), with Negri that dimension comes to the fore with greater urgency. Notably, it is a miracle of human effort, much like the predominant sense that we found with Lenin's own understanding of miracle-as-revolution. But let me trace my way back to miracle via Negri's treatment of *kairós*, which is now less an unexpected rupture than a moment of human creativity. Negri defines *kairós* as the "moment when the arrow of Being is shot" (Negri and Defourmantelle 2004, 104) and as "the immeasurability of production between the eternal and the *to-come*" (Negri 2003, 154, 180; see also Negri 2008, 97; Hardt and Negri 2004, 357;). Here the biblical distinction between *kairós* as moment and as period of time is clear, as also the resolutely temporal focus. On the first count, *kairós* is the exemplary temporal point, an opening up in time that is eminently creative. On the second, Negri seeks to recast our understanding

of time itself (with a distinct overlap with Agamben, whose work follows that of Negri here), replacing the conventional "before" with the sign of eternity and "after" with the "to come." In doing so, he resolutely opposes such a *kairós* to the measurable piling up of time as past, present, and future, in which our present is a moving point between the fixed detritus of the past (to be collated, measured, and studied by historiography, to be celebrated in triumph, or to be mourned as disaster) and the future (as a repeat performance of the past). Even though Negri emphasizes the distinction, it is still quite conventional, usually cast in terms of *kairós* versus *chrónos-krónos*.[55] Yet, in Negri's hands, *kairós* has become less a rupture than a moment of creative intervention by human beings. On this matter, he is far closer to Lenin than the others I have considered here. In contrast to their resolute emphasis on the spontaneous, ruptural dimensions of *kairós*, Negri makes it quite clear that human agency is the key. His long experience organizing among unions and revolutionary groups, as well as the disorienting experience of prison, obviously has much to contribute here, as also with Lenin. We may see this emphasis on human agency and organization in his engagement with Job (Negri 2009), rather than the New Testament favored by many recent critics on the Left.[56] Here kairological time is the point of contact between lived, concrete, painful time and the linear movement of divine epiphany. Earth and heaven touch as Job pulls God down to earth, bending transcendence to immanence (Negri and Fadini 2008, 666–68) and forcing God to answer his insistent questions. With an echo also of the God-builders, Negri's unique interpretation is that Job does indeed succeed by the end of that poetic text in the Bible: God may well have remained aloof, ignoring Job's charges, but God is brought to answer and that is Job's triumph (Boer 2011a, 271–310). Heaven has been forced to come down to earth, thereby providing not only an "immeasurable opening of *kairós*," but also a very human miracle. It is, to quote Lenin, a clear instance of "revolutionary energy and revolutionary enthusiasm which can perform miracles" (Lenin 1905r[3], 103/93).

Barring Negri among these recent efforts to rethink revolution in terms of *kairós* and miracle, they have all opted clearly for the spontaneous, incalculable side of a tension that Lenin so assiduously cultivates. Gone is any extensive sense of organization, or rather in its place appear relatively feeble options: A response of naming and fidelity to an inexplicable event that has already been, as well as a Left-communist refusal of any "legal" parliamentary involvement (Badiou); paid talks around the Western world propounding a lately recovered communism while dismissing any communist revolution that has succeeded (Žižek); watching and waiting for a rupture that may inaugurate a messianic time with little by way of proposals as to how one might prepare for or respond to such a moment (Benjamin and Agamben). At least Jameson has some specific proposals, but they risk the reformist confusion of the parts for the whole. The only one who at least embodies some dimensions of Lenin's tension between the spontaneous and the organized is Negri, with his emphasis on human agency in the creative, miraculous moment of *kairós*, the moment when human beings can indeed bend transcendence to immanence.

One may possibly explain this recent preference for spontaneity in a number of ways. For instance, one argument is that Lenin's particular practice of organization

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is no longer feasible for us. His organizational drive, the constant process of weeding out and fighting waverers from a party that was, ideally, disciplined and unified (although reality was often far from this ideal, as the prevarications between February and October show), may have been appropriate in Eastern Europe in the early twentieth century, but not elsewhere and not a century later. The fate of similar parties, the perceived "failures" of communism in Eastern Europe and the marginal status of parties on the Leninist model all add to this picture of obsolescence. On this matter, we risk confusing the specific form of Lenin's organizational prowess with the principle of a necessary tension between spontaneity and organization itself. A further reason is the forlorn status of these largely Western Marxists. Never has a communist revolution succeeded in the West and capitalism somehow has, despite its perpetual state of crisis, a far greater strength than many were prepared to admit. With no revolution apparently in sight, the only avenue left is quietism or even refusism, both of which are well known from religious movements, especially those with a strong sense of divine activity. I think here of Calvinism, a tradition I know very well (Boer 2009c), but others may equally be called up to bear witness. In the end, one awaits God's intervention, both because the situation is futile and because all human efforts have come to nothing. But even Calvinism is able to couple a strong sense of the unexpected and undeserved with a resolute organizational dimension. The incalculable miracle may happen at any moment, but one had better be prepared both for its occurrence and how to respond, thereby fostering a favorable context for its happening. In other words, waiting for the miracle to happen, or quietism, is a one-sided position, a loss of the dialectic, and thereby a travesty of the tradition.[57]

Ákairos

Let me close this discussion of *kairós* by questioning Lenin at another level. Thus far, I have assumed a rather conventional understanding of *kairós*, largely in New Testament terms—the critical time, the period at the end of time, and indeed the correct time. Here we face a tension in the biblical tradition handed down and deployed by the thinkers I have considered earlier, a tension between the unexpected nature of *kairós*, at least from a human perspective, and the sense that such a moment occurs at the right time (seasons and so forth). However, if we consider the wider Greek context in which the term appears, it leans decisively toward the sense of the correctly apportioned time and place. As Hesiod wrote in his resolutely agricultural text, *Works and Days*, "Observe due measure, and proportion (*kairós*) is best in all things" (Hesiod 1973, 81). Although *kairós* takes on a range of meanings—convenience, decorum, due measure, fitness, fruit, occasion, profit, proportion, propriety, symmetry, tact, wise moderation, as well as opportunity, balance, harmony, right and proper time, opening, timeliness—the semantic cluster coalesces around the idea of what is duly measured and proportional, in short, the right time and right place (Untersteiner 1954, 110–11; Enos 1976, 44; Gorman 1979, 135–41; Kinneavy 1983; Carter 1988; Sipiora 2002; Rickert 2007). In light of this meaning, which also has social, moral, and economic resonances, what is the opposite of *kairós*? Unlike Negri, Agamben and even Benjamin, the opposite

is not *chrónos-krónos*, but is determined by a series of prepositions: *apó kairoû*, away or far from *kairós*; *parà kairón*, to the side of or contrary to *kairós*; *pró kairoû*, before *kairós* or prematurely; *kairoû péra*, beyond measure, out of proportion, and unfit; *ektos tōn kairōn*, without or far from *kairós*, or simply wrong. All these senses bear the weight of what is outside the zone of *kairós*, untimely and out of place. But the term that captures all of them and provides the proper opposite to *kairós* is *ákairos*. If *kairós* designates the well-timed, opportune, and well-placed, then *ákairos* means the ill-timed, inopportune, and displaced.

Does Lenin exhibit a sense of *ákairos*? Often he remains within the conventional semantic cluster of *kairós*, but every now and then (not often enough), he steps outside that zone. It may be possible to cite his widely shared but mistaken anticipation of a worldwide revolution, for which the Russian Revolution was but the first moment. Again and again, he gives voice to the expectation, often providing detailed analyses, of such a world revolution (Lenin 1917m, 74/272; 1918r, 1918b[1], 1919k, 456/488; 1920i, 21–22/3–4). One may simply point out that he and the many who shared this anticipation were wrong, that they misread the period of *o kairós*, despite all the promising signs of worker unrest. Yet, on one occasion, his reflections concerning that world revolution bear within them a sense of the akairological. "We believe in the revolution in the West," he writes in 1917. "We know that it is inevitable, but it cannot, of course, be made to order." He goes on to cite the absence of certitude concerning the February and October revolutions in 1917, for barely a month or two beforehand, no one would have been able to predict what would happen. We knew that the tsarist regime was sitting on a volcano, he writes: "Many signs told us of the great work going on deep down in people's minds. We felt that the air was charged with electricity. We were sure that it would inevitably explode in a purifying thunderstorm. But we could not predict the day and hour" (Lenin 1917n[1], 292–93/61).

Here he borders on *ákairos*, the untimely and inopportune nature of revolution.[58] No matter how much one prepares and organizes, the moment and place are never of one's choosing.[59] And that requires utmost flexibility, the need for thinking on one's feet, for necessary compromise as events turn unexpectedly, as Lukács emphasizes so well in his reading of Lenin (Lukács 1970, 79–83). Now we fold back to miracle, for like revolution, a miracle is very much an akairological occurrence, one that is to all intents and purposes at the wrong time and in the wrong place. The Mensheviks and many Bolsheviks thought that the time and place were not right for revolution, believing that the full stage of the bourgeois revolution must unfold first, and that the Bolsheviks were foolhardy and premature in their seizure of power. Western Marxists have often thought so as well, thrown by the fact that the first communist revolution happened not at the center of capitalism but in Russia, and then in China and elsewhere, far from the West.[60] Finally, the akairological miracle also becomes an essential feature of a dialectical approach, which is characterized by its ability to deal with the untimely and ill-placed. To fill out a text I have quoted earlier: "They have completely failed to understand what is decisive in Marxism, namely, its revolutionary dialectics. They have even absolutely failed to understand Marx's plain statements that in times of revolution the utmost flexibility is demanded" (Lenin 1923c, 476/378).

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Within and Without (the System)

> As if one can set out to make a great revolution and know beforehand how it is to be completed! (Lenin 1919i, 155/141)

For the remainder of this chapter, I pursue another dimension of the miracle—the question as to whether one works within or without the system—which both tightens its dialectical nature and connects us more closely with the discussion of dialectics in the preceding chapter. It may be tempting to line up immediately the former distinction between spontaneity and organization in terms of internality and externality. In that case, the spontaneous, elemental force of the miracle would be translated into that which is outside the current system, the illegal, the realm of real, absolute freedom. By contrast, to be within the system would include what is legal, what is predetermined according to known forces, the zone of reform, and thereby of formal freedom. It soon becomes obvious, however, that such an alignment is less neat than at first appears to be the case. May not the spontaneous emerge as much from within as from without? And may not the hard work of preparation and organization take place in the context of existing structures as well as outside them, in the illegal underground? Take our spontaneous philosophers as an example. I may distinguish between those who emphasize the externality of the *kairós*-cum-miracle (Badiou, Žižek, Agamben, Benjamin to an extent) over against its internality (Negri, most notably, but also Jameson, and at times Benjamin, with the blast from within). The event in question may be unexpected, catching us at an unknown hour, but its emergence is now determined by its eruption or irruption. The upshot is that the move from considering a tension between spontaneity and organization to one of struggle between within and without is more subtle than may be expected; so we need to be watchful. Yet, as with my earlier exploration of the permutations of the miracle, I emphasize that the revolution-as-miracle does not belong to one side of the within–without relation at the expense of the other.

In order to avoid sounding like a noisy gong too often, I refrain from observing at the close of each of the three following sections a point I have already made. The careful attention to the topics of reform–revolution, parliamentary (non-) involvement, and freedom seeks to enhance the senses in which a revolution may be understood as miracle. They do so by drawing into the realm of miracle dimensions of the revolution that may not initially appear in the overlap between the two terms. In other words, the discussion of each topic is an effort to explore the richness of the combined semantic clusters that the translation of revolution into miracle enables.

Does Reform Have a Role in the Revolution?

On the perennial matter of reform and revolution, one might expect that Lenin would opt clearly for revolution over against reform, for an abolition of the current system over against tinkering with it in order to make life more bearable. A selective reading of Lenin's texts can give this impression. Reform is thereby described as a "tinkering with washbasins" (characteristic of the Zemstvos), that

is, introducing reliable water supply, electric trains, lighting, and other "developments" that do not threaten the *foundations* of the "existing social system" (Lenin 1906n[1], 189/263). Such reform may therefore be seen as a response by the bourgeoisie to the strength of the working class, attempting to steer the workers away from revolution by emphasizing reform. Even more, reformism is "bourgeois deception of the workers," who will always remain wage-slaves as long as capital dominates: "The liberal bourgeoisie grant reforms with one hand, and with the other always take them back, reduce them to nought, use them to enslave the workers, to divide them into separate groups and perpetuate wage-slavery" (Lenin 1913y, 372/1; see also Lenin 1906c[1], 70–71/262–63). In other words, reform is a bourgeois weapon designed to weaken the working class. Yet, should the foundations of the system be threatened, when the proletariat begins its own onslaught on that system, all the various dimensions of "tinkering with washbasins" will be abolished before we can slip out a fart.

It follows that those socialists who see the prime task at hand to be reform miss the elephant in the room, for they wish to alleviate the conditions under which they work and do not realize that the problem lies in those conditions themselves (Lenin 1902p, 387/42; 1906l[1], 378–80/62–64).[61] As Lenin observes in relation to debates, especially with the Mensheviks, over voting in the Duma elections, the danger is not whether some conservative party or other will win the elections, by fair means or foul, but in the very elections themselves: the danger "is manifested not in the voting, but in the definition of the conditions of voting" (Lenin 1907i[2], 459/277–78; see also Lenin 1906l[1], 350/33–34). One should never rest with what is given, but work to change that given. And the reason is that by fighting on the ground chosen by the enemy, reformists strengthen the power of their enemy.

What, then, is the function of reform? Is it to be dismissed entirely as a bourgeois deception and as a socialist compromise with the status quo? Contrary to initial impressions, Lenin does see a clear role for reform. In a daring formulation that is based on revolutionary experience, he argues that the opposition of revolution and reform is itself false. One cannot have either one or the other; instead, the condition for reform is revolution itself. Without any revolutionary agitation, reform would simply not exist: "*either* revolutionary class struggle, of which reforms are *always* a by-product . . . *or* no reforms at all" (Lenin 1917o[2], 213/282). In this light, reforms may be understood as temporary reconciliation with a partial victory or even failure, in which the old system has been shaken but has not yet collapsed (Lenin 1906p, 30–31/221; 1906c[1], 70–71/262–63). More importantly, reform becomes a central feature of revolutionary agitation, a means of raising the consciousness of workers and peasants, a way of both alleviating conditions in the intermediate period and of pointing out that those conditions are the problem. In this way, workers will see through the false promises of reformism and utilize reforms to strengthen their class struggle (Lenin 1913y, 372/1). Or, to put it simply, as Lenin recommends to public speakers and the Social-Democratic Duma representatives, "five minutes of every half-hour speech are devoted to reforms and twenty-five minutes to the coming revolution" (Lenin 1916h, 159/221).

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To Participate or Not to Participate: The Question of Parliamentary Involvement

> Not a platform "for the elections," but elections to implement the *revolutionary Social-Democratic* platform!—that is how the Party of the working class sees it. (Lenin 1912w, 238/6)

From the question of reform to the whole debate over parliamentary involvement is but a short step, but once again it illustrates the complexities of working within and without the given conditions. Parliamentary engagement vexed the RSDLP mightily after the 1905 revolution, particularly with the granting of real, albeit limited, power to the Dumas by the Tsar. The Dumas were concessions reluctantly granted by the autocracy under revolutionary pressure, although the powers that be did not hesitate to constrain the scope of the Dumas whenever they felt able to do so, with later Dumas more carefully engineered to enable conservative majorities. Here I am interested in debates on the Left over how to respond to and how to become involved with the new forms of parliamentary struggle. A little earlier, we encountered the debates over voting in the Duma elections, and earlier (in chapter 2) the myriad "tares" against whom Lenin struggled, with a particular interest (chapter 3) in those to his left, the otzovists and ultimatumists. To recap, while the liquidators, mostly Mensheviks, wished to abolish illegal party activity, for the apparently good reasons that it would thereby negate rampant police infiltration, harassment, and continual arrests, the otzovists and ultimatumists urged the opposite, the rejection of legal activity, recalling the RSDLP members of the Duma, and agitating for a revolutionary upsurge.[62] The former felt that a truly mass movement, with agitation through legal organizations, such as unions and recognized party organizations, would achieve far more. But the latter argued that any such engagement was a capitulation, conceding the ground of battle to the government and thereby any chance of changing the system itself. Thus, the right-wing socialists eagerly leapt at the new possibilities of the Duma, the legal press and official recognition of the party; the left-wing would have none of it.

These distinctions sharpened by the last years of the first decade of the twentieth century, especially during the period of rampant reaction before the revolutionary upsurge of 1911–12. A few years earlier, all sides had initially agreed to boycott the first Duma (March–July 1906), which was dissolved since the majority Cadets (liberal Constitutional Democrats) had begun agitating for greater freedoms, much to the Tsar's displeasure.[63] Yet, even with the first Duma, the Bolshevik–Menshevik tensions were evident, with the Mensheviks keen to become involved and reluctant participants in the boycott (Lenin 1906p[1]). By the time of the second Duma, it was the Bolsheviks' turn to be the reluctant ones. At the Unity Congress of 1906, the Bolsheviks had conceded the Menshevik push for involvement, on the condition that no blocs were to be formed with the liberal Cadets (Lenin 1906y[1], 294–98/379–84; 1905i[3], 382–95/126–41; 1905t[1], 468–74/235–41; 1906x, 1907d[2]; 1907f[2], 132/149). Despite Lenin's statement that the Bolsheviks still preferred "to settle the impending final contest for freedom outside the Duma" (Lenin 1906q[1], 425/110), the concession encouraged him to

reformulate his earlier deliberations on the integration of legal and illegal party work.

The outcome was a more complex position, one that embodies at its higher points a dialectical approach to the relation between operating internally and externally, a dialectic that has ramifications for and indeed enriches the overarching category of miracle I am exploring. In nuce, the Bolsheviks would participate in the elections and in parliamentary struggle in order to overthrow the system in which they participated. How does Lenin resolve this apparent contradiction? He had always asserted the need for both legal and illegal forms of the party, but in the current context, that becomes an argument for maintaining the illegal dimension and not succumbing to "parliamentary cretinism" (Lenin 1905q[2], 300/28; see also 1911r, 227/297; 1913f[1], 458–60/260–62).[64] Now he begins to think through precisely what that means in the context of changed circumstances. At a more mundane level, he sees that the legal and illegal dimensions both have strengths. While the legal forms provide strong footholds to spread the word of the illegal nuclei among the masses, those dimensions of newfound strength are counterbalanced by their weakness: Although they could speak of many things, openly and forcefully, they could not speak of everything, especially the most important things—the illegal party and its agitation for revolution (Lenin 1912q, 392–94/181–83). Lenin also sees the advantages of a legal platform for propagating the Bolshevik position, especially among workers. It means that the party begins its agitation at the level of workers who may still be attached to parliamentary methods. Although the party's task is not to hide the bitter truth, it does the party no good to disdain the mass of non-party workers and their level of political involvement and class-consciousness (Lenin 1920i, 58/42). Raising that consciousness is precisely the role of vigorous parliamentary involvement. Even with very few representatives (as in the third Duma), the party thereby is able to use the public forum—along with a host of legal organizations such as medical insurance societies, trade unions, educational associations, athletic clubs, and temperance societies—in order to expose the constitutional illusions, the impossibility of realizing the revolutionary demands of workers and peasants, and indeed the inability to achieve political freedom by means of the current system. Or as he states with characteristic sharpness: "revolutionary use of election meetings without formal participation in them" (Lenin 1906v[1], 107/169).[65] Legal work may have its hazards—such as the exile of all the Social-Democratic Duma representatives to Siberia in 1915 for agitation against the war or the warrants for arrest of the whole leadership during the counterrevolutionary wave of July–September 1917—but not an hour of legal work is to be allowed to slip, for it enables the illegal networks to spread the message of armed uprising (Lenin 1915i, 321–23/332–35; 1917y[1], 180/5).

A more subtle approach may be found in a series of related points, the first of which is the argument that the liquidationist stance is not a modification of the party but the dissolution of the party itself and the creation of an entirely different party, for the party is defined by the tension between illegal and legal structures (Lenin 1914q[1], 499/367). More astutely, he argues that the very possibility of the liquidationist stance is the continued existence of an illegal party structure.

Without that illegal dimension, the legal party would cease to have a reason to exist, for its ultimate aim of revolutionary overthrow would dissipate into reform (Lenin 1911e, 186–88/242–44). And then, he pushes the dialectic to its extreme when the socialists found success within the elections themselves. Reflecting upon their experiences in the Dumas of 1905–17, and then the Provisional Assembly of 1917, Lenin observes that participation both proves why such bourgeois parliaments need to be dissolved and speeds up their very dissolution. That is, participation ensures that they become politically obsolete (Lenin 1920i, 60/43–44). How does this work? At one level, participation reveals how these forms of government are ultimately unfit for a communist system. At another level, the very tensions within such parliaments indicate a revolutionary crisis. Thus, in an earlier analysis, he focuses on the electoral accomplishments of the socialist parties in the second Duma, at the great expense of the Cadets. Lenin suggests that their very success within the confined atmosphere of the existing system is a signal of rising revolutionary fervor, of a clash of oppositional forces between Left and Right, and thereby a sign of the coming collapse of the system itself. In a sentence that expresses that dialectical tension to a heightened degree, he writes: "As a result we have a new, even more Left Duma, and in prospect we have a new, even more formidable and more unmistakable revolutionary crisis" (Lenin 1907v[1], 115/382; see also Lenin 1907w[1], 159/25; 1907x, 184–85/69–70; 1907o, 63/342; and in relation to the fourth Duma elections, Lenin 1912k, 511–12/181–82). The moment of crisis may not have resulted in a successful revolution in 1907, but it provided the basis for success a decade later.

On the Question of Freedom

> But see how quickly the slave of yesterday is straightening his back, how the spark of liberty is gleaming even in his half-dimmed eyes. (Lenin 1905e[3], 541/314)

The much-abused term "freedom" offers a final element of the redefinition and enrichment enabled by the intersection between the semantic clusters of miracle and revolution. Here we enter a terrain of preconceived positions that are difficult to shift. Was not Lenin the harbinger of what is occasionally called the most dictatorial and authoritarian "regime" in history, providing the basis for Stalin's supposed "reign of terror"? Is not any discussion of freedom with regard to Lenin a bad joke? By now, we should expect that Lenin's arguments are far subtler than much received opinion. Indeed, he seeks to hold together two seemingly contradictory positions: Freedom is both real and partisan. That is, communists must always hold to the position of real or actual freedom, in which one may act to destroy the very conditions under which "freedom" has thus far been understood; yet, freedom can never escape the question, *cui bono*, for whose interest and for what purpose? Over against the limitations of bourgeois freedom, invariably propagated without the epithet and thereby assumed to be universal, Lenin strenuously urges proletarian freedom. Only through this utterly explicit partisanship is an actual, universal freedom possible. The attempted resolution of that contradiction takes place in the thorough redefinition of freedom through the whole revolutionary

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process, especially in the period after seizing power, a redefinition that renders all hitherto known senses of freedom obsolete.

However, in order to set the context, we must backtrack to 1894, to one of Lenin's early texts, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are." Engaged in a debate with a certain Mikhailovsky, who charges historical materialism with a determinism in which human beings become mere marionettes, Lenin replies:

> 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? (Lenin 1894b, 159/159)

The echoes of theological debates are strong in this text. One need only recall the debate between Erasmus and Luther concerning freedom of the will (Luther and Erasmus 1969), with the former arguing in favor and the latter against in light of the theological doctrine of election. In opposition to the Roman Catholic emphasis on the role of good works, Calvin would take largely the same position as Luther, reinforced with the doctrine of double predestination (Calvin 2006). Yet, even Luther and Calvin found a place for freedom of the will, either in terms of God's own freedom in making the decisions concerning election or *sub specie aeternitatis*, in which what appears to be freewill in our moment of decision falls into God's eternal plan (which God can see as a whole). Closer to home, in the Orthodox tradition's effort to mediate between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism,[66] salvation depends upon joint action between God and human beings. Although God's action in the process of *theosis* is infinitely greater, human will is also vital. One must respond to God's call and take the initiative, which is expressed in the key text from Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in."

In the text I quoted here, however, Lenin comes closest to Luther and Calvin, arguing that freewill makes proper sense only from the perspective of determinism. But then, he steps beyond the Reformers, for freedom comprises the task of appraising the social conditions in order to ensure the success of one's actions—analogous to the effort to read God's mind in order to gain leverage on the paths of history. From where does Lenin derive this argument? From the crucial text for all Marxists at this time: Engels's *Anti-Dühring*. The fullest exposition of this position appears in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, especially in the section entitled "Freedom and Necessity" (Lenin 1908a, 187–94/195–201). For Lenin, Engels means to say that freedom is the ability to understand and appreciate the workings of necessity. It is the knowledge of natural laws and thereby the ability to make decisions based on that knowledge. In other words, human will and mind "must necessarily and inevitably adapt themselves to the former" (Lenin 1908a, 188/196). Thereby, what appears to be blind necessity is simply what is unknown, a condition to which human beings are forever consigned since limited human knowledge will never know everything—even though science enables one

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to minimize that "blind" necessity. Translated into the terminology of objective and subjective conditions, the former now dominates and the latter finds itself constantly adapting to the objective working out of social and economic forces.

Needless to say, the dialectic is a little flat in this account by Lenin, in which necessity is the determining feature and freedom of the will has to find a small space. If he had stayed with such a formulation, the miracle and indeed revolution would become part of the working out of a grand, objective scheme of history. It would therefore appear to be an unexpected miracle purely from our perspective of limited knowledge. However, as we have already seen with respect to the question of dialectics, Lenin also offers sharper formulations.

At this point, the distinction between formal and real or actual freedom becomes useful, with the former designating the often unrecognized conditions under which freedom operates and the latter that moment when "everything is possible," when it is possible to alter the conditions under which freedom itself is defined. The terminology was obviously part of the discussions among members of the government at the time, for Lenin and Trotsky make use of it, both in criticisms of bourgeois formal freedom and in defining real freedom, as emancipation from oppression and for the opportunity to eat one's own bread (Lenin 1918i, 74/63; 1918p, 246/255; 1919l, 380/376; 1919g, 111–12/276; 1920h, 408/368; 1920c, 145/162; 1920k, 393/425, 395/427; Trotsky 1976, 113–14).[67] Here we need to be careful, for formal freedom does not designate a simple limitation in the extent of freedom. On this understanding, freedom is a universal, an ideal before which the bourgeoisie falls short. By contrast, formal freedom designates a structural or constitutive exclusion in its very definition. That is, the claim to be universal or "pure" freedom relies on the systematic unfreedom of those who enable such "freedom." In Lenin's words, "Marxists have always maintained that the more developed, the 'purer' democracy is, the more naked, acute and merciless the class struggle becomes, and the 'purer' the capitalist oppression and bourgeois dictatorship" (Lenin 1919k, 461/496; see also Lenin 1918p, 245/254–55; 1919p, 417/440–41).

Lenin never tires of pointing out that the much-vaunted bourgeois claims to "freedom" and "democracy" are anything but absolutes, that they are always tied to the interests of that class. Freedom of industry and trade? That gives rein to exploitation of the poor and predatory wars (Lenin 1919a, 77–80/62–65). Freedom of labor? It is merely another excuse to rob workers (Lenin 1902p, 355/9). Freedom of the press? It is actually freedom for the rich to own the press and propagate their bourgeois views and befuddle the people (Lenin 1917v, 379–80/209–10; 1919d, 370–71/391; 1917o, 1919i, 163/149–50; 1921c, 504/578–79). Freedom of assembly? All it means is that the bourgeoisie reserve the best buildings and facilities for themselves (Lenin 1918i, 74/63; 1919k, 460/494). Parliamentary freedom? That depends entirely on the bureaucrats deciding precisely which "freedoms" might be exercised (Lenin 1906x, 422/107; 1912c; 1917a^2, 353–54/71).[68] The ultimately determining instance is capitalism, which generates certain forms of political representation that further its own aims; that is, "democracy" operates within strict parameters: "The facts of democracy must not make us lose sight of a circumstance, often overlooked by bourgeois democrats, that in the capitalist countries

representative institutions inevitably give rise to specific forms in which capital exercises its influence on the state power" (Lenin 1912d, 129/366). Lenin sums up all of these in a characteristic fashion, replete with a biblical allusion (Matthew 23:27):

> All your talk about freedom and democracy is sheer claptrap, parrot phrases, fashionable twaddle, or hypocrisy. It is just a painted signboard. And you yourselves are whited sepulchres. You are mean-spirited boors, and your education, culture, and enlightenment are only a species of thoroughgoing prostitution (Lenin 1907y, 53/40)[69]

Lenin also deploys an argument first developed by Marx in relation to the 1848 revolutions across Europe (Marx 1850a, 1850b). Until then, the slogans of freedom and democracy united the surging bourgeoisie with the workers in their efforts to overthrow "old corruption." But when the workers demanded the fruits of their labors, the bourgeoisie began flexing its newly toned muscles and denied the workers the liberties for which they had fought so hard. Here, argues Marx, was the crucial moment of class consciousness when the working class stared its new class enemy in the face. Similarly, for Lenin, the process of revolution sharpens and concretizes the abstract claims to political liberty and popular interests. Initially, workers, peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie, liberal bourgeoisie, and liberal landlords all work together under the slogan of freedom, but when the practical meaning of that "freedom" becomes an issue, class differences gel. Precisely what "freedom" means for the bourgeoisie, workers, and peasants soon sets them over against one another, with the bourgeoisie not willing to proceed to complete freedom once it has attained power, keeping the much sought-after freedoms for itself, denying them to the majority by setting the framework within which "liberty" may be exercised.

> It is only in the course of the class struggle, only in the course of a more or less lengthy historical development of the revolution, that the different understanding of this "democracy" by the different classes is revealed. And what is more, the deep gulf between the interests of the different classes is revealed in their demands for *different* economic and political measures, in the name of one and the same "democracy." (Lenin 1907i[1], 405/278; see also Lenin 1905r[3], 124/115; 1905h[1], 380–84/380–84; Lenin 1906o)

By now, all of this is far too obvious, yet the sad truth is that there is as much need today for such observations as in Lenin's time. An excellent example of the deployment of a Leninist critique of bourgeois freedom and democracy may be found in Domenico Losurdo's "Lenin and *Herrenvolk* Democracy" (2007).[70] Losurdo argues that parliamentary democracy is not merely limited in extent (which would then simply entail an extension of that democracy) but that it is structurally geared to exclude significant groups from that "democracy," indeed that it requires such exclusions in order to constitute itself as "democracy." Here he elaborates on Lenin's observation that the more highly developed such a democracy is, the more subject it is to capitalism and the more viciously it suppresses

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politically divergent groups (Lenin 1918p, 245–46/254–56). Among the more salient points, Losurdo notes that John Stuart Mill opines, in his *On Liberty*, that "despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians," for liberty is only for "human beings in the maturity of their faculties" (Mill 1859, 224). As for the rest, they are little superior to the animals (precisely the sentiment of Aristotle in relation to ethics and democracy[71]). In other words, liberal "freedom" and "democracy" are inseparable from oppression and dispossession; the former relies on the latter to function.

Losurdo explores this contradiction at the heart of today's beacon of "democracy" and "liberty": Liberal democracy developed in the white community in direct relation to the enslaving of blacks and deportation of indigenous peoples. The presidents of the United States for 32 of its first 36 years were slave-owners and they were the ones who wrote both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Indeed, one cannot understand "American liberty" without slavery and dispossession, for they grew together, one sustaining the other. As a further example, during the so-called Progressive Age, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, numerous "democratic" reforms took place: Direct election to the Senate, secret vote, primaries, referenda, and so on. They all took place during a rise in ferocity of the Ku Klux Klan terrorist squads and a push to assimilate indigenous people and deprive them of their residual lands. So also with the treatment of "rogues" or "pariahs" outside the United States ("rogue" was originally a term used for slaves, and when one had white semi-slaves, they were branded with an "R" to signify their status): once declared a "rogue" or "pariah" state, the "world's oldest democracy" (Clinton) and "model for the world" (Bush) can crush these "barbarians" (Mill) in order to bolster "freedom and democracy."

One might also compare Israel, suggests Losurdo, supposedly the only "true democracy" in the Middle East, where "freedom of expression and association" exist. But that can be maintained only by ignoring a macroscopic detail: "government by law and democratic guarantees are valid only for the master race, while Palestinians can have their lands expropriated, be arrested and imprisoned without process, tortured, killed, and, in any case under a regime of military occupation, have their human dignity downtrodden and humiliated daily." And then in a new twist, when fading colonial powers are losing their grip, they suddenly happen upon self-determination for valuable sections of the former colony (which have themselves been ethnically, culturally, and religiously engineered). Thus, when England finally had to return Hong Kong to China, the last governor, Chris Patten, suddenly experienced a "conversion" to colonial self-determination: He appealed to the inhabitants of Hong Kong to claim their right to "self-determination" against China, by means of which they could remain under the influence of the British empire. One might say the same about claims for Tibet's independence. Finally, to what do the oft-repeated and much-vaunted claims for "human rights," "liberty," and "freedom" amount? Losurdo deploys Cecil Rhodes's formula for the British empire, which is still perfectly valid today: "philanthropy + 5 per cent," where "philanthropy" is synonymous with "human rights" and 5 percent the profits to be made by waving the flag of "human rights." Many of these details are reasonably well known, but the argument is usually one

of hypocrisy: They do not live up to their ideals. But Losurdo, developing Lenin, has a much sharper point. The very possibility of bourgeois "democracy" and "freedom" is directly dependent upon, and thereby unthinkable and unworkable without, systemic dispossession of the majority.

Against these various permutations of formal freedom is real freedom. Here we need to be careful, since Lenin means not a "free-for-all," not a "pure democracy" to which one aspires, not the full display of individual freedoms assumed but never practiced in liberal slogans.[72] Real or actual freedom is the insistence that we have the ability and opportunity to abolish the old system and its formal freedoms. Hence the persistence in maintaining the illegal party, hence the need for a military wing, hence the constant uncovering of sham bourgeois slogans of "freedom." Yet, at times, Lenin sounds like a good liberal, arguing for a state administration that is utterly responsible to the people, that is accountable to, elected by, and subject to recall by the people (Lenin 1905g[2], 41/342). It is all too easy to juxtapose these statements with the restrictions on such freedoms after the revolution (Rabinowitch 2004, 2007; Lih 2011), but that misses a subtle point Lenin makes, not only in the debates during the times of the Duma, but also after the revolution, as we will see in a moment. Before the revolution, liberal freedoms are indeed to be pursued, he points out, for, in that context, workers' associations and parties may make full use of the greater possibilities of legal gatherings, associations, presses, and strikes. But they are not ends in themselves, for the workers always keep in sight a "*radical* change in the entire political system," precisely the system which has enabled those freedoms (Lenin 1912g, 417/199).[73]

A vital question remains: What happens after the exercise of real freedom when the whole order that has set the terms for formal freedom has been abolished, or at least is in the process of being abolished? More simply, what happens after the revolution? The beginning of an answer is that the revolution is not merely the moment—with however long a process leading up to that moment—when the old order has been overthrown and power has been seized by the revolutionaries. It includes that vital period after the revolutionary overthrow when all things have to be made anew.[74] The ramifications for understanding revolution-as-miracle now begin to clarify, for the miracle is not so much a moment of real freedom, for that would be to follow a Humean definition in which miracle breaches the "laws" of nature. Instead, the miracle is both the moment (with echoes of Lunacharsky) when "heaven" and "earth" touch and the crucial period that follows when the task of reconstructing the new reality begins.

Given this revised sense of revolution-as-miracle, we may now ask what the implications are for real freedom. The answer is found in what at first may appear to be a jarring juxtaposition: Freedom is partisan. Is this not precisely the accusation hurled at the bourgeoisie, that their prattle about "freedom" conceals specific class interests? Does it not become another version of formal freedom? Not at all, but let us see why. Already in 1905, Lenin wrote, "They who serve the cause of freedom in general without serving the specific cause of proletarian utilisation of this freedom, the cause of turning the freedom to account in the proletarian struggle for socialism, are, in the final analysis, plainly and simply, fighters for the interests of the bourgeoisie" (Lenin 1905o[1], 502/281). This is a bold claim:

"freedom in general" is to serve the cause of proletarian freedom, for only in this way will actual freedom be realized.

Six factors play a role in Lenin's argument. First, in the appropriation of Western political terminology during the revolutionary process after February 1917, "democracy" became associated with the laboring masses of workers and peasants, who were the "people" (*demos* and thereby *narod*). The opposite of democracy was not the autocracy or dictatorship, but the classes of the old aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Thus, terms such as "democratic elements," "democratic classes," "revolutionary democracy," along with "democracy" itself, had distinct class dimensions. Democracy thereby became synonymous with the range of socialist parties, while those of the bourgeoisie (Cadets) and the old aristocracy (Octobrists and others) were antidemocratic (Kolonitsky 2004). Lenin played no small part in that process of redefinition, which brings me to the second point concerning concealment: Bourgeois claims to foster "pure democracy" or "freedom in general" conceal their class interest. By contrast, one must not conceal the partisan nature of proletarian freedom, for it is "*openly* linked to the proletariat" (Lenin 1905y[1], 48/104). Third, bourgeois freedom is predicated on the individual, while proletarian freedom is collective. The catch here is that this supposed individuality of bourgeois freedom is in fact a collective position that is, once again, systematically concealed and denied. However, if one begins explicitly with the collective, then freedom begins to mean a very different type of freedom. Fourth, this apparently individual, bourgeois freedom operates within a society that holds as sacrosanct private property, a society "based on the power of money, in a society in which the masses of working people live in poverty and the handful of rich live like parasites" (Lenin 1905y[1], 48/103; 1919j, 354/348). In other words, bourgeois freedom serves the cause of capitalism in which the vast majority is systematically denied freedom. The only viable form of freedom, a "freedom without inverted commas," is that which emancipates labor from the yoke of capitalism and replaces it with a communist system (Lenin 1906b[2], 264/339; 1919j, 352/346). Fifth, we may use the terminology of universals: Bourgeois freedom constitutes a false universal, based upon a particular that is concealed, namely the power of capital, while proletarian freedom is a genuine universal, based not upon greed or careerism but upon the interests of the vast majority that unites the best of the past's revolutionary traditions and the best of the present struggle for a new life.

Yet, even this terminology becomes inadequate and falls away in light of the final point, which aligns with Lenin's argument in *The State and Revolution*.[75] Here he argues that since all freedoms are partisan and since proletarian freedom constitutes the only true freedom, freedom and democracy themselves will disappear with the construction of communism. In a crucial (and significant parenthetical) observation he writes: "(Let us say in parenthesis that 'pure democracy' is not only an *ignorant* phrase, revealing a lack of understanding both of the class struggle and of the nature of the state, but also a thrice-empty phrase, since in communist society democracy will *wither away* in the process of changing and becoming a habit, but will never be 'pure' democracy)" (Lenin 1918p, 242/251). This comment follows his point that while classes exist, there can only ever be class democracy rather than "pure" democracy. But why are the parentheses significant?

They give voice to an as yet unrealized situation, after the bourgeois state, after bourgeois freedom and democracy have been destroyed. But in that situation, not only does class conflict disappear and not only does the state wither away, but so also do freedom and democracy in the sense that they become not a goal for which one must strive but *an everyday habit*.

We may describe this argument as an effort to redefine freedom in a sense that is not bourgeois. The problem is that such a task had never been undertaken after a successful overthrow of bourgeois power; so Lenin and the communists found themselves in uncharted waters (and subject to intense criticism not only from the international bourgeoisie but many fellow socialists [Lenin 1919j, 340/334, 350–53/341–44]).[76] As he reiterated over and over, the actual seizure of power is the easy part, but the task of constructing communism is far more complex than anything that has gone before. As Yermakov puts it so well, "They were part of a search for a correct road to the unknown" (Yermakov 1975, 107).[77] And Lenin repeatedly reminded his fellow Bolsheviks of the many mistakes made, of the evils and "many sins" they have committed, and of the need to try anew each time.[78] As he writes in a New Year greeting in 1919: "Greetings and New Year salutations to the Communist group. With all my heart I wish that in the new year we shall all commit fewer stupidities than in the old" (1919c[1], 180/234).

That sense of setting out into unknown territory is reflected forcefully in the piecemeal notes, concerning freedom and new democratic structures, Lenin made for the Extraordinary Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March 1918 (Lenin 1918c, 152–57/70–75). One may, of course, attribute the sketchy nature of the notes to Lenin's crushing workload, but I would suggest they also reveal the tentativeness of exploring what a new sense of freedom means. Lenin's effort to work out that new sense has at least two ramifications. To begin with, the partisan nature of actual freedom means that the bourgeoisie has to be smashed in order to construct a world inhabited only by those who work (Lenin 1919j, 355/350). So he writes, " 'Liberties' and democracy *not* for all, but *for* the working and exploited masses, to emancipate them from exploitation; ruthless suppression of exploiters." And in explanation, "NB: chief stress is shifted *from* formal *recognition* of liberties (such as existed under bourgeois parliamentarism) *to* actually ensuring the *enjoyment* of liberties by the working people who are overthrowing the exploiters, e.g., from *recognition* of freedom of assembly to the *handing over* of all the best halls and premises to the workers, from recognition of freedom of speech to the handing over of all the best printing presses to the workers, and so forth" (Lenin 1918c, 155/72–74). Naturally, the offer was always there for the bourgeoisie to join the process of constructing communism and to divest themselves of bourgeois class identity, as indeed many did among intellectuals, inheritors of capitalist wealth, and middle peasants. But many more continued resistance and, when that proved futile, fled abroad to feed the anticommunist cause in as many ways as they could among the Entente. The reality of the concentrated effort by the Entente to dislodge the new government, with troops, equipment, and money for the Terror at the hands of the various White Armies and their temporary regimes, ensured that the remnants of the bourgeoisie and old aristocracy within Russia would indeed be smashed.[79]

Yet, the ramifications of constructing everything anew also unleashed new forms of freedom, forms that were partially in evidence in the lead-up to October, but forms that simultaneously risked falling back into old patterns while exhibiting new possibilities. Let me give two examples. Before October, the Bolsheviks were, as Rabinowitch makes clear through a mass of detail on internal debates, less a tightly disciplined and unanimous organization and much more a flexible party. This was especially so in the crucial period between July and October in 1917, with open and vigorous and freewheeling debate, disagreements, and responsiveness to the mood of the masses. Indeed, the "phenomenal Bolshevik success can be attributed in no small measure to the nature of the party in 1917 . . . I would emphasize the party's internally relatively democratic, tolerant, and decentralized structure and method of operation, as well as its open and essentially mass character" (Rabinowitch 2004, 311; see further xxi, 51–82, 172, 178–82, 291–308, 311–14; Wade 2004, 213–14; Liebman 1975, 149–61).[80] It is worth noting that after October, the party operated in largely the same pattern, with spirited debate that included many women among the men (Turton 2007) and in which Lenin's "directives" were not necessarily "obeyed" but formed sharp points in that ongoing debate.

As a second example, let us now move to the period after October and the account of Arthur Ransome at a conference in Jaroslavl in 1920. Even in the midst of the multiple crises brought on by the aftermath of the First World War and the "civil" war, debates were vigorously open. Upon arrival from Moscow with Radek and Larin (a Menshevik), Ransome notes that the auditorium was full of workers; not an intellectual was to be seen. The topic was industrial conscription. In the first session, Radek (for) and Larin (against) lengthily set out their opposing views, but the second session on the following day turned out to be very revealing. Worker after worker came forward to speak, some a little naive but most astutely aware of the political issues at stake, exhibiting a "political consciousness which would have been almost incredible three years ago." Most were in favor of the general proposal, especially in light of the success with similar methods in the Red Army, but the debate sharpened over the issue of individual or collective leadership. Some were wary of the proposal to employ specialists to take charge, since they were at that time inevitably bourgeois. And if a political commissar was placed in charge, as with the Red Army and its early officers, then he would have to take the side of the specialist against the workers. Others pointed out that the system of employing specialists had worked in the Red Army, so why not in the factories? Furthermore, the argument that collective control would produce enthusiasm for the tasks at hand was problematic (why then do we need industrial conscription in the first place?), for it would lead to time-wasting and excessive bureaucracy. So the debate rolled on all evening, with even the trade union representatives discussing the role of the unions after the revolution, when there was no longer a need to strike,[81] as well as concerns over relations with the peasants who had to be kept on side. The outcome: The sympathy for Larin's opposition faded and Radek's proposal to support the proposal was carried. Yet, the most intriguing point is that for Ransome, this is nothing less than the complex process of free debate enabled under the dictatorship of the proletariat (Ransome 1921, 28–34).

It is as if Ransome is reporting on the actual embodiment of three of Lenin's "Ten Theses on Soviet Power":

> (4) (3) abolition of parliamentarism (as the separation of legislative from executive activity); union of legislative and executive state activity. Fusion of administration with legislation;
> (3) (4) closer connection of the whole apparatus of state power and state administration with the masses than under previous forms of democracy;
> (9) transfer of the focus of attention in questions of democracy from formal recognition of a formal equality of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, of poor and rich, to the practical feasibility of the enjoyment of freedom (democracy) by the working and exploited mass of the population. (Lenin 1918c, 154–55/72–73)[82]

Perhaps, it would be better to say that Lenin was formulating a process already underway.

Thus far, I have argued that real freedom arises from the explicit partisanship of freedom advocated by Lenin. This formulation is not quite correct, for the opposition between formal and actual freedom was a product of the former system that the communists set out to smash and replace. That is, with the very conditions for distinguishing between actual and formal freedom now passing, the type of freedom fitfully emerging is qualitatively different. But what are the ramifications for the proposition with which I began this chapter concerning revolution-as-miracle? To begin with, miracle is not restricted to the domain of real freedom. Neither is to be defined as embodying both formal and real freedom. Instead, the miracle marks both the destruction of the way life has gone until now and, even more intensely, the task of constructing a new life after that moment. Or, as Lenin occasionally observed, if October itself was a stunning miracle of human agency and energy, and if the victories of the Red Army were stupendous miracles, then the construction of communism—an as yet untraveled path—requires yet a greater miracle.

Conclusion

> It is more pleasant and useful to go through the "experience of revolution" than to write about it. (Lenin 1917h², 497/120)

By now, it should be clear that miracle is far more than a metaphor for revolution, in the same way that another of Lenin's favored descriptions—"revolution is an art"[83]—is more than a mere metaphor. I have of course deliberately focused on miracle as an alternative approach to the question of revolution, an approach that has sought to listen and engage with a theological ear. And that has enabled me to identify a detailed and intricate range of what it means to call a revolution a miracle. The results of that listening may be summed up briefly: In bending transcendence to immanence and emphasizing human agency, the miracle becomes the site of a dialectical tension between spontaneity and organization, so much so that one seeks to organize for the spontaneous, enabling the unexpected, unplanned revolution to be integral to that organization. All of this is then overlaid with

another related but distinct tension, now between working within and without the current situation, in which the miracle is once again at the intersection, whether in terms of the revolutionary function of reform and parliamentary involvement, or in terms of an utterly open and partisan freedom that becomes the basis for a genuinely universal freedom, which in its turn abolishes the old distinction between formal and actual freedom.

I close with three points that arise from this recasting of miracle. To begin with, revolutions raise the question of the relation between old and new. On one side, the revolution is seen as a clean break with the past and all that represents that past must be destroyed, the "evil" must be "rooted out" so that the new may be constructed (compare the story of the Flood in Genesis 6–9). Thus, the institutions of the old world come down in a thundering crash, the bourgeois dictatorship of the state must be smashed, the Red Army is a development never before seen in its full extent, the soviets are a form of the state never witnessed before in history, the "filth" of the old world must be cleansed, and the new must be built from scratch.[84] On the other side, the new is never constructed on a tabula rasa; so one must build the new with the various pieces of preserved and salvaged pieces of the old, thoroughly transforming them in the process. After October, debates raged on precisely this matter, with Lunacharsky, for one, arguing strenuously that the revolution exercises an *Aufhebung* on the past, abolishing, preserving, and transforming all that was best of the past. Here again, we have the interaction characteristic of the miracle in Lenin's thought: Is it an absolute and unexpected break, or does it emerge from within the known? He moves between both options, between a clean revolutionary break and continuity with the past.

An excellent example is the early work, "The Heritage We Renounce" (Lenin 1897d), in which he outlines why the "disciples" (as they were called) of Marx differ from both the "enlighteners," who believe that the present course of social development would lead to a better world without seeing the contradictions of that development, and the Narodniks, who fear precisely that development because of its contradictions and seek another path. So also in *The State and Revolution*, where Lenin argues that the bourgeois state must be "smashed" in order for the new to be constructed. Yet, after October, Lenin comes out strongly on Lunacharsky's side, reiterating time and again that the new state needs to make the most of the past, even if it seems counter to common sense: Old generals for the sake of building the Red Army, bourgeois specialists for constructing industry and modernizing technology, the New Economic Policy with its limited and controlled patterns of market exchange, and the best of literature and art from the past. As Lenin says on one of the many occasions when he addresses this issue, "We are not utopians who think that socialist Russia must be built up by men of a new type; we must utilise the material we have inherited from the old capitalist world" (Lenin 1919s, 24/6).[85] In terms of culture and education, he was almost too much of a traditionalist, tolerating but looking askance at the futurists and Proletcult (Lenin 1917h^{2}, 389/40; 1917k, 273/191–94; 1917q; 1918e^{1}, 476–80/283–87; 1918k; 1918n, 76–81/136–42; 1919u, 395–96/417–18; 1919p, 424–25/449; 1919s, 24/6; 1919a, 68–74/51–58; 1919i, 152–56/138–43; 1920a^{1}, 1920f; 1920e^{1}, 284–89/301–6; 1921u, 334–53/211–31; 1921g, 1921f; 1922a,

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269–71/76–78). All of these are perhaps best summed up in his comment after listening to Beethoven: "It makes you proud to be a human being when you hear what human genius can do . . . Beauty is necessary" (quoted in Lunacharsky 1980, 147, 150; see also Rubenstein 1995, 374–78).

Furthermore, the outcome of this exploration of revolution-as-miracle is a distinct relativizing of both the political and theological languages that may be deployed. My concern has been Lenin's own thought and the theological implications that emerge from it, but the relevant point here is that I have not argued that Lenin derives his approach from the absolute source of theology, nor indeed that theology is a poor second to Lenin's politics. Instead, as I have argued in detail elsewhere (Boer, in press-a), they should both be seen as languages or codes in which both are relativized, movable from code to code and thereby gaining in richness. In that light, it is possible to say that miracle is one possible theological term for revolution, just as revolution is the political translation of miracle.

Finally, I have indicated at various points throughout this chapter that in the mutual translation of revolution and miracle, both terms are enriched in a way that is not restricted to the point of overlap between the theological and political semantic clusters. That is, the elements beyond that initial overlap are now drawn into what is really an enlarged semantic cluster designated by revolution–miracle. In this respect, we have seen spontaneity and organization, *kairós–ákairos*, and working within and without the system (reform–revolution, parliamentary involvement, and freedom)—all of them enhancing and thereby redefining the category of miracle. At the same time, it must be asked whether any item drops out of this large field, whether something is lost as well as gained. I would suggest that it lies in what may be called the ontological reserve provided by the theological code of the miracle. In that code, "God" designates what human beings cannot attain, that we always fall short and should not aspire to claim too much for ourselves. However, in dragging transcendence to immanence and locating miracle in the domain of human effort (with all the dimensions I have explored), the risk is that human beings may seek to become gods. I have already indicated some of the pitfalls of such an outcome in the analysis of Lunacharsky's God-building, particularly in terms of the tendency of human beings not to seek each other's best but to visit the worst on one another. As for some further ramifications of this veneration of human effort, that is the topic of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 6

Venerating Lenin

> Lenin is always alive.
> Whether you laugh or cry,
> Lenin is (in) your spring;
> He is (in) every great thing.
> Lenin is within thee,
> As he is within me.
>
> Tulikov and Oshanin 1955[1]

Lenin's veneration is the topic of this chapter, although that veneration is occasionally and unfortunately called the Lenin "cult." Thereby, I make a slight shift from a detailed focus on Lenin's works to the veneration visited upon him after his death. Yet, even here, careful attention to his written material is needed, for a number of currents in that material—at the intersection between the conscious and the subconscious—turn out to have a bearing on his veneration. The importance of revisiting the veneration of Lenin lies not merely in its significance for the question of Lenin and theology, insofar as theological matters emerge from a close engagement with Lenin, but also because the sustained veneration of Lenin became the prototype for later revolutionary communist leaders. Stalin of course comes to mind, although his embalmed body was soon enough removed from the mausoleum and buried, as well as Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Min, and even Kim Jong-Il (plans for the preservation of his body are underway as I write). One may list other revolutionary heroes, from Che to Chavez, but those I have mentioned were also embalmed and revered to a much greater extent after their deaths. These processes have been the sources of fascination, derision, and much facile analysis, most notably in terms of a quasi-religion, albeit with a hint of assumed "backwardness"—you think you are atheists, but you superstitious people have created merely another, secular religion. By focusing on the veneration of Lenin, I hope to provide at least some steps toward a more in-depth analysis of the crucial role such veneration played in the new communist situation in Russia (at that time still the RSFSR).

In the following analysis, I distinguish between the more overtly theological factors and those that were not so obviously theological. The former include saint, prophet, and martyr. On each count, I find that none of them provides a simple background that fed into the veneration of Lenin. Instead, the revolutionary possibilities developed countertraditions that relativize the absolute theological claims concerning saint, prophet, and martyr. For instance, in the case of the rapidly developing celebration of the revolutionary martyr, including the funeral and the genre of the revolutionary biography (or martyrology), a distinct alternative tradition grew that both transformed elements of the religious tradition and developed its own shape. More significant and far less noticeably religious factors in the veneration of Lenin include the unexpected and the expected. Never discussed but crucial for that veneration is a curious juxtaposition in Lenin's life and texts, between his passion for vigorous outdoor exercise and his simultaneous fascination, in his written work, with diseases, decaying bodies, and corpses—a juxtaposition that operates at the intersection between the conscious and the subconscious. So we encounter him swimming (naked), ice-skating, hunting, and above all hiking in the mountains (he was always shod in hiking boots) and cycling as long and as far as he was able. Whenever the smallest opportunity presented itself, he would be away, into the mountains, a lake or sea or river, on his bicycle, or out with a rifle. And he was skilled at each . . . apart from hunting, for he was a dreadful shot. Often Krupskaya would go with him and it is to her that we owe some of the more lapidary observations concerning Lenin's ventures. At the same time, Lenin's texts evince a fascination with bodies in decay. As metaphors in a polemical piece or a longer detailed study, or as images in one of his favored parables, time and again we encounter diseased, abscessed, rotting bodies, usually still alive. Rather than one element undermining the other, I argue that they operate in a tension that expresses an anxiety over, if not an aversion to, a sickly, decaying body. And it was an aversion that could not help being communicated to his closest comrades as well as the many who read his texts.

Beyond these two interleaved currents, other significant factors also play a role. So I return to Anatoly Lunacharsky and introduce another God-builder, Leonid Krasin, both of whom were important figures in the veneration of Lenin after his death. While the less-articulate Krasin was in charge of the initial phases of the preservation of Lenin's body and the plans for constructing a wooden mausoleum, Lunacharsky headed an elaborate competition for the design of the permanent mausoleum. Both were prominent members of the Immortalization Commission, the successor to the Funeral Commission. As I argued earlier, Lenin permitted the continued God-building of Lunacharsky at least after the Revolution, fully aware of what the latter was doing in his role as Commissar of Enlightenment. A third major factor was the sheer extent of popular and creative veneration, initially following the assassination attempt in 1918 but above all after Lenin's death. This outburst of intense reshaping—through new folk tales, stories, and art—of the symbols and images of the existing worldviews of those who had found their voices after the revolution took the government by surprise. But the government soon caught up and built upon that veneration through a vast program of Agitprop. All of these bring me to my final point concerning the specific economic and social

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function of that veneration. I argue that Lenin's veneration became a necessary feature of a new form of compulsion for people to engage, with revolutionary fervor, in constructing a new social and economic system.[2]

Saints, Prophets, and Martyrs

Slightly anointed with Soviet oil. (Lenin 1922–23, 605/357)

I begin with three more explicitly theological themes, those of saint, prophet, and martyr. Rather than these items simply providing a background within religious sensibilities to the veneration of Lenin, a complex picture emerges in which the revolutionary tradition both sets itself over against and draws from the religious. Of course, that act could not have taken place without the religious dimensions of saint, martyr, and prophet, but what the revolutionary development of alternate traditions shows is that the theological deployment of these themes is neither primary nor original. Rather, their theological moment becomes one of a series of possible uses.

Saint

When the worker became the vanguard leader of the poor he did not thereby become a saint. (Lenin 1918m, 398/364)

One tradition that played less of a role than often asserted is that of the Russian Orthodox saint, at least within the wider panoply of popular religious consciousness. With bodies believed to be incorruptible, their relics and icons both the recipients of prayers and sources of miracles, accounts of their lives avidly read, pilgrimages undertaken to their last resting place, elaborate theological arguments concerning the relation between the earthly remains and the newly transformed heavenly body, myriad saints dotted the vast landscape of Russia. Some were decidedly local, barely known outside a cluster of villages; others were national saints, venerated and propagated by the Orthodox Church. Part of the rich intermingling of pre-Christian practices (with a world populated by spirits and devils) and Orthodoxy that signaled the peasantry's own creative appropriation of the latter (Walling 1908, 153–56, 231–32), the popular local saints included Varlaam of *Khutyn'* (twelfth century) of Novgorod, Tryphon of Pechenga (died 1583) in the far north, The Venerable Macarius (1349–1444) of the middle and upper Volga regions, and John the Hairy (sixteenth century) of Rostov. As for the better-known saints who crowded the religious calendar, they included Greeks and Bulgarians (indicating the sources of Russian Orthodoxy), Tsars and their sons, especially those who had died in an untimely manner, and hosts of Russians. Perhaps, the most famous was Sergius of Radonezh (1314–92), attributed with creating water in the wastes, healings, and even, like Christ, resurrections of the dead.

So we find the inevitable connections made between the preservation of Lenin's body—or at least those parts not removed for the autopsy, dissection

(especially his brain), and in order to enable preservation itself—and those of the saints who went before him. Although neither a necessary nor sufficient requirement for canonization, popular calls for figures to be declared saints were often made on the basis of supposed incorruptibility. In the popular mind at least, they may have become incorruptible through divine fiat, but Lenin became so through science. The outcome, as some have suggested, is analogous, rendering Lenin a saint in largely traditional terms (Stites 1989, 120; Tumarkin 1997, 5–6).[3] The analogy is strengthened by the popular belief that kings and princes who died before their time became saints purely for these two reasons—an untimely death as a prince—and that they remained protectors of Russia. Yet, significant differences are also manifest. Lenin's body did not become a magnet for prayers, not even for Soviet success in battle, industrial expansion, or peace in a hostile world. Neither his body nor his image (which occasionally drew upon the artistic traditions of iconography) was identified as the source of miracles, at least in the sense that the saints managed the stupendous feats of curing sore toes and strange discharges.[4]

At another level, of course, the heavy stress on the collective legacy of Lenin (as I will argue later) does continue his own transformation of the miracle as an act of extraordinary, collective human effort. In this case, one may perhaps speak of an *Aufhebung* of the Leninist miracle, particularly in the way his veneration served as a unifying force within the new state. But this is a far cry from the popular belief in miracles sparking forth from the relics of saints. It is also a far cry from the theological efforts to connect the saint's earthly body with the physical, heavenly body (note the absence of the pagan doctrine of the soul in heaven). Lenin's singular body remained very much here on earth, inside the gates of Red Square and close by the Kremlin wall. Indeed, precisely at the time Lenin was ailing and then after his death, the new government was waging a sustained campaign against those very saintly relics that are supposed by some to have provided the primary basis for the embalmment of Lenin (Stites 1989, 92–109; Gabel 2005). As Lenin was carefully being prepared for permanent and open display, saints' tombs were opened and the "incorruptible" bones or wax effigies revealed for what they were. Rather than a convergence between Lenin and the Russian saints, we are faced with a somewhat different conclusion: This campaign generated significant difference between the practices of priests and the church, as well as a distinctly new tradition, one that served a specific purpose to which I will come in more detail later.

Prophet

We can prophecy for you. (Lenin 1907f, 329/184)

A more complex pattern may be identified with regard to the prophet, for here we find a closer interaction with the religious dimension of prophecy and yet a development of an alternative, revolutionary prophet that relativizes the claims of the former. As I argued earlier (chapter 2), Lenin himself was not averse to deploying religious and even biblical imagery. Although "saint" was not part of

this vocabulary, "prophet" does appear, both in the terminology itself and in what may be called prophetic utterances that evoke the fire of the biblical prophets.

The prophet in question is not one who communes with the gods or spirits and pronounces an "oracle," perhaps prophesying the imminent collapse of Soviet power (Lenin 1906b[2], 203/275; 1919r, 71/233), but one who analyzes the complexity of events as they unfold in order to "foretell" and "foresee" as accurately as possible how they may unfold (Lenin 1902p, 513–14/176–77).[5] Thus, while Lenin states that "one does not need to a prophet to foretell . . . " (Lenin 1901a, 399 fn/413 fn; 1901d, 89/81; 1908n, 20/6), he also clearly claims, "We can prophecy for you"—just as Marx and Engels did, scientifically (Lenin 1907f, 329/184; 1918a[1], 165/169; 1918q, 494–99/172–78).[6] In his pattern of denying that he acts as a prophet while simultaneously appropriating prophetic terminology, we may see the complex process whereby he both negates the priority of the religious sense of prophecy and then claims it for a different usage.

So also condemnations of oppression and calls for the relief of suffering, of which a sample suffices: "We are consequently faced with an already crystallised class of workers, possessing no homes of their own and virtually no property, a class bound by no ties and living form hand to mouth" (Lenin 1899b, 539/540).[7] Or, in more explicitly biblical terms, condemning those who speak with "honeyed words" and "smooth tongues" (Psalms 5:9; 55:21; Proverbs 2:16; 5:3; 6:24; 7:5, 21; 26:23; Isaiah 30:10; Romans 16:18):

> Actually, all these honeyed words are nothing but deceit and mockery of the peasant. What these smooth-tongued people call cheap and profitable farming is the want, the dire need, which forces the middle and small peasant to work from morning till night, to begrudge himself a crust of bread, to grudge every penny he spends. Of course, what can be "cheaper" and "more profitable" than to wear the same pair of trousers for three years, go about barefoot in summer, repair one's wooden plough with a piece of rope, and feed one's cow on rotten straw from the roof! Put a bourgeois or a rich peasant on such a "cheap" and "profitable" farm, and he will soon forget all this honeyed talk! (Lenin 1903t, 392–93/162–63)[8]

Nonetheless, Lenin did not always speak in tones of prophetic indignation, in the spirit of a Jeremiah or Ezekiel. He was not averse to visionary, almost utopian moments, when he dreamed of how a communist future might look,[9] as well as to direct evocations of the "last, final struggle"—words not only of *The Internationale*, but also very much from the biblical tradition, as we saw in my discussion of *kairós* in the preceding chapter. Yet, the role of the prophet is not to glorify himself but to deliver a message, which for Lenin was the message of Marxism to workers and peasants. It was a message not so much on behalf of a divine being, but of a collective and radical movement, a "cause."[10] And that message was one of freedom from grinding oppression.[11] In delivering that message, he drew not merely from the Bible, but from the language and worldview of those he wished to reach, the peasants and those who had until only very recently been peasants, the workers.[12] No wonder, then, that the Social-Democrats promised the peasants "a land flowing with milk and honey," albeit not immediately in 1903 (Lenin 1903t, 418/190; 1918t, 302/263).

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Martyr

> We will not forget your suffering,
> That you, our leader, endured for us.
> You stood a martyr. (Quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 84)

Martyrdom, the third overtly theological feature of this preliminary collection, reveals most clearly the point at which the Russian communists developed their own traditions in contrast to the religious ones. Here, they clearly counter the theological claims of absolute origins, for the main background in relation to Lenin was not the theological tradition but the increasingly rich tradition of revolutionary martyrs. Of course, some overlap may be identified with the religious saint, who from the earliest days of the Christian movement populated the Christian calendar. The children murdered by King Herod as he searched for the Christ child (Matthew 2:16–18) become the first martyrs for all traditions, with the Orthodox tradition celebrating the legendary "event" on December 29, to be followed by Christ himself, Stephen (Acts 6:8–8:3), and then a long trail including the more notable Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna (died 155), Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (died 258), and a tradition of martyrs—"witnesses" who held to their faith against opposition and suffered for it (Boyarin 1999; Castelli 2004). Indeed, so appealing was the promise of immediate access to heaven that early Christians were known to seek death at the hands of the Roman authorities (Ste. Croix 2006). However, such martyrdom was by no means restricted to Christianity and was not necessarily a religious phenomenon at all. So we find martyrs within Judaism, especially the stories of the Maccabean martyrs resisting Hellenization in 1 and 2 Maccabees; within Islam and the tradition of the *shahid*; within Bahá'í, notably the faithful who, although valuing life and avoiding self-sacrifice, may suffer death for holding to the faith before persecution.

Nonetheless, on the question of martyrs, we encounter most clearly the point I have been arguing: "Martyr"—is neither an exclusively religious term nor is its religious version the origin of all other meanings. If we understand a martyr as someone who holds true to a cause, especially in the face of opposition and death, and who is remembered afterward, often in an embellished narrative, then religious martyrs are but one version of the martyr. So also with political martyrs: Left movements in particular have a long tradition of martyrdom, whether the communist martyrs of Kerala, India, the Tolpuddle Martyrs of nineteenth-century England, or the Haymarket martyrs of 1886 in the United States.

So too for Lenin, who wrote a string of commemorations for revolutionaries who had died: "Revolutionaries have perished," he wrote already in 1897, "long live the revolution!" (Lenin 1897f, 348/467). Or, after the death in revolutionary struggle of Nikolai Ernestovich Bauman in 1905: "May the memory of this fighter in the ranks of the Russian Social-Democratic proletariat never die! May the memory of this revolutionary, who has fallen in the first days of the victorious revolution, live for ever!" (Lenin 1905q[1], 436–37/37). The list grows ever longer over the years leading up to October 1917, not least among which is Lenin's own brother, Aleksandr, who was executed for an attempted assassination of the

Tsar in 1887, but also Ivan Vasil'evich Babushkin, Paul Singer, Paul and Laura Lafargue, Joseph Dietzgen, August Bebel, Harry Quelch, Stepan Razin, Eugène Pottier, and the Left SR, Proshyan (Lenin 1910h, 1911n, 1911u, 1913x[1], 1913b, 1913p, 1919e[1], 1913l, 1918f). Clearly, these were not merely Russian revolutionary martyrs, but significant figures throughout the global socialist movement, which grew and gained "strength under the fire of persecution" (Lenin 1912j[1], 335/109). Of course, October produced a long list of revolutionary martyrs, especially now that Russia was leading the world revolutionary movement. The best example for my purpose is Yakov Sverdlov, who died from influenza during the starving and disease-ridden period of the "civil" war in March 1919.[13]

Lenin's funeral speech follows what is by this time an established generic pattern, not without connections to the ancient art of the funeral eulogy, but above all one that had been taking shape in the revolutionary tradition. The bulk offers the narration of a revolutionary life. Sverdlov was, says Lenin, a dedicated revolutionary even from youth, a man who had forsaken his family and given away the comforts of bourgeois society. Devoting himself heart and soul to the cause of revolution, he spent many years passing from prison to exile and to prison yet again. In the process, he "cultivated those characteristics which steeled revolutionaries for many, many years" (Lenin 1919w, 91/76), becoming toughened through extensive illegal activity while maintaining close contact with the masses. Crucial is the mention of personal acquaintance, which thereby vouches for Sverdlov's extraordinary abilities and his gaining of unquestioned and unchallenged prestige in the revolutionary struggle. Such was Sverdlov's intuition as a practical worker, such was his talent as an organizer, such was his absolutely unchallenged prestige (taking sole charge after October 1917 of the largest branches of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee), that he is irreplaceable. Yet, despite his unique abilities, he was exceedingly modest, playing down his abilities for the sake of the cause. Lest one elevate the individual above the collective cause, states Lenin, Sverdlov was also the product of a larger whole, the cause of revolution. Has not history shown that in the course of great revolutions, great figures arise and develop talents that had formerly seemed impossible? So also will the revolution bring forth new leaders who will be inspired by his example (Lenin 1919w, 1919z).

Two factors of this genre of revolutionary martyrology should be emphasized. First, the commemoration of an individual always takes place within the wider, collective context. The one celebrated and remembered embodies that cause. Since party members, according to this generic expectation, "should portray themselves as dutiful, modest, faithful servants of the cause," any biography of an individual should always be seen as "a continuation of the collective" (Turton 2007, 7). Indeed, we may see this tradition of Russian revolutionary martyrology as a confluence of two generic factors, one deriving from Russian traditions in which one does not speak negatively of the dead, and the other from the revolutionary tradition in which the person in question is always hard working, often misses meals and sleep, cares little for his or her own well-being, is courageous and dedicated, kind to those who are vulnerable (children, the poor, animals), and pitiless to the revolution's enemies (Turton 2007, 8, 143–44).

Second, Lenin is perfectly comfortable using the terminology of martyrdom, for the history of the Russian revolutionary movement contains "a list of martyrs who were devoted to the revolutionary cause" (Lenin 1919w, 90/75; see 1918a[1], 1918g[1] 167/171). Soon, the life of the revolutionary martyr would become a full-blown genre, with multiple versions and millions of copies published and read—especially for Lenin. Initially contested and contradictory, in regard to Lenin's class origins and childhood, whether he loved children or not, or even in terms of his approach to politics, these lives of Lenin would soon enough conform to a more standard generic model, focusing on the importance of Lenin's example, the crucial role of his writings, and, as with Sverdlov and other revolutionaries, the importance of keeping alive his memory and inspiration. The words Lenin uttered at Sverdlov's graveside would before long apply just as much to his own memory: "Millions of proletarians will repeat our words: 'Long live the memory of Comrade Sverdlov. At his graveside we solemnly vow to fight still harder for the overthrow of capital and for the complete emancipation of the working people' " (Lenin 1919v, 95/80). This tradition and genre of revolutionary martyrology would play a significant role in Lenin's own commemoration a few years later.

So also would the tradition of the revolutionary funeral. Drawing on the simpler traditions of the martyr's funeral, by the turn of the century, the Russian revolutionaries had developed their own distinctive form. The funeral of Nikolai Bauman (mentioned earlier) signaled the early reshaping of this tradition. Beaten to death while in prison by a member of the right-wing and anti-Semitic Black Hundreds in October 1905, his funeral became simultaneously a massive celebration and an explicitly political event. Six party members, dressed in leather, carried a coffin draped in red, which was led by another member in black waving a palm branch. Before him marched the party leaders bearing flags, wreathes, and banners, while behind marched 100,000 people. A student orchestra played what was to become the standard revolutionary anthem, "You Fell Victim to a Fateful Struggle." As night fell, torches were lit and Bauman's widow gave a fiery speech condemning the tsarist repression and government. This tradition of the revolutionary funeral was enhanced by communist artists such as Isaak Brodsky and his painting, "Red Funeral: The Funeral of the Victims of the Armed Attack on the Peaceful Demonstration in St Petersburg on 9 Jan 1905." After October 1917, the practice came to full flower with the funeral of Moisei Uritsky, assassinated on August 17, 1918, in the same counterrevolutionary wave that put a couple of bullets in Lenin. At Uristsky's funeral, we find the full ceremony that would be repeated at Lenin's funeral: Lying-in-state, guard of honor, raised bier covered in red, massive cortege, armed escort for the funeral carriage, lone white horse in ornamental coverings, row upon row of armored cars, and air-force flybys (Stites 1989, 113).[14] The city of Petrograd was mobilized, with the whole population witnessing the event, in order to pay honor to a martyr of the revolution. With the "civil" war soon to descend upon the new state, many more such funerals would follow, coming to a culmination with that of Lenin.

The traditions of the revolutionary martyr and funeral took place in a contested field, for the church sought to maintain its stranglehold on both. So while

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there were ever greater numbers of martyrs who had stood up and died for the communist cause, the church asserted that those reactionary religious leaders who had suffered for opposing the communists were also martyrs, or "new martyrs" (*novomucheniki*) as they were called—ordinary souls such as Tsar Nicholas II and the Tsarina, Alexandra Feodorovna, Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna, and church leaders such as Vladimir of Kiev, archpriest Ioann Kochurov, bishop Germogen, and Metropolitan Veniamin of Petrograd (Polsky 2002). Of course, the "red priests" who established the Renovationist Orthodox Church (under the leadership of a man we met earlier in relation to Lunacharsky, Metropolitan Alexander Vvedensky) are difficult to find in the list of such martyrs (Roslov 2002). The revolutionary martyrs and their elaborate funerals sought to claim a distinct space, commemorating not royals and church leaders, but ordinary revolutionaries. Tellingly, popular enthusiasm often went with the latter, blending in creative fashions the revolutionary and religious traditions, modifying their former worldview in light of the momentous changes underway. In this light may we see the spontaneous outburst of popular imagery of martyrdom that followed the attempted assassination of Lenin in 1918:

> You came to us, to ease
> Our excruciating torment
> You came to us as a leader, to destroy
> The enemies of the workers' movement...
> We will not forget your suffering,
> That you, our leader, endured for us.
> You stood a martyr. (Quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 84)[15]

Soon the government would realize the extraordinary potential of these popular currents, turning them to a unique form of compulsion for the new economic and political order.

Of Hunting, Hiking, and Cycling

> We always chose the loneliest trails that led into the wilds, away from any people. (Krupskaya 1930, 105)

The streams I have discussed thus far have reasonably clear, if contrary, connections to theological elements, but now I turn to the less overtly theological features of the veneration of Lenin. Some may be unexpected, such as the tension in his own life between a love of vigorous exercise and the pervasive imagery of rotting bodies, while some are to be expected, especially the role of God-builders like Lunacharsky and Krasin in the preservation of Lenin's body and the construction of the mausoleum, as well as the wave of popular and uncontrolled veneration that followed Lenin's death. But they are all crucial to the growth of that veneration.

Let me begin with the tension between exercise and corpses in Lenin's own texts and practice of everyday life. Mentioned perhaps in passing by critics, Lenin's love of donning his hiking boots and heading off with glee to the mountains, his urge

to set out skating on any piece of frozen ice, his pleasure in tearing off his clothes (all of them) and diving into a river or the sea for a good swim, or his joy in pulling out his bicycle and riding it all day, are rarely, if ever, understood for the vital role they play in his life.[16] These significant pleasures do not merely express a desire to retreat, seek self-renewal, and to rethink matters from the ground up during a crisis, as Kouvelakis suggests in relation to Lenin's time in the Berne library when he read Hegel in 1914 or the exile in Finland in 1917 when he wrote *The State and Revolution* (Kouvelakis 2007, 168). Nor are they elements that reveal a certain hypocrisy, bourgeois foibles of a man of the people (Elwood 2011, 155–66). Nor do they signal a busy man who knew how to take time for himself, like a company director who realizes the importance of regular exercise to keep himself at the top of his form (Tumarkin 1997, 172).

We may go much, much further than these passing suggestions. In the extended periods in the mountains, in the sea, or on the road, Lenin would typically banish any thought of work from his mind. Now his body would work hard, allowing his mind to run freely to whatever thought might appear next. For anyone who engages in such activities (mine is long-distance cycling for days and weeks at a time, but also hiking), the effect is extraordinary: As the end of the ride or hike draws nigh, a reluctance to return home sets in and plans and dreams of much longer expeditions begin to form. All one wishes to do is stay on the road, concerned merely with the next meal, a place to sleep for the night, the smooth working of one's body, and, if on a bicycle, of one's machine as well. And when the door of home does open, all that had weighed so heavily on one's mind at departure now seems far less pressing, so much so that one wonders what all the fuss was about.

In Lenin's case, of course, the issue is the body of a revolutionary. Others observed that he had the strong, well-built, and balanced body of an athlete, enjoying even sailing and the trapeze (Valentinov 1969, 31; 1968, 77–91; Trotsky 1976, 141).[17] That he was supremely fit goes without saying; that he was skilled to the point of impressing observers is noted by Krupskaya when Lenin skated on the frozen river in Shushenskoe on his mercury skates, cutting figures and performing all manner of tricks such as "giant steps" and "Spanish leaps," or when he swam (daily when possible) in a pool, river, or the sea.[18]

One caveat must be noted here, for Lenin was a lousy hunter, no matter how passionately he pursued it. Again and again, in her letters to Lenin's mother and sisters, Krupskaya would comment on how "Volodya" would grasp his "famous gun" and go out for hours, dressed in leather breeches and hunting jacket, with a dog he had trained and a local accomplice from Shushenskoe, but come back empty-handed. On one occasion when they were out for a walk together, he brought his gun, but said, " 'You know, if I come across a hare I won't shoot it, because I didn't bring my bags. It will be awkward to carry.' Yet as soon as a hare came bounding out he would let go at it." But he would miss, for he was "apt to get too excited" over hunting (Krupskaya 1930, 39). An equally successful expedition took place in autumn of 1898. Faced with a flock of partridges rising from the sides of the road, Lenin groaned with pleasure, took aim, and fired, "but the partridge simply walked away without even bothering to fly" (Krupskaya 1898c 564/397).[19]

Hiker

Ilyich was terribly fond of hiking. (Krupskaya 1930, 262–63)

But let me draw out two activities on which he spent most energy, namely, hiking and cycling. For most of the information on these matters, we are dependent largely on Krupskaya, who more often than not accompanied Lenin. Or rather, these were activities they undertook together, relishing the opportunity to share in what was close to both their hearts. At the simplest level were the daily walks, a habit they maintained even after the October Revolution, albeit intermittently and more limited in extent. Unlike the extended hikes when they would banish all thought of work from their minds, the daily walks were a time for talk, sharing thoughts on what they were writing. For Lenin, this process was an extension of his habit of writing, in which he would "pace up and down the room, whispering what he was going to write." In this light, the daily walks "became as much a necessity to him as whispering his article over to himself before putting it down in writing" (Krupskaya 1930, 63).[20]

More strenuous were the day-long hikes together, usually "scrambling up mountains," at times with a group dubbed the "excursionist party" (Krupskaya and Lenin 1914b, 516/352; 1913c, 507–8/346). Krupskaya writes of walks in the Wolski Forest near Krakow, the snow-capped summits of the Tatra Mountains in the south of Poland around Poronino, the mountains around Zakopane, and those near Sörenberg, such as the Rothorn and Schrattenfluh, in Switzerland. At Sörenberg, they would try to work in the morning and set off in the afternoon, but often the temptation became too great and they would climb mountains all day (Krupskaya 1930, 262–3, 268, 307–8, 310–11; 1915, 622/452). From these locations, they would send "hikers' greetings" to family members, occasionally on a postcard (Lenin 1911w, 471/321; 1904m, 363/236; 1904n, 364/236). The Bolshevik Pianitsky tells of Lenin's cycling when he could and of a hike together up to the "The Eye of the Sea" (Morskie Oko), the largest mountain lake in the Tatra Mountains, near Poronino. They arrived home after dark, drenched and cold, after climbing over rocks and up cliffs with the help of iron hooks made fast in the rock. When they made the peak, it was covered in cloud, and three times they began their descent, only for the sun to come out and incite another scramble to the top (Pianitsky 1933, 182–83).

Yet what draws me in, causing me to dwell long over the brief notes, recalling my own experiences and imagining what it would have been like to walk with them, are the hikes for weeks on end in the mountains. They were extraordinary, almost utopian expeditions.[21] For instance, they spent six weeks hiking in the Swiss Alps in 1916, with a base in Tschudiweise. Living a "carefree existence," they set out from their base and rambled through the mountains. So absorbed was Lenin that, on one descent, he caught sight of some mushrooms and began to pick them eagerly (as he often did with berries and other wild fruits). The problem was the rain, for it was pouring. Soaked to the skin but with a bagful of mushrooms, they of course missed the train home and "had to wait two hours at the station for the next one" (Krupskaya 1930, 327).

Above all, the month-long hiking in the Swiss Alps in July 1904 was a glorious experience. After the split of the second congress and the party squabbles that ensued, they took to the mountains in early July. They left behind their worries at their home in Geneva and retreated to Lausanne. After a few days, the books they had brought with them for quiet study were sent back to Geneva. Instead of study, they eagerly packed their rucksacks and planned two weeks of hiking through the mountains, leaving at 4.00 a.m. and aiming for Lucerne via Interlaken (Krupskaya and Lenin 1904, 362/235). Seduced by the walking, two weeks became a month. As Krupskaya writes, "we always chose the loneliest trails that led into the wilds, away from any people." The planned route was forgotten; so they set out each day not knowing where they would rest their tired bodies by nightfall. And as happens on such ventures, sleep is long and deep, often more than ten hours before waking at first light. With very little money, they "lived mostly on cold food such as eggs and cheese, washed down with wine or water from a spring." Or acting on a tip from a worker, they avoided the sections of hotels where bourgeois tourists would sit, preferring the tables with coachmen and laborers, for there the food was twice as cheap and far more satisfying. As happened to the planned route, the last remaining books in their rucksacks were neglected—a fat French dictionary in Lenin's pack and a thick French book for translation in Nadya's: "It was not at dictionaries we looked, but at the snow-capped everlasting mountains, at blue lakes and turbulent waterfalls" (Krupskaya 1930, 105–6). A glimpse of the sheer pleasure of the hike may be gained from the postcards Lenin sent to his mother and sister Maria: "Greetings from the tramps," he writes on the back of one from Kandersteg near Frutigen, and "Greetings from our *Mon Repos*. In a day or two we shall be off once again" on a card with a view of Iseltwald am Brienzersee (Lenin 1904m, 363/236; 1904n, 364/236).

So vital to Lenin were these times that he gained a reputation for always wearing his hiking boots. And given that for a walker, one's boots are the most important piece of equipment, he would clean his and Nadya's boots himself. He took the boots every morning to the shed and worked at them with complete absorption while chatting with the other bootblacks (Krupskaya 1930, 326). Nadya puts it simply: "Ilyich was terribly fond of hiking" (Krupskaya 1930, 262–63).

Cyclist

This week we have been cycling our heads off. (Krupskaya 1911, 610/440)

Alongside tramping through the mountains, the other great passion for Lenin was cycling. In letters to his family, we find constant references to the bicycles and rides. The bicycle soon became a primary mode of transport for everyday life, exercise, and holidays. In exile from Russia, Lenin first notices bicycles in Munich: "The traffic in the streets here," he writes to his mother in 1901, "is far less than in an equally large Russian city; this is because the electric trams and bicycles are completely ousting cabs" (Lenin 1901l, 332/212). However, it would take another few years before he and Nadya actually acquired some bicycles, first on holiday in Stjernsund, Sweden, where they were soon "leading a holiday

life—bathing in the sea, cycling" (Lenin and Krupskaya 1907, 369/240; see also Krupskaya 1930, 209), and then more regularly in Geneva, which seems to have been very congenial for a novice cyclist. In addition to his notorious cold bath or shower at 6.00 a.m., Lenin and Krupskaya now refer regularly to cycling in their letters, which became a daily affair like their walks (Lenin 1908t, 391/154; 1908y, 387/252; Krupskaya 1930, 199, 224, 238).

By 1908, they were planning a move to Paris, and by now, the bicycles were important enough to contemplate taking with them: "We are going to find out what to do with the bicycles. It is a pity to leave them behind; they are excellent things for holidays and pleasure trips" (Lenin 1908b[1], 397/260). All the same, Paris was not Geneva, especially in terms of traffic. Soon after arriving, Lenin writes to his sister:

> Dear Manyasha,
>
> I have received your postcard—*merci* for the news. As far as the bicycle is concerned I thought I should soon receive the money, but matters have dragged on. I have a suit pending and hope to win it. I was riding from Juvisy when a motorcar ran into me and smashed my bicycle (I managed to jump off). People helped me take the number and acted as witnesses. I have found out who the owner of the car is (a viscount, the devil take him!) and now I have taken him to court (through a lawyer). I should not be riding now, anyway, it is too cold (although it's a good winter, wonderful for walks). (Lenin 1910s, 447/303; see also Krupskaya 1930, 100)

By the end of the month (January 1910), the case had gone in his favor and he was back on the bike: "The weather is fine and I intend to start cycling again since I have won the case and should get my money from the owner soon" (Lenin 1910u, 452–53/307; see also 1910t, 450/305). All the same, he continued to curse Parisian traffic: "I have often thought of the danger of accidents when I have been riding my bicycle through the centre of Paris, where the traffic is simply hellish" (Lenin 1910u, 452/307).

Yet now, Lenin was hooked, a committed cyclist who would head out whenever he could—as did Nadya (Lenin 1910v, 457/312). Not being city people, they preferred places on the edge of town and close by the country. Later that year, he writes to his sister Anna: "I have been cycling for some time and I often go for rides in the country around Paris, especially as we live quite near the *fortifications*, i.e., near the city boundary" (Lenin and Krupskaya 1910, 458/312).[22] They would ride a 50-km round trip from Paris to see Paul and Laura Lafargue (Krupskaya 1930, 204), as well as send postcards from cycling tours, such as this one from June 2010:

> Mother dearest,
>
> Greetings to you, Anyuta and Mitya from our Sunday excursion. Nadya and I are cycling. Meudon Forest is a good place and close by, 45 minutes from Paris. I have received and answered Anyuta's letter. A big hug from myself and Nadya.
>
> Yours,
> *V. U.* (Lenin 1910w, 460/314)

Like any good cyclist in a cold climate, Lenin grew impatient for spring, when he could get out his bike and start riding again. As he writes to his mother: "It seems that we are having an early spring here this year. Some days ago I again went cycling in the woods—the fruit trees in the orchards are all covered in white, 'as though bathed in milk,' and such a wonderful perfume—a really delightful spring! It is a pity I cycled alone; Nadya has caught cold, has lost her voice and has to stay at home" (Lenin 1912l[1], 475/323). On such rides, they would encounter weariness, exhilaration, rain storms, stolen bicycles, and . . . flat tires, that universal experience of the cyclist (Krupskaya and Lenin 1914b, 515/352; Krupskaya 1930, 158; 1901a, 601/432).[23] He could sometimes overdo it, such was his passion. As Nadya writes in a letter to his mother: "It is very beautiful here [in Poronino, Poland]. Fortunately you cannot do a lot of cycling, because Volodya used to abuse that amusement and overtire himself" (Krupskaya and Lenin 1913b, 498/341).

In other words, the leader of the first successful communist revolution was not only a lover of hiking, but he was also a committed cyclist, pedaling as often and as far as he was able. An image of a typical day for both of them is provided in this description by Nadya from their time at the socialist commune in Longjumeau, France, in 1911:

> Volodya is making good use of the summer. He does his work out in the open, rides his bicycle a lot, goes bathing and is altogether pleased with country life. This week we have been cycling our heads off. We made three excursions of 70 to 75 kilometres each, and have explored three forests—it was fine. Volodya is extremely fond of excursions that begin at six or seven in the morning and last until late at night. (Krupskaya 1911, 610/440)

All of this activity is a far cry from the gym culture of bourgeois life in the twenty-first century, a keeping fit in commodified form so that one may be more effective in one's career and live longer. For Lenin and Krupskaya, there is deep intimacy in these extended times together with just the two of them. But there is also a passion, a sheer delight in the body and its movement, an extraordinary absorption in another way of being. However, they were also vital for their revolutionary work, with its prisons, exiles, stresses of party struggles, let alone the complete immersion when the revolutions themselves began to happen. Already after his prison sentence in 1897, despite his efforts to maintain warmth and some vigor through energetic toe-touching (Lenin 1898d), he looked the worse for it after a few months. Maria Aleksandrovna, his mother, had asked Nadya to report on his health when she arrived in Shushenskoe. Nadya was happy to report, "It seems to me he is a picture of health and looks very much better than he did in St. Petersburg," so much so that even after a few weeks, she was still not "used to Volodya's healthy appearance" (Krupskaya 1898a, 558/390; 1898b, 560/392). Did this mean he was always a sickly looking man? No, it meant that he had put some weight on his athletic body. At a time when skinny was the norm, when prison or poverty meant that one became decidedly gaunt, the gaining of weight was a sign of health.

But the skating, swimming, hunting, hiking, and cycling did provide an absolutely necessary dimension to his life. For one who was apt to overwork, to suffer the aftereffects of struggle, to relive and reprocess conflict for days, and to suffer sleepless nights as a consequence, we may trace a necessary and productive tension between a love of grand outdoor expeditions, of a complete forgetting of all else, and the intense engagement of revolutionary activity. Perhaps, the best signal of this tension is the arrival at the Finland station in early 1917. Krupskaya gives a good impression of how much Lenin was thrown by the exultant reception by thousands upon thousands, especially after coming from the mountains in Switzerland and via a long journey by train across Europe. He hardly knew how to respond, his body strangely out of step with the rush of events in the revolutionary city. In contrast to their long walks, after their arrival in St. Petersburg, "Ilyich and I hardly spoke a word that night" (Krupskaya 1930, 348).

Earlier, the mountains and bicycles provided the necessary respite, having the effect of bathing "in a mountain stream" and washing "off all the cobwebs of sordid intrigue" (Krupskaya 1930, 106).[24] The problem was that after the October Revolution, with the "civil" war, the immense struggles of dragging a country out of economic and social collapse, and the efforts to lay the basis for a communist system, these times disappear. The bicycle was left to gather dust in a forgotten corner, as were the hiking boots and ice skates (the swimming trunks did not join them for he never wore anything when he swam). Only the treasured daily walks remained. But now, they became much shorter, and Lenin used them to talk about the problems they faced. In other words, he carried the terrible burden of events with him on those walks, perhaps around the streets of Petrograd, or simply around Smolny, or along the Kremlin walls later in Moscow (Krupskaya 1930, 357, 422, 448, 452–53, 522). Earlier, such walks may have provided an opportunity to talk about all manner of things, but they were coupled with the pleasure of longer excursions when all thoughts of work would be banished for weeks on end. No longer was that the case. In contrast to Lenin's own repeated comments about his increasing stress and "illness," Krupskaya tellingly does not write in her *Reminiscences* of Lenin's declining health, his strokes, and incapacitation. Instead, we encounter comments on his deep weariness, his inability to sleep, his nerves, and the fact that he simply looked terrible (Krupskaya 1930, 452, 470, 487, 528, 534). All of these are summed up in her observation from those last hectic years, "Although we went for walks every day, there was no real zest in them" (Krupskaya 1930, 426).[25]

Bodies, Diseases, and Corpses

Find the corpses, and you will always find the worms. (Lenin 1906b[2], 238/312)

All of this is only half the story, of a man whose life—at least until October 1917—was characterized by a vital and productive tension between intense revolutionary work and complete abandonment to another way of being. The other side of that story is an intriguing theme of diseased and rotting corpses that runs through Lenin's texts. This theme adds a whole new, subconscious complexity to

understanding Lenin's own body, for it is distinct from his explicit awareness that intense overwork for the revolution was potentially destructive, that it rendered him unable to engage in any productive work, and that a crucial dimension of his life involved time on the trail, on the road, or in the water. The living, decaying body, diseased, infected, ulcered, and abscessed, is a favored form of imagery in Lenin's texts—precisely those texts that were read by increasingly wider circles of readers. I would suggest that the mixture of fascination, obsession, and abhorrence of decay would have been communicated to his readers. Let me trace these images before drawing conclusions in relation to the preservation of his own body from decay.

The diseased body, not yet dead but suffering from illness, cancer, and abscesses, appears often. Of course, Lenin is by no means the only one to have depicted a corrupt and failing political system as diseased, as "an accursed canker" that will be rooted out by the revolution, or as a rotten and putrid ulcer that has burst with war, or perhaps as severely wounded, covered in bandages, and staggering on a little longer as its lifeblood oozes away (Lenin 1906e, 136/332, 1912i; 1922i, 350/174). Yet, more often than not, he deploys this complex of metaphors for his own party. Thus, the malignant diseases of economism, otzovism, ultimatumism, and God-building need to be cured, not without some struggle, or they may become a chronic "disease of dejection, faint-heartedness, despair and lack of faith," which is itself the result of a poisonous bacillus (Lenin 1909y, 75/122–23; 1912i; 1900e, 54/56; 1905n[3], 331/60).[26] Or, the betrayal of many of the international socialist parties in supporting the war effort in 1914 becomes a "hideous excrescence," a "foul and festering abscess" with an "unbearably putrid stench" (Lenin 1915m, 356/13; 1915b, 208/212). Or, in the context of the struggles with the Workers' Opposition in 1921, Lenin observes that a small cut (disagreement) may be commonplace, but if it festers, it may result in blood poisoning and death (Lenin 1921n, 56/269; 1921i, 75/269). Indeed, it turns out that the party is sick, suffering both a "bureaucratic ulcer" and a severe fever; it remains to be seen whether it is strong enough to recover from the malaise (Lenin 1921w, 190/31; 1921j, 43/234). Nonetheless, these illnesses internal to the socialists can be beneficial in the long term, in the same way that an abscess draws out the poisonous substances from a body. While an abscess may at times be harmful, contaminating the party, it may also be beneficial. As it grows, an abscess is unsightly, ugly even, but as long as that abscess draws out deadly substances rather than driving them into the organism, it serves its purpose of healing. In the end, of course, one must puncture the abscess and drain it of pus, thereby finally removing the poison (Lenin 1911d, 344–53/2–10).[27]

As vivid is the image of the body rotting alive, especially that of tsarist Russia: The body will not revive, for it is on the course to an inevitable death, yet it may continue to contaminate the country. Or, later in 1917, Lenin speaks of the atmosphere in the rotten Provisional Assembly (in which the SRs and Mensheviks were involved) as "abominable, putrid to the point of nausea, and harmful for *any* man to breathe for any length of time." Variously, German Social-Democracy, the Second International, and even the early Soviets are "rotting and decaying alive." So also with capitalism and bourgeois society, the corpse of which is polluting the

air and poisoning lives, to the extent of sucking what is new, fresh, and virile into its decay. For these reasons, a revolutionary course will ensure both the death of the old organism and prevent its putrefaction poisoning Russia (Lenin 1905x[1], 21/64; 1913z, 227/305; 1917h, 94/295, 105/306; 1918i; 1918p, 279/290; 1919d[1], 311/307; 1919n, 59/220–21).[28]

Eventually, a diseased and rotting body dies. All that is left is a putrid and vile-smelling corpse, one that cannot simply be buried but continues to disintegrate in one's midst. For Lenin, this image depicts not only the putrescence of the old capitalist system that threatens to infect the new order (Lenin 1918h, 434/409), but also the socialist trends that some try to revive—Narodnik socialism via the SRs, liquidationism, the tradition represented by the German Social-Democrats, or even the journal *Kommunist*, originally established by Lenin in 1915 but now a corpse not worth reviving (Lenin 1913y[1], 560/368, 561/369; 1913v, 499–500/233–34; 1919n, 57/217; 1910f, 368/280).[29] The problem with corpses is that "maggots are found near corpses, not near living people" (Lenin 1906b[2], 264/339). The best one can do is read the burial service at its grave (Lenin 1914p[1], 169/13),[30] unless one is religious, which is comparable to necrophily, for "all worship of a divinity is having sex with a corpse" (Lenin 1913u[1], 121/226).[31]

The relevance of all this should be clear enough, for Lenin's own fascination with disease and the decay of corpses, whether still alive or already dead, would come to have a unique bearing on what was to be done with his own corpse. His obsession with such matters indicates both a complex awareness of the reality of physical process and an aversion to decay. Indeed, all his images have a distinctly negative cast, using the terminology of poison, evil smells, and putrefaction. Except in at least one arresting moment, namely, the image of the resurrection brought about by revolution:

> The Cadets are the worms in the grave of the revolution. The revolution lies buried. It is being eaten by worms. But revolution has the power of speedy resurrection and of blossoming forth again on well-prepared soil. The soil has been wonderfully, magnificently prepared by the October days of freedom and by the December uprising; but we would not for a moment deny that the worms, too, are doing useful work while the revolution lies buried. Why, these fat worms manure the soil so well. (Lenin 1906b[2], 219–20/292)

Now he comes close to agricultural imagery, especially that of seeds and growing that are central to Lenin's engagement with the Gospels (see chapter 2). But note what has happened: Here the corpse is neither that of the old autocracy nor of the various opponents among the socialists. It is the corpse of proletarian revolution itself, buried already in the reaction that has set in after the 1905 revolution. The Cadets may be temporarily ascendant in the elections to the first Duma, conceded by the Tsar in response to the revolutionary upsurge, but they become worms in a soil well prepared by the gains and lessons of the events of 1905. In this text, the images are arrestingly reconfigured, not only in terms of corpses and worms, but above all in the striking conjunction of the blossoming forth of plants, revolution, and resurrection. In the process, resurrection itself is enriched with a whole new

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metaphorical array of associations: What will come to life once again is the collective force of revolution. Or, as Lenin puts it during the struggles over support for or opposition to the war effort, one may identify a socialism that is dying and one that is being reborn (Lenin 1915m, 356/13). This reconfiguration will become a vital feature of Lenin's own metaphorical resurrection after his death, for it served a distinct purpose of sustaining revolutionary enthusiasm.

Apart from the initial tracing of some potential threads that lead to the veneration of Lenin—saint, prophet, and martyr, albeit with significant twists and the production of alternate traditions—I have focused thus far on a tension with Lenin's perceptions of bodies, death, and decay. Or rather, I have been concerned with his approach to his own body, in the modes of his embodied existence. While he avidly and passionately enjoyed health, fresh air, mountains, and the sea, along with a very physical life in many ways, he was also wont to employ images of disease and decay, whether in living bodies or corpses. Indeed, at a structural level, we may see this tension embodied in a shift between his earlier and later correspondence. Here, the many references to cycling, hiking, hunting, and swimming give way to frequent comments on his increasing stress and illness, usually with an apology for not being able to give a task its requisite attention (Lenin 1920d[1], 19/202, 41/225; 1921e, 501/72; 1921z, 510/85; 1921d, 512/88; 1922d, 202/189; 1922a, 273/80, 306/113–14, 319/126; 1922f, 370/209; 1922c, 387/242; 1922b, 418/278; 1922s, 434/299; 1922j, 435/300; 1922e, 460/240). This tension operates at two levels, the one more overtly conscious and deliberate and the other at a subconscious level of preferred and often earthy imagery. It may be possible to argue that one subverts the other, the subconscious providing the truth that lies behind a vigorous life. It may even be possible to suggest that the active life functioned as an effort to forestall the obsessions of the subconscious. But I prefer the argument that their juxtaposition reveals a profound ambivalence over his own body, illness, and death, an ambivalence that could not avoid being communicated to his closest comrades through everyday interactions and his writings. But I would go further, for Lenin himself offers a resolution to that tension, one that emerges on occasions such as the one noted above concerning resurrection. Here, an arresting reversal of the dominant codes is effected, for now the corpse and the worms become a positive site for collective, revolutionary resurrection.

God-Builders at the Mausoleum

> I think that Lenin, who could not abide the personality cult, who rejected it in every possible way, in later years understood and forgave us. (Lunacharsky, quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 105)

It should be no surprise, then, that two of the key people involved with the preservation, embalmment, and then construction of the mausoleum were God-builders from the initial controversy of the first decade of the 1900s. Anatoly Lunacharsky, chief theorist of God-building and now Commissar of Enlightenment, directed the competition for the design of the granite mausoleum, and Leonid Krasin, a

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lesser light in the earlier movement but no less an advocate, was in charge of the project to embalm Lenin and construct the initial wooden mausoleum.[32]

I begin with Krasin, who supervised and reported on the activities of the Executive Troika of the Funeral Commission, which was charged with the task of preserving Lenin's body.[33] The Troika had been formed a little over a week after Lenin's funeral, although the commission itself had been in operation since the morning after Lenin's death (January 21, 1924). Initially, the task of the commission had been to oversee the transport of Lenin's body from Gorki, his lying in state, and the elaborate funeral itself on January 27. Much of that early work had been directed by Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, a student of Russian sectarianism and erstwhile editor of a Bolshevik newspaper for sectarians in the 1900s called *Rassvet* (*Dawn*), and then, after October, the secretary of Sovnarkom and the man charged with ensuring that photographs, portraits, sculptures, and even short newsreels of Lenin were made widely available (he famously tricked Lenin into being filmed in the Kremlin courtyard while Lenin was convalescing from the attempted assassination). Bonch-Bruevich had arranged for Lenin's coffin, funeral, and the first crypt with its simple inscription, "Lenin." However, Bonch-Bruevich was among the minority opposed to preserving Lenin's body, so when that decision was made, his immediate influence over the process waned. All the same, as I show later, he was to have a deeper influence on the process of venerating a strong and sorely missed leader.

With the decision to preserve Lenin's body, Krasin was in his element. Apart from having been one of the bearers of the coffin when it left Gorki for Moscow, and apart from influencing the choice of design for the oaken sarcophagus and for the wooden mausoleum that preceded the permanent granite affair, his main role concerned the first stages of the preservation of Lenin's body. An engineer by trade, he threw himself into overseeing the process. But let me backtrack a moment, for Krasin took over a process that already had a small history. Initially, Lenin's body had been embalmed for six days after the autopsy, preserving it for sufficient time until the funeral. The doctor in charge was Aleksei Abrikosov, who directed the team of physicians involved in the autopsy. Before the funeral, however, it had already been decided by the Central Executive Committee that Lenin's body would be preserved a little longer, so that the many who had not as yet been able to pay their last respects would be able to do so. Abrikosov's tenure was extended, although he had to overcome initial doubts that the autopsy may have compromised the possibility of longer preservation. But he felt that the body would be able to be preserved for a few years if the coffin was kept airtight, the humidity low, and the temperature at zero degrees centigrade (in this case, it was a matter of *warming* Lenin's body since the temperature of an uncommonly cold Russian winter went down as far as −40 degrees centigrade).

The question was how to carry out these aims. Here Krasin's background as an engineer became valuable (although he was then Commissar of Foreign Trade). Co-opted onto the Funeral Commission on January 29 and then made a member of the Troika a few days later, Krasin supervised the construction of the air-conditioning unit—in duplicate—that would circulate air at the appropriate temperature into the glass-lidded sarcophagus. Until now, electric heaters had

been used in the crypt, along with measures to prevent fire and water seepage. Yet, in the midst of this frenzied activity, with decisions concerning the sarcophagus, the wooden mausoleum, and the first testing of the air-conditioning unit, the body began showing signs of decay, with the skin obviously discoloring.[34] All of this preparation may well have worked had not mold already found its way into the body. But once mold was there, Krasin's initial plans were less than suitable.

Once again, the doctors came to the fore, now in a hastily convened committee on February 26 that set to work to negate the effects of decay and preserve the external appearance of the body and the face so that it could be viewed. After much discussion, work began in earnest on March 26 and, four months later, the first successful embalming of a human body, so that it remained intact and recognizable, was achieved. Throughout this process, Krasin was still heavily involved in directing the project, although now in collusion with professors Veisbrod and Rozanov. With the success of the embalming, the biochemist directly involved in the actual process of re-embalmment, Boris Zbarsky, made a pointed statement to a foreign reporter:

> The Russian Church had claimed that it was a miracle that its saints' bodies endured and were incorruptible. But we have performed a feat unknown to modern science . . . We worked for four months and we used certain chemicals known to science. There was nothing miraculous about it. (Quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 194)[35]

Fully conscious of the analogies being made between the incorruptible saint's body and that of Lenin, Zbarsky makes it perfectly clear that it was no religious miracle, requiring outside intervention, but a feat of science in the new Soviet state.

By now, the Funeral Commission had been renamed the Commission for the Immortalization of the Memory of V. I. Ulyanov. With the body preserved and the sarcophagus and wooden mausoleum constructed and opened on August 1, 1924, the new task was the design and construction of a permanent mausoleum.[36] But at first, a full-scale competition was needed in order to produce an acceptable design. The man in charge of that process was Anatoly Lunacharsky, although Krasin was still involved in the early stages (both of them spoke to the initial report, recommending such a competition, presented to the Immortalization Commission on November 13, 1924). Lunacharsky's specific role was to head the committee overseeing the competition. Many were the proposals, and many were the imaginative ideas: Vast edifices topped with globes and statues of Lenin; a ship sailing toward a lighthouse covered in red stars; a vast block housing a tractor, a locomotive, and a flowing stream; a mountain with trees, streams, castle, and a beacon to the world; a statue of Lenin up to 20 stories high, with space for offices and meeting halls; a proto-postmodern tower covered in tiles and glass; a rostrum in the shape of a giant screw and two nuts, with slogans engraved on each thread of the screw, along with a sculpture of Lenin meeting with members of the Comintern; a reworked ziggurat or pyramid; or even a mausoleum in the shape of a cathedral festooned with Greek columns and cupolas. The elaborate

competition, running over 1925 and concluding in April 1926, played a crucial role in fostering enthusiasm among Russia's artistic community—Lunacharsky's major concern. Yet, while the competition was successful in this aim, it yielded no suitable design. In the end, it was decided to construct a permanent mausoleum based on the initial design of the wooden mausoleum. Made of Ukrainian red–black granite, Karelian porphyry and labradorite, it followed the design of Aleksei Shchusev, with its elegant modernist design that is still striking today.[37]

It is worth noting that Shchusev, who was responsible for the design of both mausoleums, had a background in religion and architecture (he worked for the synod of the Orthodox Church before the revolution). Shchusev claims that he "was looking for analogies in the whole history of architecture" opting for a "step-fashioned memorial" that sought to express the idea that "Lenin is dead but his task [*delo*] keeps on living" (Abramov 2005, 22; see also Shchusev 1940). That whole history of architecture included the tombs and memorials to ancient rulers, including the pyramid of Cestius, the mausoleum of Cecilia Metella, many tombstones along the Appian Way between Rome and Capua, the architecture of the Egyptian mastabas and pyramids, the burial towers of Palmyra and Petra, and the tomb of Cyrus.[38] Many of these Shchusev had himself seen (Afanasyev 1978, 92). Cyrus's tomb is of closer interest, for this "anointed" of the Lord (Isaiah 45:1) and "shepherd" (Isaiah 44:8) who was responsible for the decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra), had a simple stepped structure for his own tomb, with the sarcophagus at the top. One of the proposed designs that arose from the competition had precisely this structure. Of course, we will never know whether Shchusev drew specifically from the tomb of Cyrus, modifying it as he saw fit, or whether he drew on the wider tradition of memorials, in which a simple stepped structure enabled a meeting point between powerful ancient tombs, the architectural environment in Red Square, and the modernist impression it gives.

I have traced some of the details of this process in order to show how significant Lunacharsky and Krasin (and even Shchusev) were in the process of embalming and venerating Lenin. Lunacharsky, of course, we have met earlier as the key theorist of God-building, but before I draw out the implications for the veneration of Lenin, let me consider Krasin for a moment. Not possessing Lunacharsky's intellect, he left no writings concerning his position. Tumarkin does provide one small piece of evidence, although it is second hand. In 1931, the Old Bolshevik, Mikhail Olminsky, reported on a speech Krasin gave in 1921 at the funeral of a certain Lev Karpov:

> I am certain that the time will come when science will become all-powerful, that it will be able to recreate a deceased organism. I am certain that the time will come when one will be able to use the elements of a person's life to recreate the physical person. And I am certain that when that time will come, when the liberation of mankind, using all the might of science and technology, the strength and capacity of which we cannot now imagine, will be able to resurrect great historical figures—and I am certain that when that time will come, among the great figures will be our comrade, Lev Iakovlevich. (Quoted in Bergman 1990, 242; Tumarkin 1997, 181; 1981, 44)

Tumarkin leans heavily on this slim evidence, mediated by the memory of a man ten years after the event. Nonetheless, it expresses less a coherent God-building program or the desire to foster a new cult than a utopian belief in the power of science. Now of course, cloning is very much a part of scientific debate and experiment, as is the continuing exploration of doing so from dead tissue such as that of the mammoth or even Neanderthal human beings. Krasin the engineer may have been motivated by this utopian desire in his work to preserve Lenin's body, but it was Lunacharsky's more sophisticated project of God-building that was able to identify the crucial ideological, social, and economic role that the veneration of Lenin would provide.

As we saw earlier, God-building advocated warm enthusiasm over against cold rationalism, the egalitarian, utopian, and socialist dimensions of Christianity (in light of its deep political ambivalence), the anthropocentric focus of religious expression, and above all revolution itself as the climax of the whole project.[39] In my previous discussion, I also emphasized the fact that Lunacharsky kept most of his God-building intact after his appointment as Commissar of Enlightenment, making it a central feature of his educational philosophy. I also argued that Lenin acquiesced, or at least did not reprimand Lunacharsky, especially in light of their almost daily contact. It should come as no surprise that Lunacharsky would bring his God-building predilections to the task of overseeing the design competition for the permanent mausoleum. However, two points are worth emphasizing. First, he explicitly connected the raising up of the "new man" with the process of revolution. As I argued earlier, while he interpreted the events of Bloody Sunday in terms of a sinless sacrifice, the October Revolution became the moment of collective resurrection from that sacrifice, a revolution that was "the greatest, most definitive act of 'God-building'" (Lunacharsky 1919, 31). Second, for Lunacharsky, the process of God-building was by no means complete with the revolution. It was merely a beginning—a view he shared with Lenin, but with his own twist. Construction of the new society and the new human being had only just begun, and, in that process, an ideal must be maintained, one that drew upon the best theological resources. The image of the ideal human being, one who is like unto the gods, leaves us in our current state as mere raw material, "living ingots," as he put it, "that bear their own ideal within themselves" (Lunacharsky 1981, 57). For Lunacharsky, the veneration of Lenin was a major step along that path.

In that light, it is instructive to reread Lunacharsky's small book *Lenin through the Eyes of Lunacharsky* (Lunacharsky 1980), for here we find very much an ideal Lenin. He is the visionary, the astute and insightful politician, the great intellect, the man without pretension or artifice, the excellent judge of people, the orator with an extraordinarily common touch, the concrete writer who communicates to worker and peasant, the man with a singular aim in life. Too easy is it to dismiss this work as a piece of worshipful Soviet propaganda. Instead, Lunacharsky brings to bear precisely this God-building project, now mediated through his educational philosophy, in order to represent Lenin as an ideal to which we might strive. So he stated in his funeral oration for Lenin:

> After the passage of 100 years, the world will long since have known a new bright order. And people, looking back, will not have known an era more exalted, more

> holy, than the days of that Russian revolution which began the world revolution. And for this reason they will not have known a human figure who inspired more veneration, love and devotion than the figure, not only of a prophet, not only of a sage of the new communist world, but of its creator, its champion, its martyr (*muchenik*) . . . We have seen Man, man with a capital letter . . . In him . . . are concentrated rays of light and heat. (Quoted in Tumarkin 1981, 45)

Here is the awareness that the veneration of this ideal human being would play a crucial role in the ideological structure of a communist society.

Veneration

> Yes, Lenin has died . . . but if we wholeheartedly work for his cause, *we will be able to replace him with our collective strength, collective work, collective will*. (Yaroslavsky, quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 166)

Lunacharsky and Krasin did not throw themselves into such projects in a vacuum, or purely through the inspiration of the intermittent God-building tradition. The initial context was obviously the larger campaign of Agitprop, with its fostering and enhancement of the genre of the revolutionary martyr's biography, with its busts, images, renamings, recordings, newsreels, newspaper articles, specific agitational vehicles such as the "Lenin train" and the "Red Star" ship designed to spread the word—in short, what has been called Leniniana. But even this is only one half and a secondary response to a more fundamental feature: The massive outpouring of popular veneration of Lenin.

This popular upsurge noticeably begins, as Krupskaya already pointed out, after the assassination attempt in late August 1918. Alongside the shock to the government and its organizations, the near assassination, she writes, brought the broad masses of workers, peasants, and Red Army soldiers to realize what Lenin meant for the revolution "with special force" (Krupskaya 1930, 482).[40] Apart from rousing and widely published speeches by Trotsky and Zinoviev, and apart from newspaper articles calling for vengeance on the SRs (the would-be assassin, Fanny Kaplan, was a member) and stressing Lenin's importance to the revolution, by far the major response was the spontaneous production of popular stories and poems. I have quoted an initial example in relation to the discussion of the revolutionary martyr earlier, but there were many others. One, published in a regional Moscow newspaper, stated that instead of the old theme of a medallion, notebook, or button deflecting a bullet, now it was the will of the proletariat that prevented the bullets from piercing his lung or severing a major artery or nerve in his neck. Another poem went further:

> Great Leader of the iron Host,
> Friend and brother of all oppressed people,
> Welding together peasants, workers and soldiers
> In the flame of crucifixions.
> Invincible messenger of peace,
> Crowned with the thorns of slander,

> Prophet who has plunged his sword into the vampire,
> Fulfiller of the fiery dream. (Quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 84)[41]

The biblical images that weave themselves into this poem are clear—friend of the oppressed, crucifixion, messenger of peace, crown of thorns, and prophet. But two points need to be stressed. First, such a poem marks the beginnings of a creative reworking of the available symbols and images that were crucial to the popular imagination. This work was a continuing process, marked by the innovative ways in which people appropriated Christianity into their own formulations full of both non-Christian and Christian spirits, saints, devils, and imps, all of which were manifested in the rich tradition of Russian folktales famously analyzed by Vladimir Propp (1968). I would also locate here Lenin's love of earthy, agricultural, and often biblical images in his writings, which I discussed earlier (chapter 2). I will discuss much more of this creative work in a few moments. Second, as Tumarkin notes (1997, 84–85), this popular adulation manifested itself a full week before official statements and publications. A tell-tale sign of its popular spontaneity is that it follows no carefully nurtured line, but rather runs in all manner of directions. Various themes are picked up, reworked, and rethought, often in stark contradiction with one another.[42] One cannot avoid the impression that the Soviet leaders were taken aback by such veneration and found themselves responding to a hitherto unexpected phenomenon. Eventually, through trial and error, they would come to see its value in terms of fostering a viable political myth and sustaining the revolutionary motivation required for moving forward on a path no one had as yet attempted.

With Lenin's death, these creative popular efforts were raised to a whole new level, marked not least by the 700,000 people who came to see his body while lying in state, the millions during the time of the wooden and then the permanent mausoleum, the myriad local ceremonies carried out on the day of the funeral in almost every city and town, and the widespread renaming of towns, factories, farms, projects, and so on. With the first stirrings of veneration already manifest while he was recovering from the bullet wounds of 1918, Lenin himself was less than impressed when he became aware of it. Opposed as he was to any focus on individuals and fully aware that adulation was too close to flattery and too far from devotion to the wider cause, he told the presses in no uncertain terms to desist. Lenin even toned down his speeches to avoid rousing any more enthusiasm (Le Blanc 1990, 322–23). The catch with such a move is that it served to enhance popular veneration even more. As I noted earlier with the biography of the martyr, the subject's discomfort with and avoidance of overt adulation is a crucial mark of his greatness. The legendary modesty of the living arrangements of Lenin, Krupskaya, and his sisters;[43] the desire to be seen as part of a much larger, collective project; and the persistent earlier critiques of the personality cult, all had the result of enhancing his veneration, precisely because he did not want it.

So after his death, there was a massive outpouring of all manner of legends and myths. One of the most striking stories comes from an old woman in the Orenburg district. The Tsar was informed by one of his leading generals that there was someone, "of unknown rank, without a passport, who goes by the name of Lenin." This person was threatening to entice the Tsar's soldiers to his side with

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one word, and then grind into ashes the commanders, generals, officers, even the Tsar himself, and throw them into the wind. The Tsar grew afraid and decided to do anything he could to prevent Lenin saying the word. So he made contact with Lenin, offering to divide the country in half. Lenin agreed to the proposal, but with one condition: The Tsar must take the "white" half, that is, the generals, officers, and wealthy people, while Lenin would take the "black" half, the workers, peasants, and soldiers. The Tsar could not believe his good fortune in keeping all that mattered to him; so he quickly agreed. But to his dismay, he realized soon enough that Lenin had tricked him. His officers had no soldiers to lead, the rich people had no workers, and the Tsar had no people to run the country. So the white part under the Tsar went to war with Lenin's black part, in order to win the latter back. But the white part was unable to survive for long. So it happened that Lenin took the country away from the Tsar (Tumarkin 1997, 92–93).

Another excellent example originated among the peasants of the Viatka countryside about a year after his death and is called "Wily Lenin."

> One day Lenin was sitting in his room after dinner, reading various books and newspapers. The newspapers and books all spoke about him, saying, "Why should we fear the Entente and America when we have Vladimir Ilyich, who is the wonderful Lenin?" He rose from his chair, walked around the room and said to himself:
>
> "Okay, this is what I will do."
>
> After sending a messenger to the finest Soviet doctor, the doctor came and Lenin said to him:
>
> "Can you make sure that I appear dead, only not quite dead?"
>
> "We may, Vladimir Ilyich, but why?"
>
> So he said, "I want to experience how things go on without me, so that everything does not rely on me."
>
> "Well," answered the doctor. "It can be done. We will put you not in a grave, but in a spacious room, and we will cover you with glass so no one can poke you with his fingers."
>
> "But look here, doctor," said Lenin. "This is a very big secret between us. You will know, and, yes, even Nadezhda Konstantinovna."
>
> And soon all the people declared that Lenin had died. The people groaned, the communists were reduced to tears. Everyone thought in his heart, what shall we do now?
>
> Lenin was put into a place called a mausoleum and a guard was placed at the door. A day or two . . . a week, a month—Lenin tired of lying under glass. One night he quietly went out the back door of the mausoleum and straight to the Kremlin, in the main palace, where all manner of commissars were meeting . . . By the time Lenin arrived at the meeting it was over and some janitors were sweeping the floor. Lenin asked:
>
> "Is it over?"
>
> "Yes, it has ended," one said.
>
> "Do you not know what they talked about?" asked Lenin.
>
> "Yes, they talked about different things. Listen, the British want to make friends with us and we have more power. We heard through a crack, with half an ear, but have not understood everything."
>
> "Yes, yes," said Lenin, "but have they remembered Lenin?"
>
> "Very well remembered indeed. That is, they say that Lenin died, but the communists are now nearly twice in number. Now let the Entente dare make a peep."

> "So, so," said Lenin and left the janitors. He returned to the mausoleum and lay down under the glass, thinking: Everything is working without me. Okay. Tomorrow I'll go to the factory workers.
>
> The next night Lenin went to the plant...
>
> "Hello, comrades," said Lenin.
>
> "Hello," they replied.
>
> "How is it?" asked Lenin... "Are you non-party?"
>
> They replied, "Before the death of Lenin we were not party members, but now we are communists, Leninists."
>
> Lenin's heart was warmed. "Is the work delayed here? Are a lot of products available?" So he began to ask many questions.
>
> "Yes, soon it will be peace time," they said.
>
> "Well," said Lenin, "Work well and in good time."
>
> On his way back to the mausoleum, Lenin thought: "Now I need to visit people and learn about their everyday lives."
>
> On the third night, Lenin rose as before, took a train and then disembarked at a remote station and walked along a road to a remote village...In one hut a light shone. In went Lenin.
>
> "Can one rest here a little?" asked Lenin.
>
> "Come on in," was the reply.
>
> Lenin entered and was surprised at what he saw. No icons. Red banners and portraits everywhere. Lenin deliberately asked:
>
> "Are you unbaptized?"
>
> "We are citizens, comrade," they replied. "Our house is a reading room and that is the Lenin corner."
>
> "So they remember me," thought Lenin. "And how is life as a peasant?" He asked.
>
> "Not so very well, but things are getting better...Long ago, Lenin spoke about the bond between the communists and the peasants. He thought we should link up. Now it is happening, but it has a way to go."
>
> Lenin left the house happy and lay in the mausoleum comforted, sleeping for many days after his travels. Now, perhaps, he will soon wake up. That will be an immense joy. No words can tell, no ink can describe. (Akulshin 1925, 120–28; see also Unger 1929; Tumarkin 1981, 35–36; 1997, 92–95)

Other tales have similar themes: Lenin has not died but still lives secretly among the people. From Uzbek came a story that Lenin was wandering in the mountains searching for truth. From the northern Caucasus was the legend that he secretly walks the earth and watches over Soviet power. Like the tale of "Wily Lenin," many asserted that he was merely asleep in the mausoleum (Tumarkin 1997, 198).

Soon enough, the plethora of such popular stories, creatively reworking traditional themes from folklore, legends, and myths, was gathered and published, whether in newspapers, journals, or anthologies. Many of these came from peasants, for whom the immediate land reform bill after the October Revolution had made Lenin deeply popular. And soon enough, the response came from the government itself, seizing upon the popular imagination, channeling and fostering it in distinct paths.[44] Yet, the popular material was not censored and relegated to the curiosa of an earlier period, for the official Agitprop, with its museums, Lenin

reading rooms, Lenin evenings, Red Army work, educational programs for children, red corners, the poetry and songs by Mayakovsky and others, the busts, statues, images, and biographies (Tumarkin 1997, 213–32), appeared side by side with the popular mythology.[45] To be sure, the government did try to regulate precisely what was produced, such as the busts of Lenin so that they at least resembled him. By and large, however, the government drew upon much of this popular material, the symbols and images of the rich traditions of Russian folklore, and melded it with the revolutionary tradition. Through trial and error and refinement, they began to see its immense necessity in the new order. The result was a unique and fascinating contribution to that latter tradition.

So the question arises: What was the purpose of gathering and publishing such material, alongside the official Agitprop and its ceremonies? The reasons proposed have indeed been legion, some of them truly wayward and others striking a glancing blow on the nail in question. The least persuasive and easily refuted suggestion is that Stalin, the former theological student at Tiflis with an astute awareness of the political power of religion, engineered the whole "cult" for the sake of his own aggrandizement (Schapiro 1964, 282; Carr 1965, 353–55; Deutscher 1967, 269–72; Figes 1998, 806). At most, Stalin was one of a number in favor of embalming Lenin, but he played a minor role in the actual process compared to Lunacharsky, Krasin, or Zinoviev. Closely related is the suggestion that the reverence shown to the dead Lenin was a full-blown secular or pseudo-religion, although the reasons proposed vary somewhat. It may be attributed to the inability of the new government to eradicate religion quickly; so they simply decided to deploy such forms to their best advantage (Bergman 1990, 243–46). Or it may be due, suggest some, to the unavoidable tendency of human beings to religious expression, coupled with the backwardness of Russia and Slavic sensibilities. Already in January 1924, Walter Duranty, who was reporting on the whole process from Lenin's death to his placement in the wooden mausoleum, wrote in the *New York Times*: "Many foreigners here long familiar with the Slav character believe it will be only a question of a short time before there will be 'miracles,' or at least temporary cures of hysterical disorder so common in Russia, at Lenin's 'shrine.' Indeed, the 'superstitious instincts' of the peasant masses 'are stronger than ever,' so they will seek a substitute religion in the worship of Lenin" (quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 197).[46] Despite Tumarkin's occasional efforts—many decades later—to distance herself from such a position, stressing, for instance, that no miracles were attributed to Lenin's body, she cannot resist the temptation to describe the whole process as a replacement religion. The limited truth of this position is that some of the forms deployed by religion were also deployed by both popular and government veneration, but that position misses both the point that religion is but one use to which such forms may be put and that these forms served a new and gradually articulated purpose.

A third position also contains a partial truth. The veneration of Lenin was fostered for the sake of political stability after the death of the acknowledged leader of the new (and not entirely stable) state and in the context of post-civil-war uncertainties. Tumarkin makes this her central thesis, coupled with the argument that Lenin's creation of a government in his image required that it keep him alive

after his death (Tumarkin 1997, 52–61). To be sure, there were concerns that a new civil war might break out if there was instability in the government, but the evidence indicates at least three features that mitigate such an argument: Already during Lenin's increasing illness, considerable struggles were underway over the realignments of power, struggles that carried on after Lenin's death; the transition of power went quite smoothly precisely in the context of those struggles, so much so that one may argue that the struggles were already an indication of the strength of the government's position (which was perhaps not realized at the time but which had already been secured through the civil war); the popular, spontaneous expressions of veneration outweighed the early efforts of Agitprop, to the extent that key figures in the government realized its potential, gained inspiration from, and drew upon that popular veneration.

All of these lead me to an insight that will be developed in the next section. Here I turn to Bonch-Bruevich, precisely because he had opposed the preservation of the body: " 'Well,' I thought . . . 'Let him after death, as in life, serve the proletarian cause, the cause of the working class' " (quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 179).

Compulsion

Bonch-Bruevich came to realize that the veneration of Lenin, even in terms of his embalmed body, served a distinct purpose in the new communist project. And that purpose was compulsion. It may be voiced in terms of the proletarian cause; the collective strength, work, and will of communism; the "embodiment of the courageous thought and revolutionary will of the proletariat" (Trotsky 1976, 202); the collective and revolutionary "resurrection"; or simply as the assertion that Lenin lives within each of us. But these are various formulations of the issue of compulsion.

Part of the Marxist constellation of analysis, compulsion takes both economic and extra-economic forms. In precapitalist economic formations, such compulsion is usually represented as being predominantly extra-economic: The sacred in the much-debated Asiatic mode of production, the political in the ancient mode of production, religion in a very different form in feudalism, and so on. By contrast, compulsion under capitalism is held to be primarily economic, with the drive for "success" being the size of one's pay packet or, more preferably, the amount of capital one owns. The situation is of course far more complex, especially if compulsion is reframed in terms of the "mode of régulation" developed by the Régulation School of economic theory. Such a mode is the pattern of expectations and patterns of behavior that any economic system requires in order to function in a stable fashion. In more detail, a mode of régulation is "the totality of institutional forms, networks, and norms (explicit or implicit), which together secure the compatibility of typical modes of conduct," which correspond "as much to the changing balance of social relations as to their more general conflictual properties" (Lipietz 1988, 30; see also Lipietz 1987, 14–15, 32–34; Boyer 1990, 42–45; Jessop and Sum 2006, 42). This pattern takes place in three domains, namely, those of constraints (laws and rules), compromises,[47] and patterns of behavior, assumptions, and the methods by which these are socially reinforced and challenged

(Boyer 1990, 44–45). Of interest are the cultural patterns that are simultaneously shaped by people and which shape them in turn (Bourdieu's *habitus* may stand as a marker for this feature [Bourdieu 1977, 1980]). Here may be located the expressions of popular veneration, the creative reshapings of the existing cultural patterns—folklore, beliefs, symbols, images, legends, and myths—that emerged with such spontaneity and variety in the veneration of Lenin.

In these terms, any economic system requires both economic and extra-economic types of compulsion in order to function. The situation in the very early years of new communist system in Russia provides an extraordinary example of the process of developing very different forms of compulsion, a very different mode of regulation, than the capitalist one they were replacing. All manner of questions were posed. Do we proceed rapidly or a little more slowly, allowing some elements of the previous system to persist (the New Economic Program) while the new order is constructed?[48] Does one use persuasion or force, or a mix of the two? If one removes the economic compulsions of capitalism, with what should be replaced? Will the sheer attraction of communist means of production, labor, and social life be enough, the first glimmers of which appear in the subbotniks (Lenin 1919m, 1919q, 1920g)? And above all, what ideological and cultural elements of compulsion work best?

I suggest that the veneration of Lenin became a crucial part of this extra-economic compulsion. It became a central feature in fostering the revolutionary enthusiasm required to draw people into the new project. I write "became," since it is quite clear that the government and the institutions responded to a very new phenomenon in the popular veneration of Lenin. On this matter, Bonch-Bruevich played a significant role, especially in light of his study of and lifelong interest in sectarian groups. As I pointed out earlier, while living at the Kremlin, Lenin would escape to Bonch-Bruevich's quarters and read the archives of sectarian groups kept there. It was Bonch-Bruevich who perhaps first saw the importance of strong leadership models precisely within the context of communal life and proto-communist economic patterns. Apart from sectarian groups in Russia, he had also followed the story of the dukhobors on their transatlantic journey from Russia to Canada. As Etkind observes: "Theirs was a totalitarian utopian model of universal compulsion [*vseobshchego podchineniia*] rather than a romantic utopian model of universal love; the idea of a collective farm (*kolkhoza*) rather than of commune (*kommuny*); the image of state rather than of peasant commune (*obshchiny*)" (Etkind 1998, 648). I would suggest that this insight provided one, rather significant, component of the government's response to the popular veneration of Lenin. The government's part was to respond to and refine that veneration, through much trial and error, so that it was able to serve its purpose. It is not for nothing that subsequent communist revolutions have found it necessary to develop similar forms of veneration, especially of the revolutionary leader—China, Vietnam, North Korea, to name but a few.

All of this raises the question of Stalin and his veneration during his lifetime, one that faded dramatically soon after his death due to the "de-Stalinization" undertaken during the periods of Khrushchev and then Brezhnev. Yet, the seed of my proposal—that the veneration of Lenin was a cornerstone of compulsion—comes

from none other than the veneration of Stalin. Or rather, I have drawn on some insightful comments by Cockshott and Cottrell. Refusing the facile dismissals by many on the Left in order to distance themselves from Stalin, they argue that the full implementation of a communist economic system happened under Stalin. Through the Five-Year plans beginning in the late 1920s, the capitalist mode of extracting surplus value was replaced by a planned economy, in which surplus was controlled and allocated by the planning mechanism.

> Under Soviet planning, the division between the necessary and surplus portions of the social product was the result of political decisions. For the most part, goods and labour were physically allocated to enterprises by the planning authorities, who would always ensure that the enterprises had enough money to "pay for" the real goods allocated to them. If an enterprise made monetary "losses," and therefore had to have its money balances topped up with "subsidies," that was no matter. On the other hand, possession of money as such was no guarantee of being able to get hold of real goods. By the same token, the resources going into production of consumer goods were centrally allocated. Suppose the workers won higher ruble wages: by itself this would achieve nothing, since the flow of production of consumer goods was not responsive to the monetary amount of consumer spending. Higher wages would simply mean higher prices or shortages in the shops. The rate of production of a surplus was fixed when the planners allocated resources to investment in heavy industry and to the production of consumer goods respectively. (Cockshott and Cottrell 1993, 4–5)[49]

In this context, the question of compulsion becomes urgent, for the old modes of capitalist compulsion simply do not apply. How do you encourage workers and peasants to engage in the new system? Under the circumstances of such rapid change (in which Stalin "out-Lefted" his opponents) and in the face of a sustained threat from international capitalism, that compulsion took the form of carrot and stick. Genuine revolutionary fervor characterized much of the effort, but for those less inclined to engage, forced labor, exile, and "terror" were deployed. In this context, the "cult of Stalin's personality appears not as a mere 'aberration,' but as an integral feature of the system." Stalin embodied the sheer grit (thereby making up for what he lacked in oratorical skill) of the revolutionary "miracle" required to adopt such a radically new economic system. He was thereby able both to promote a deep sense of "participation in a great historic endeavour," but he was also the "stern and utterly ruthless liquidator of any who failed so to participate" (Cockshott and Cottrell 1993, 5). I would add that this combination, along with the deep strength of the communist economic system, enabled the extraordinary recovery during the Second World War and the eventual victory of the USSR over Germany and fascism.

Conclusion: Whither Lenin's Veneration?

The thesis of this chapter may be stated succinctly: Lenin's veneration provided a new and initially unexpected form of extra-economic compulsion in the effort to construct communism. Added to this is a consistent theme that the religious

and communist forms of such veneration relate to one another not hierarchically but in terms of a relativization of each other, precisely in their intersections and crossovers.

Yet, my argument leaves a question begging: What is the relation between the veneration of Lenin and that of Stalin? On this matter, we must steer between Scylla and Charybdis. On one side lie the shoals of suggesting that Stalin engineered the veneration of Lenin in order to develop his own "cult" (Schapiro 1964, 282; Carr 1965, 353–55; Deutscher 1967, 269–72). On the other side lie the reefs of a fundamental break in which Stalin killed off the focus on Lenin and put himself, as a living ruler, in its place (Tumarkin 1997, 246–48). A more subtle analysis is required, especially if one views it from the perspective of compulsion. With Stalin's massively rapid process of collectivization and industrialization in the First Five-Year Plan, Lenin's veneration was used directly to foster and encourage the revolutionary enthusiasm needed to bring it to completion. For instance, in *Pravda*'s annual Lenin issue in 1929, the paper concentrated on Lenin's views of a socialist economy, including an article by Krupskaya on Lenin and the construction of collective farms. The focus was clearly on economic matters and party solidarity. In the following years, the same theme was used, with images of Lenin set against factory backgrounds, or photo montages of Lenin set among machines and factories. In 1931, *Pravda* wrote on the anniversary of his death: "We are building the best monument to Lenin—uninterrupted collectivization" (Tumarkin 1997, 247). In other words, Lenin's memory was employed directly in order to foster participation in the grand project. Crucially, from 1933, Stalin begins to feature in that veneration, now as the "best disciple and companion of Com. Lenin." The key here is that Lenin's veneration is clearly forward-looking, oriented to a future that is being realized under Stalin.

This argument does, however, face the problem of the stagnation of communism under Brezhnev, which took place precisely during a vastly enhanced veneration of Lenin in order to forget Stalin, begun by Khrushchev and exacerbated by Brezhnev. As far as the stagnation is concerned, the Brezhnev era witnessed the mitigation of many of the measures introduced under Stalin. Above all, the crucial element of compulsion began to fade, in terms of both its harsher dimensions and in revolutionary fervor. No adequate replacement for compulsion was found (Cockshott and Cottrell 1993, 5–7).[50] Here we face an apparent paradox, for this was also the time of a renewed veneration of Lenin. As a means of laying Stalin to rest and all for which he stood, Lenin was once again brought to the fore, even more than he had been in the early years of his veneration. The solution to this paradox is that this form of veneration ceased to be forward-looking, bracingly encouraging the enthusiasm needed for the vast project of communist construction. Instead, it became a form of nostalgia, looking fondly to the past rather than the future. The very fact that the veneration was so overdone, breeding indifference and contempt, is the surest mark of its loss of both the earlier focus and the compulsion that had become so vital.

It is no surprise, then, that the period leading up to and after the dissolution of the USSR involved a reverse of the veneration of Lenin. Now he was debunked, supposedly devastating and hitherto hidden documents revealed his

true "authoritarian" nature (some of which have since been identified as forgeries; Pipes 1999), a demonizing biography or two appeared (Volkogonov 1994; Gellately 2008), and some statues were torn down. Thankfully, that period is over, and one may now explore the many dimensions of "Red Petrograd," where Lenin is still very present—from the Finland Station, through Mars Field and the cruiser Aurora, to the Square of the Proletarian Dictatorship that stretches out before the statue at the Smolny Institute.[51] Indeed, in the protests (led often by the Communist Party and Left Front) that followed the parliamentary and then presidential elections of 2011 and 2012, posters with Lenin were brandished once again.

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Conclusion

> For Russia it seems to be at once a revolution, a reformation, and a renaissance.
>
> —Walling 1908, 426

I have sought to read Lenin with a theological ear, allowing and enabling the various themes to emerge from careful reading of his texts. In this respect, I am, as noted at the outset, indebted to the long and oft-neglected tradition of biblical commentary and exegesis. Pure exegesis is, of course, a fiction, for the issues that I have "led out" (the basic sense of exegesis) of his texts are issues determined by the questions I have asked. But it does mean that I have been less interested in juxtaposing Lenin with this or that theologian, or even arguing that he derived this or that position from Orthodox theology and practice. In part, this is due to an underlying theoretical position that theology does not provide the absolute source of ideas, no matter how "secularized" they may be. In part, it is also due to the fact that a couple of studies exist that attempt such as approach—Oleg Kharkhordin's *The Collective and the Individual in Russia* (1999) and a research project on Orthodoxy and communism being undertaken by Tamara Prosic. I have been a little more interested in the context of Lenin's work, albeit only in a secondary capacity, for context is so often the fetish that is felt to provide the secret to a text. Instead, I have concerned myself primarily with his texts and that has proven to be a significant task in and of itself.

That exploration has raised a series of at-times complex matters, ranging over Lenin's explicit and often contradictory engagements with religion, his attraction to the words of Jesus in the biblical Gospels, a love of constructing his own earthy parables, encounters with various Christian and peasant socialists, the extended tussle with God-builders such as Lunacharsky, which drew me to reexamine the encounter with Hegel and then the tension between vulgar and ruptural deployments of dialectics, the translation of revolution as miracle, and then the intriguing question of the veneration of Lenin. These topics cover the six chapters of the book. I see no point in reiterating their arguments, for summaries already appear in the introduction and at the beginning of each chapter. However, they do raise two questions that I wish to explore a little further here. The first concerns Lenin's ambivalence and ambiguities concerning religion, which were analyzed in various dimensions over the first four chapters. The second deals with the translatability

and thereby relativization of the theological and political codes for speaking of matters such as revolution and veneration.

However, before I make a few comments on these questions, I would like to address the matter of fall narratives in critical works on Lenin, especially by Western scholars. Obviously, this raises a theological question at the level of genre, for I mean a narrative that is structured in terms of a fall from grace, analogous to the story in Genesis 2–3, in which Eve and then Adam eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree (of the knowledge of good and evil) and are thereby banished by God from paradise. In the case of critical works on Lenin, the fall becomes a betrayal of the revolution, a running into the mud of authoritarianism, repression, and dictatorship. This fall narrative is unwittingly deployed by mostly Western (not even necessarily Marxist) analysts of the Russian Revolution, if not all communist revolutions.

According to these analysts, when did the betrayal or fall take place? The least generous suggest that it happened even before the revolution, especially through Lenin's supposedly devious machinations and his refusal to cooperate with other socialist groups such as the Mensheviks and SRs (both Left and Right wings). An example of this approach may be found in Bruce Lincoln's two massive works, *Passage through Armageddon* and *Red Victory* (Lincoln 1986, 1989). The second book ends with a section called "the revolution consumes its makers," where the rise of Stalin constitutes the final "travesty" of the revolution. Yet, the conditions for that fall were also established in what Lincoln insists calling a "civil" war (despite 160,000 troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Greece, Italy, Japan, Germany, Austria, France, and Turkey, along with equipment, money, and logistical support for the White Armies), if not beforehand in the nature of communism. For Lincoln, communism by its very nature leads to such betrayal. He shows his true colors in his sympathies for the last stand of the White Army in Crimea under Wrangel. This aristocrat was, argues Lincoln, a good tactician and organizer, supposedly trying to ensure a just regime. After his defeat, the departure of about 150,000 Whites from Crimea is recounted with a sense of loss.

More often, for Western Marxists at least, the moment of the fall is the October Revolution itself, if not immediately afterward. From that moment—to give a few of the many formulations—the party and even the working class disintegrate; the Bolsheviks become "renegades," doing everything possible to distort in most horrendous ways their own principles; Lenin's thought loses it coherence; his "heroic narrative" of a victorious working-class socialist revolution begins to come apart; bureaucracy becomes pervasive; a transformation takes place from a flexible, democratic, and open party to one of the most centralized and "authoritarian" political organizations in modern history; the dictatorship of the proletariat becomes the dictatorship of the secretariat; the revolution shifts from being a revolution from below to one from above; the democratic soviets crumble before a centralized and dictatorial party (Laue 1964; Anweiler 1974, 192–253; Liebman 1975, 213–356; Cliff 1987; Farber 1990; Le Blanc 1990, 289–331; 2006, 101–51, 188–90; Donald 1993, 221–46; Fitzpatrick 1994, 156–72; Bensaïd 2007, 156; Michael-Matsas 2007, 101; Harding 2009, vol. 2: 283–328; Lih 2011).[1] The problem with such fall narratives is that they bear an inescapably theological dimension, in which a fall

from grace obscures the complex messiness of history (Boer, in press-a). They also assume that communists are perfect human beings who should not "sin," despite Lenin's repeated comments on the many failings of the Bolsheviks.[2] And they neglect Lenin's repeated point that the revolution itself is easy; far more complex is the construction of communism. The result is that many of the most sympathetic Marxists prefer the time before the fall, before October, before the moment of the revolution itself when the Bolsheviks, with massive support, seized power.

Some lament the lost opportunities, suggesting that a broad, cross-party socialist government, such as the one established in the February Revolution, was the ideal (Rabinowitch 2007). Others entertain the possibility that the brief time after the revolution was valid, but that the "civil" war corroded all the gains, for it was a period of centralized control, tough measures, the Cheka, and "war communism," all of which betrayed the revolution (Cliff 1987). A solution for some is to side with Trotsky, arguing that if he had won out over Stalin, the situation would have been far different.[3] This is a classic example of a futile "what if" narrative.

All of them belong to the genre of revolutionary fall narratives, accounts of betrayal of the communist revolution. I would suggest that a couple of other factors also play a role, such as the resentment that the West never had a successful communist revolution, for nearly all seemed to have happened in the "East": Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, China, Vietnam, Laos, and so on. None of the few revolutions in the "West," from Finland to Germany, was successful. And having established the genre of the revolutionary fall narrative for Russia, it became easier to deploy it in terms of these later revolutions. Furthermore, such narratives tend to operate with a complex mix of dismissal and revolutionary romanticism.[4] As for the latter, it appears in the position that the perfect revolution is yet to come, that it will happen at an undefinable utopian moment in the future. The criteria for what constitutes such a romantic moment constantly shift, depending on what position one takes, but they all remain in the future, have not yet been realized, offer as yet unimaginable qualitative change, and certainly do not need an army. Needless to say, the Eastern revolutions fail the test, for they inevitably turned away from romantic revolutionary ideals, falling from grace.

A significant outcome of these fall narratives is that they prefer to focus on the period before October, before the sullying turn. As will have become apparent in this book, I find the period after October equally valuable, if not more so. Not only is it a story of the astonishing survival and stunning success of the revolution against crushing odds, the deep devastation brought on the First World War, the "civil" war, and international blockade, alongside the widespread expectations that the new Soviet government would collapse very soon indeed,[5] but it is also a period when some of Lenin's sharpest and most dialectical formulations concerning revolution and freedom may be found. Here too appears the fascinating development of Lenin's veneration, as also some of the more intriguing ambivalences concerning religion, especially in relation to marginal Christian socialist groups and Lunacharsky's God-building.

With that in mind, let me return to the two questions raised earlier, concerning ambivalence and translation. As far as ambivalence is concerned, time and again I

found that despite Lenin's notorious criticisms and dismissals of religion, he would allow some space for its more radical forms. It may be the ambivalence contained within his phrase "spiritual booze"; progressive priests; work among the "sects" and the desire for united fronts with religious radicals; the radical edge of the sayings and parables from the Gospels; the incisive critiques of feudal and capitalist exploitation arising from Tolstoy's Christian communism; the admiration for the passion and directness of peasant socialists; the materialist possibilities of Hegel's resolute idealism; the space granted to Lunacharsky after the October Revolution; even the fostering of marginal religious groups such as unaffiliated yet sympathetic Christian peasants and proto-communist groups such as the Old Believers. Yet, at the same time, Lenin attacked the hypocrisy of Christianity, argued that it arose from a situation of oppression and contributed to that oppression, that believers should not seek to propagate their views in the party, dismissed Tolstoy's solutions, found the peasants socialists naive and petty-bourgeois, developed a dubious argument that linked God-building with empirio-criticism, sought to remove the established church from its political influence, and energetically advocated the propagation of atheism, even castigating comrades for not doing so with enough skill and effectiveness after October. In balance, the moments when he glimpsed the possibilities of the religious Left were fewer than those when he attacked religion. And if he was aware of a deep political ambivalence at the heart of Christianity—as was Lunacharsky—then it was largely implicit, borne in between the lines rather that stated explicitly. All of these lead me to express a regret that he was not as clearly aware of these possibilities as he might have been. For to harness the depth of that tradition and to bring on side the power of the religious Left would perhaps have made matters a little easier, on both ideological and practical levels.

As for translation, I have argued that the revolution–miracle conjunction brings about a process that mutually enriches the semantic clusters associated with those terms in their political and theological modes. Given that translation very rarely manages a perfect match between the semantic clusters of terms, and given that the partial overlap between terms leaves realms of each semantic cluster beyond the overlap, then here a process of enrichment begins. That is, those dimensions left over, idly passing the time beyond the initial point of contact, are gradually brought into the discussion. The outcome is a widening and enrichment of the semantic field of each term that enables one to see what it really means to call a revolution a miracle. In what is perhaps the most involved chapter of the whole book, I gradually brought an increasing number of topics into touch with the question of miracle: Spontaneity and organization, including issues relating to the military, to strikes, and to revolutionary reconstruction; *kairós* and then *ákairos* and the relation to some kairological thinkers on the Left; the tension between being within or without the system, now in terms of reform and revolution, parliamentary (non-)involvement, and the detailed and ever-relevant question of an explicitly partisan freedom that is the source of a true freedom. In each case, the sense of miracle was enriched and therefore redefined.

However, is it always an enrichment? Do some elements become lost in the process?[6] I have suggested that at least one item does disappear, what may be called

the ontological reserve. For this reserve, "God" is the code: The line beyond which human beings cannot pass. By having "God" within the system, one marks a point where human beings realize their limits and cannot raise themselves to the status of the "divine." I think not of the reactionary version of this account—as in the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11—where rebellion against the powers that be is translated into rebellion against God and is thereby punished viciously. Rather, I think of the radical way in which the ontological reserve may function. The danger of urging human beings to become like gods, to seeing the gods in Lunacharsky's terminology as the ideals to which we aspire, is that it fosters yet another version of hierarchical distinctions in which some may lord it over others, assuming omnipotence and omniscience.[7] Add to this the reality that human beings often seek to do the worst rather than the best to one another, to be bastards rather than comrades, and the desire to storm heaven becomes dangerous indeed. Obviously, these comments relate as much to my discussion of Lunacharsky's God-building and to the veneration of Lenin (or other manifestations of the "personality cult") as they do to the question of translation. But in terms of translation and the miracle, I would suggest that what is lost is a sense of that impassable line, of the ontological reserve: If miracles become efforts of purely stupendous human effort, rendering all that is beyond human agency into versions of human agency, then the dangers of human beings becoming gods also lurk.

Finally, the translatability of terms—whether in terms of miracle or in relation to veneration—relativizes the absolute claims of both theology and revolutionary politics. I mean here not a liberal version of everyone being permitted to have their strange cooking smells and customs in their own corners, celebrating difference and tolerance. Instead, I mean that such translatability negates the absolute claims of theology as the origin and source, perhaps in a secularized form as Schmitt liked to claim, of all political thought, not least those of a communist persuasion. Instead, theological and political discourses become various, limited codes in which they may be expressed, fruitfully usable for a time and in relation to one another. Thus miracle becomes the theological code for revolution (as also may *kairós* or even grace [Boer, in press-a]); the religious martyr or prophet is not the original but one shape martyrdom or prophecy may take; the veneration of the hero may take religious or political forms. While my emphasis has been on neutralizing the surprisingly common claims to theological absolutism, the same would apply to such absolutism on the political Left.

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Notes

Preface

1. Since the bibliography lists under the same date the English translation and then the Russian original of the works of Lenin and Krupskaya, the in-text citations list the English page number first and then the Russian, separated by an oblique. Where a whole work is cited, no page numbers are given.

Introduction

1. Althusser did attempt, to the affront of his esteemed philosophical peers in France, to link Lenin and philosophy, especially by focusing scandalously on *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (Althusser 1971, 23–70). In some respects, this project may be seen as an extension of Althusser's preliminary efforts.
2. In the last few years, a number of works point to a revival of this question, if not a distinct effort to move beyond the old terms of debate (Roberts 2008a, 2008b; Molyneux 2008; Rehmann 2011; Boer 2012a).
3. The Brotherhood Church continues as a religious socialist community in Stapleton (see http://www.thebrotherhoodchurch.org/intro.htm). Three hundred thirty-eight delegates attended the congress in 1907, representing almost 150,000 members, including Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Bundists, and Polish and Latvian Social-Democrats. In reporting on the congress, Lenin notes: "amid laughter from the Bolshevik benches (in the London church we actually sat on benches so that the expression is not figurative)" (Lenin 1907h, 505/385). It is worth noting that Lenin was not averse to publishing items in journals such as *God's World* (*Mir Bozhii*). A review of Bogdanov was published in precisely that journal (Lenin 1898b).
4. This is not the only time Badiou makes the connection: "Saint Paul for the Church, Lenin for the Party, Cantor for ontology, Schoenberg for music, but also Simon, Bernard or Clair, if they declare themselves to be in love" (Badiou 2006a, 393; 1988, 431). For a discussion of this ghostly and theological fifth procedure of truth, see my *Criticism of Religion* (Boer 2009a, 163–65).
5. Žižek writes: "there is no Christ outside Saint Paul; in exactly the same way, there is no 'authentic' Marx that can be approached directly, bypassing Lenin" (Žižek 2000, 2).
6. Only some examples among many of Lenin's polemic against intellectuals, secure professors, and philosophers can be cited here (Lenin 1905b[1], 29–34/137–43; 1906b[2], 216–18/288–91; 1908a, 51/46, 106/105; 1914y, 144/361; 1914s[1], 190/34).

7. With Badiou's comment in mind, occasional pieces by Lenin do seem to echo Paul, especially in terms of a persecuted organization (Lenin 1900b) or in prison and surrounded by opponents (Lenin 1900a, 351–53/354–56).
8. In making these arguments, I at times provide some necessary information concerning Lenin and the Russian Revolution. I do so with consideration for those who are not familiar with either; those who are may easily skip over such material.
9. So also his oratory, as described by Sukhanov: "Lenin was in general a very good orator—not an orator of the consummate, rounded phrase, or of the luminous image, or of absorbing pathos, or of the pointed witticism, but an orator of enormous impact and power, breaking down complicated systems into the simplest and most generally accessible elements, and hammering, hammering, hammering them into the heads of the audience until he took them captive" (Sukhanov 1922, 280). Trotsky also has some good descriptions of Lenin as orator, especially with his fine eye for detail and the way Lenin was able to win over a hostile audience to an unpopular position (Trotsky 1976, 53, 140–47).
10. One may be tempted by Gabel's *And God Created Lenin*. Even though it provides useful information on the various movements and splits in the Orthodox Church after Lenin's death, including the reformist, conciliatory, and progressive Renovationist wings, the level of analysis is weak overall and superficial (Gabel 2005).
11. Plamenatz is a complex case, since he argues that Lenin was an unprincipled opportunist, as we saw earlier, but that he was also a deluded opportunist who thought he was faithful to Marx while making crucial additions that distorted Marxism (Plamenatz 1975, 222), or that he was confused and abandoned Marx when it suited him (Plamenatz 1947, 85), or that Lenin and Russian Marxism were consistently faithful to Marx (Plamenatz 1947, 83).
12. Although Krupskaya generally adheres to the "consistent narrative" position (number 4), she does note on occasion Lenin's sheer impracticality. When the news of February 1917 broke, Lenin stayed up all night dreaming up impossible plans to get back home, such as flying a plane over to Russia or obtaining a Swedish passport even though they spoke no Swedish (Krupskaya 1930, 337).
13. Chamberlin offers a minor variation in an unsympathetic biographical sketch, suggesting that Lenin was utterly consistent from a class perspective, but that he was not original or intelligent (Chamberlin 1987, 134–35).
14. Agursky's argument is that Lenin was no different from Marx in this opportunism: "Lenin was Marx's star pupil in his realpolitik, which used an abstract theory to legitimize his political actions generated from the current political context. Marxism was accepted by Lenin in its entirety" (1987, 75). At the same time, Agursky's Lenin is a Marxist heretic: a die-hard dialectitian whose innovative heretical twist stemmed from Russian populism. Pearson bases Lenin's opportunism on the unfounded assumption that the German government, at the direction of the Kaiser, bankrolled the October Revolution. While Agursky also buys into a version of the "German gold" myth (Agursky 1987, 141–57), he contradictorily twists the position of unprincipled opportunism to argue that Lenin was not really a Marxist at all (position #1). Lincoln's work is simply dreadful, full of petty bourgeois American moralizing (Lincoln 1986, 1989).
15. As Badiou points out, the October Revolution inaugurated a century of successful revolutions—China, Cuba, Vietnam, and so on—after a century of failure (Badiou 2007, 58).

1 Spiritual Booze and Freedom of Religion

1. The second and third texts were prompted by the God-builder debate—see the full discussion of that debate in chapter 3.

2. For example, see the introduction to the collection, *On Religion* (Lenin 1969).
3. This "textbook" Lenin is actually closer to the positions of some contemporaries of Lenin, such as his erstwhile comrades, Miliukov and Alexinsky (Miliukov 1905, 60–104; Alexinsky 1913, 307–17). Miliukov, a contemporary leader of the Russian liberals and Cadet representative in the Duma, is scathing about all forms of religion in Russia. As will soon become clear, Lenin's position within such a context is far more sophisticated and open.
4. As Lenin points out already in 1894: "the materialists (Marxists) were the first socialists to raise the issue of the need to analyse all aspects of social life, and not only the economic" (Lenin 1894b, 161–62/161). A footnote quotes Marx from a letter to Ruge in 1843: "The whole socialist principle is again only one aspect . . . We, on our part, must devote equal attention to the other aspect, the theoretical existence of man, and consequently must make religion, science and so forth an object of our criticism . . . Just as *religion* represents the table of contents of the theoretical conflicts of mankind, the *political state* represents the table of contents of man's practical conflicts" (Marx 1844c, 143; 1844d, 344; Lenin 1894b, 162 fn/161 fn).
5. By 1909, when Lenin writes "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion" (Lenin 1909a) and "Classes and Parties in Their Attitude to Religion and the Church" (Lenin 1909c), his invocation of both Marx and Engels is direct and deliberate, for he wishes to show that the position he espouses is the one that derives from Marx and Engels—now in response to the God-builders, who also asserted their Marxist credentials.
6. Also, "The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their apparently complete helplessness in face of the blind forces of capitalism" (Lenin 1909a, 405–6/419). One may usefully compare his comments on "constitutional illusions" from the middle of 1917, between the two revolutions: "Constitutional illusions are what we call a political error when people believe in the existence of a normal, juridical, orderly and legalised—in short, 'constitutional'—system, although it does not really exist. At first glance it may appear that in Russia today, July 1917, when no constitution has yet been drafted, there can be no question of constitutional illusions arising. But it would be very wrong to think so. In reality, the essential characteristic of the present political situation in Russia is that an extremely large number of people entertain constitutional illusions. It is impossible to understand anything about the political situation in Russia today without appreciating this" (Lenin 1917l, 196/33).
7. In a similar vein, Lenin writes: "So far I have touched upon the purely material, or even financial, aspect of the matter. Incomparably more melancholic or, rather, more disgusting, is the picture of spiritual bondage, humiliation, suppression and lack of rights of the teachers and those they teach in Russia" (Lenin 1913l[1], 142/130).
8. Thus, in "Political Agitation and 'The Class Point of View,'" Lenin observes, "What a profitable faith it is indeed for the governing classes! In a society so organised that an insignificant minority enjoys wealth and power, while the masses constantly suffer 'privations' and bear 'severe obligations', it is quite natural for the exploiters to sympathise with a religion that teaches people to bear 'uncomplainingly' the hell on earth for the sake of an alleged celestial paradise" (Lenin 1902i, 338/265).
9. Or as Lenin puts it with characteristic earthiness: "All oppressing classes stand in need of two social functions to safeguard their rule: the function of the hangman and the function of the priest. The hangman is required to quell the protests and the indignation of the oppressed; the priest is required to console the oppressed, to depict to them the prospects of their sufferings and sacrifices being mitigated (this is

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particularly easy to do without guaranteeing that these prospects will be 'achieved'), while preserving class rule, and thereby to reconcile them to class rule, win them away from revolutionary action, undermine their revolutionary spirit and destroy their revolutionary determination" (Lenin 1915b, 231–32/237). Or: "a speedy, honest, democratic and good-neighhourly peace is like the good village priest urging the landlords and the merchants to 'walk in the way of God', to love their neighbours and to turn the other cheek. The landlords and merchants listen to these sermons, continue to oppress and rob the people and praise the priest for his ability to console and pacify the 'muzhiks'" (Lenin 1917j[1], 336/51; see also Lenin 1903t, 413/184–85, 422/194, 424/196, 427/199–200; 1913f, 332/400; 1915b, 228/233, 229/234, 231/236–37; 1916c, 295/417–18; 1917v[2], 265/342–43; 1916j, 128/187; 1917f, 185/250; 1913y[1]; 1920c, 149/166; 1913j[1]; 1901g, 290–91/336–37; 1899b, 242/237; 1905z, 87/194; 1905f, 464/56; 1906x[1], 40/231; 1907l, 275/135; 1913n, 260/331; 1913o, 269/340; 1913h, 40/137).

10. "People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the *interests* of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises" (Lenin 1913r[1], 28/47).
11. Olgin provides a succinct picture of this situation, quoting the reactionary theorist Katkov: "The Russian Tzar, in the opinion of the theorists of absolutism, is not only a supreme, unlimited and unhampered ruler; he is more. 'All power has its derivation from God', says Katkov, 'the Russian Tzar, however, was granted a special significance distinguishing him from the rest of the world's rulers. He is not only the Tzar of his land and the leader of his people, he is designated by God to be the guardian and custodian of the Orthodox Church. The Russian Tzar is more than an heir to his ancestors, he is a successor to the Caesars of the Eastern Empire, the builders of the Church and its conclaves, the founders of the very Creed of the Faith of Christ. With the fall of Byzantium, Moscow arose and the grandeur of Russia began. Herein lies the mystery of the deep distinction between Russia and all the nations of the world'" (Olgin 1917, 58).
12. "There is a well-known saying that if geometrical axioms affected human interests attempts would certainly be made to refute them. Theories of natural history which conflicted with the old prejudices of theology provoked, and still provoke, the most rabid opposition" (Lenin 1908k, 31/17).
13. So also with science, which was under the domination of the queen of the sciences, theology: "Mr. Struve cannot but know that in the Middle Ages all scientific laws, not only the law of value, were understood in a religious and ethical sense. Even the laws of natural science were interpreted by the canonists in the same way" (Lenin 1914s[1], 192/36).
14. Note also: "Is the superstition of our 'educated' Catholics any better than the superstitions of the savages?" (Lenin 1908l, 245–46/248–49).
15. An excellent example of this process may be found in the autobiography of Kanatchikov, whose process from village to factory to radical politics and involvement in the revolution is marked by a significant loss of faith. Or rather, a key element in freeing himself from the world of his village is dispensing with the saints, Gospels, liturgy, and reality of heaven and hell that were the building blocks of that world (Kanatchikov 1932, 27–36, 147–48, 172–73). It is worth noting, however, that despite the ethos of radical workers breaking with their religious past, many workers—often having grown up in villages and returning regularly—maintained Orthodox religious practices (Smith 2008, 83–87). Hence, the attraction of so many to Gapon's movement (see chapter 3).

16. Lenin's powerful sense that his days were numbered seems to have made him anxious concerning the massive number of tasks still incomplete.
17. Vvedensky was engaged in a very popular debate over two nights with Anatoly Lunacharsky on September 20–21 in 1925. This observation, which Vvedensky had gained from doctors who used opium to treat melancholy and other ailments even in the twentieth century, is, to my knowledge, the first observation concerning the ambivalence of the opium image.
18. As one example among many, Jenny writes to Engels in 1857: "Dear Mr Engels, One invalid is writing for another by *ordre du mufti*. Chaley's head hurts him almost everywhere, terrible tooth-ache, pains in the ears, head, eyes, throat and God knows what else. Neither opium pills nor creosote do any good. The tooth has got to come out and he jibs at the idea" (Marx (senior) 1857b, 563; 1857a, 643).
19. Exactly the same phrase, now as a quotation from Marx, is translated with the genitive in "The Attitude of the Worker's Party towards Religion": "Religion is the opium of the people [религия есть опиум народа]—this dictum by Marx is the corner-stone of the whole Marxist outlook on religion" (Lenin 1909a, 402–3/416).
20. As does the influential shift in phraseology from *The State and Revolution*: "the opium of religion which stupefies the people" (Lenin 1917h[2], 455/76).
21. Lenin at times gives the phrase this sense, as in his quotation of the Social-Democratic speech in the Duma: "Religion is the opium of the people . . . Not a farthing of the people's money to these murderous enemies of the people who are drugging the people's minds" (Lenin 1909c, 422–23/438). Note also a comment in response to an interjection during the Tenth All-Russia Conference of the Russian Communist Party in 1921: "(Voice: What about icons; there's a demand for icons). As for icons, someone has just given a reminder that the peasants are asking for icons. I think that we should not follow the example of the capitalist countries and put vodka and other intoxicants on the market, because, profitable though they are, they will lead us back to capitalism and not forward to communism; but there is no such danger in pomade (laughter)" (Lenin 1921v, 426/326). A comparable thought is contained in a certain Petrosov's claim "that Marxist thought 'is doping itself with the hashish of trivialities'" (Lenin 1911v, 68/120). See also Walling's treatment of the negative effect of the tsarist monopoly on alcohol production and the criticisms of this monopoly by the peasant representatives in the Duma (Walling 1908, 344–46).
22. Personal communication.
23. Lenin makes a varied and complex use of the image. For example, it is invoked by a former priest, Jeronim Preobrazhensky, whom Lenin quotes elsewhere. Jeronim criticizes the hypocrisy and reactionary nature of the clergy, which still supports the use of the "rod—that atrocious instrument for the degradation of human beings created in the image of God" (Lenin 1901g, 295/34). And then, Lenin mentions the enviable class organization of the squires, who "occupy all the most important institutions in the land, which are fashioned 'in their own image', to suit their own 'needs'" (Lenin 1914g[1], 285/139).
24. In his lifelong task of God-building, Lunacharsky would also deploy the terminology of "image." In some insightful reflections on education (in his role as Commissar of Enlightenment), he points out that the Russian word for education (*obrazovanie*) derives from the word meaning *image* or *form* (*obraz*). Drawing upon the theological tradition in which human beings are made in the image of God, he inverts it in a Feuerbachian direction to point out that the gods are made in the image of human beings. The result: The ideal human being is actually presented for us in such theological traditions, which one may then hold up as the aim of education (Lunacharsky 1981, 45–46).

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25. This suggestion is not as far-fetched as it seems, for Orthodoxy is known for attempting to steer a path between the "extremes" of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism. To that end, one may consult the *Catechesis* by Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), which was *the* textbook in the Russian imperial schools of Lenin's time, used in the instruction of "The Law of God" (Lenin indicates that he was familiar with Philaret's work [1901g, 294/339; 1903t, 422/194]). Philaret discusses predestination at some length before the (more) orthodox concept of *promysel*, God's provision for humanity, along with Genesis 1–2 and its narrative of the creation of human beings in the image of God. "God's will about the purpose of man as directed toward the eternal bliss has a special name in the instruction of the faith: the predestination of God," writes Philaret. More interesting still, Philaret's direct source is the so-called Declaration of the Faith by the Eastern Patriarchs (known in English as the "Answers of the Orthodox Patriarchs to the Non-Jurors," from 1723). This text was itself a repetition of the earlier seventeenth-century effort to mediate between Roman Catholicism and Calvinism, specifically at the Synod of Jerusalem in 1672 where Calvinism was discussed and "refuted" at length. In other words, Philaret's Catechism was a sincere attempt to inculcate the next generation of Russian youth in the doctrines of Orthodoxy, but it did so by taking them through the whole Calvinist discussion of predestination. Lenin would have been instructed in this catechism at school. Many thanks to Sergey Kozin for this point.
26. It is also worth noting (in a way that connects tangentially with the later chapter on miracles) that in northern Russia, it was believed that alcoholic delirium led one into the realm of miracle: *chudo/chudesa* are the events that happen after one becomes drunk (Kormina 2001, 124–26).
27. In the Marxist tradition, Engels provides a signal example of a lifelong celebration of fine tobacco, great beer, and glorious food. See the full discussion with all the references in Boer (forthcoming-a).
28. English captures the metaphoric elision in the very word "spirit," as both a distilled drink and what pertains to the higher realms of the gods.
29. I discuss the question of political freedom and democracy in chapter 5.
30. Thus, at the beginning of "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion," Lenin writes: "An interest in everything connected with religion is undoubtedly being shown today by wide circles of 'society', and has penetrated into the ranks of intellectuals standing close to the working-class movement, as well as into certain circles of the workers. It is the absolute duty of Social-Democrats to make a public statement of their attitude towards religion" (Lenin 1909a, 402/415). We meet the God-builders in intimate detail in the next chapter.
31. Lenin, a good "Erfurtian," cites precisely this text in "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion" (Lenin 1909a, 404/417).
32. See also her comment that "religion is a private affair [*la religion est une affaire privée*]" (Luxemburg 2004, 2; 1903, 28).
33. For example, in the Party's 1899 platform, we find "uncurtailed freedom of conscience" (Lenin 1899c, 239/224). Similarly, the 1902 platform includes "unrestricted freedom of conscience, speech, the press and of assembly" (Lenin 1902e, 28/206; see further Lenin 1905d[3], 92/176; 1907l, 296/157; 1903t, 402/173; 1903n, 79/47).
34. Here he cites Engels as his authority (Lenin 1909a, 404/417), as he does later in *The State and Revolution* when discussing the same clause (Lenin 1917h[2], 455–56/76–77). Note also a comment to Plekhanov in 1902, in which he expresses desire to attack the "freedom of conscience" position: "Regarding religion, in a letter of Karl Marx on the Gotha Programme I read a sharp criticism of the demand for *Gewissensfreiheit* and a

statement that Social-Democrats ought to speak out plainly about their fight against *religiösem Spuk*. Do you consider such a thing possible and in what form? In the matter of religion we are less concerned about cautiousness than the Germans, as is the case, too, in regard to the 'republic'" (Lenin 1902t, 94/169–70).

35. In the later *Notebooks on Imperialism*, Lenin cites Kautsky on this distinction, where the latter argues that the question of religion should neither be raised nor answered in both party and state. Lenin's marginal comment is simply "vulgarian!" (Lenin 1915–16, 590/570).
36. See also the 1902 platform, which includes "separation of the church from the state and of the school from the church," as well as the "confiscation . . . of monasterial property" (Lenin 1902e, 28, 30/206, 209). Furthermore, "All religions and all churches should have equal status in law. The clergy of the various religions should be paid salaries by those who belong to their religions, but the state should not use state money to support any religion whatever, should not grant money to maintain any clergy, Orthodox, schismatic, sectarian, or any other" (Lenin 1903t, 402/173; see further Lenin 1903c, 347–48/124–25).
37. Lenin maintained this position after the revolution (1921t, 373–74/333). See also the proposed "National Equality Bill," put forward in 1914 by the Social-Democrat members of the Duma (but not made law at the time): "No citizen of Russia, regardless of sex and religion, may be restricted in political or in any other rights on the grounds of origin or nationality" (Lenin 1914f[1], 173/17). The specific aim of this bill was to counter the anti-Semitism and pogroms fostered by the Right (see further Lenin 1903n, 79/47).
38. Note also: "a political organisation cannot put its members through an examination to see if there is no contradiction between their views and the Party programme" (Lenin 1909a, 408/422). Here Lenin has listened carefully to the position of Marx and Engels in relation to the First International, which resolutely refused to make atheism part of the platform. They did so in resistance to pressures from conservatives, anarchists, and even former comrades. Thus, the anarchists with Bakunin at their head pushed to make the International officially atheistic, to abolish religious ritual, and replace religious faith with science. Marx retorts, "As if one could declare by royal decree abolition of faith!" (Marx 1868a, 208; see also Marx 1872, 142; Engels 1872a, 275–76; 1872b, 169–70; Engels 1870a; Engels 1870b; Marx and Engels 1873a, 460; 1873b, 335). The many opponents of the International, ranging from conservatives and repressive state apparatuses to former comrades like Jules Favre and Mazzini, assumed that the International was just as the anarchists wished, formally atheist. In reply, Engels asserts again and again that atheism is not part of the communist platform (Engels 1871a, 608; 1871b, 28; 1871c, 164).
39. Lenin would therefore find the attack on religion by the "new atheists" a typical idealist and bourgeois program, for it makes religion the primary cause of all the world's ills (Hitchens 2001, 2007; Harris 2005, 2006; Dawkins 2006; Dennett 2007). See my detailed assessment in "The New Old Atheists" (Boer 2009b).
40. Or in the different situation of Western Europe, where the bourgeois revolution had already achieved its anticlerical program, the bourgeoisie may deploy anticlericalism as a way to split the united front of the working class. In this respect, religion is still made into a basic issue at the forefront of the struggle (Lenin 1909a, 411/424–25).
41. In "The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion," Lenin gives the example of a strike in a region where the proletariat is divided into "class-conscious Social-Democrats" and those who are religious. The latter are part of a Christian labor union that calls a strike in relation to economic struggle. In this context, it

is "the duty of a Marxist to place the success of the strike movement above everything else, vigorously to counteract the division of the workers in this struggle into atheists and Christians, vigorously to oppose any such division. Atheist propaganda in such circumstances may be both unnecessary and harmful" (Lenin 1909a, 407/420–21). Note also Lenin's observation that communists should support every protest and struggle against oppression: "Hence, it is our bounden duty to explain to the proletariat every liberal and democratic protest, to widen and support it, with the active participation of the workers, be it a conflict between the Zemstvo and the Ministry of the Interior, between the nobility and the police régime of the Orthodox Church, between statisticians and the bureaucrats, between peasants and the 'Zemstvo' officials, between religious sects and the rural police, etc., etc." (Lenin 1902i, 341/268).

42. Much later, during the "civil" war, Krupskaya relates a somewhat amusing story that illustrates this question nicely: "The Second Army had a rather peculiar agitator: he had been a priest before the October Revolution, but after he had become an agitator for the Bolsheviks. At a meeting of five thousand Red Army men in Perm he spoke of the Soviet power's intimate link with the masses. 'The Bolsheviks', he said, 'are today's apostles'. When asked by a Red Army man in the audience, 'What about baptism?' he answered: 'That would take a couple of hours to explain, but briefly it's pure eyewash'" (Krupskaya 1930, 526).
43. Lenin offers a third example, this time concerning the God-builders (Lenin 1909a, 409/422–23), whom I discuss in full in the next chapter. Here he uses the same principle, pointing out that if someone says "socialism is my religion" for the sake of addressing workers, for the purpose of getting the message across, then that is no reason to censure such a person. However, if someone propagates God-building by whatever means possible—by argument, in the press, through a school such as the one on Capri—then that is unacceptable. Note here, however, that he does not state that such a God-builder should be expelled from the party; he or she is to be censured. Why? The God-builders, especially Lunacharsky and Gorky, were close comrades and Lenin was keen to keep them in the party. Indeed, he was notorious for working closely with those whom he attacked in print.
44. Further examples may be found at the close of chapter 4.
45. For a full treatment of this material by Engels, with all of the relevant references, see my *Criticism of Earth* (Boer 2012a).
46. See also the studied avoidance in the brief biography of Marx from 1914 (Lenin 1914s).
47. Already in 1843, Engels notes in his "Letters from London" that during times of revolutionary unrest, the lower classes become far more progressive. "In general, this is a feature of every revolutionary epoch, as was seen in particular in the religious revolution of which the outcome was Christianity: 'blessed are the poor' [Matthew 5:3], 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness' [1 Corinthians 1:20], etc." (Engels 1843a, 380; 1843b, 451–52).
48. Another glimpse may be found in a short piece from late 1914, when Lenin was still coming to terms with the betrayal of the member states of the Second International in supporting the national war efforts. He quotes an extensive section from a magazine from Zurich called *Neue Zeit: Blätter für religiöse Arbeit* (September 1914). In this magazine, published by a "group of kind-hearted little churchmen," appears a strong argument for workers to turn their weapons from fighting each other to fighting together against oppressors, against those who have fomented the war in the first place. So close is this to Lenin's own position that he contrasts their position with that

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of Kautsky and others of the Second International who have written "scientific" arguments in favor of the war (Lenin 1914q, 92–93/94–95).

49. This was particularly an issue in 1909 (Lenin 1909c) and then again in 1912 (Lenin 1912s, 227–28/469–70; 1912z, 341–44/125–32; 1912h, 347/140). In the midst of these developments, Lenin points out that the priesthood has always been involved in politics covertly; so it is best to make it overt and thereby cease being hypocritical (Lenin 1912y, 310–11/80–81). See also the detailed treatment of the reactionary leanings of the clergy and the church (Lenin 1901g, 289–96/335–42).
50. See also the full discussion of this development in Walling (1908, 392–401).
51. A word is necessary here on the curious usage of the terms "nation," "national," and "nationality." Lenin takes here Karl Kautsky's definition of a nation as comprising two items: language and territory (Lenin 1903m, 99/72–73). This position leads one to the very Eurocentric idea that a state is determined by one ethnicity and one language, so much so that newly independent states, from Norway to the parts of the former Yugoslavia, claim what are really dialects to be unique languages, such as Norwegian in relation to Danish or Croatian in relation to Serbian. It also lies behind the creation of modern Hebrew and the Zionist push for a state of Israel. This position falls down when faced with multi-lingual and multiethnic states (Canada, Belgium, Finland, China, Australia, etc.) and indeed the simple point that any national entity, let alone an ethnic one, is always a confluence of multiple ethnicities, so much so that one is unable to distinguish any "pure" identity at all (D'iakonoff 1999, 153). On the complexity of the "national" question in Russia at the time, see Alexinsky's *Modern Russia* (1913, 297–306), and for a close analysis of Lenin's position, see Cliff (2004, 53–63).
52. Many further statements reiterate this position (Lenin 1913h, 22–28/118–25; 1913w, 345–47/423–26; 1913q, 379–81/8–10; 1913n[1], 427–28/57–59; 1913d, 1913d[1], 1913i[1]; 1914c, 281–83/136–37; 1914j, 290–91/146–47; 1914g, 351–52/215–16; 1914r[1]; 1915i, 316–17/328–29; 1915h, 1914v[1]). These positions were embodied in the famous decree on peace on the day after the October Revolution (Lenin 1917f[2], 249–53/13–18). For debates over the national question in the Comintern, see Riddell (1984, 353–64).
53. The following arguments are drawn from a spate of texts from 1913 to 1916 (Lenin 1913q[1], 243–47/314–19; 1913h, 36–38/133–36; 1914i[1], 1914c, 1914r[1], 1913a[2], 1913j, 1913i, 1914j, 1916k). Note especially: "Our task is not to segregate nations, but to unite the workers of all nations. Our banner does not carry the slogan 'national culture' but *international* culture, which unites all the nations in a higher, socialist unity, and the way to which is already being paved by the international amalgamation of capital" (Lenin 1913i[1], 548–49/237).
54. Or as he puts it later, using the analogy of divorce, "This example clearly demonstrates that one cannot be a democrat and socialist without demanding full freedom of divorce now, because the lack of such freedom is additional oppression of the oppressed sex—though it should not be difficult to realise that recognition of the *freedom* to leave one's husband is not an *invitation* to all wives to do so!" (Lenin 1916a, 72/125).
55. From time to time, Lenin mentions Muslims, Roman Catholics, Stundists, Old Believers, and "sects," but his arguments come to their sharpest expression in debates with the Bund (Lenin 1897b, 476–77/489–90; 1907o, 63–64/342–43; 1907b, 408/389; 1901g, 291–94/336–40; 1920c[1], 494/175; 1915–16, 112/87, 534–36/513–15, 762/734; 1912c[1], 269/370; 1912k[1], 280/36–37; 1902p, 402/58, 414/71). In response to the tsar's "fig-leaf" concessions, which really shore up the established church and the autocracy, Lenin writes: "we demand . . . an amnesty for all 'political prisoners' and members of religious sects. Until that is done, all talk about tolerance and freedom of worship will

remain a miserable pretence and discreditable lie" (Lenin 1903c, 348/125). For a far more negative contemporary view of religious minorities and sects, see the work of the socialist Alexinsky and the liberal Miliukov (Alexinsky 1913, 307–17; Miliukov 1905). By contrast, it is worth noting that the early *Iskra* was distributed by Lithuanian religious groups, also suppressed by the Tsar (Lih 2011, 75).

56. Out of the multitude of references, I can give only a representative collection of citations (Lenin 1897b, 471/483; 1897d, 529/545; 1900d, 376/382; 1901h, 96/88, 98/90; 1902e, 49/228–29, 57/237; 1903d, 1903e; 1903r, 44/342; 1905e[2], 204/333; 1905p[3], 495–96/266–67; 1905t[3], 172/152; 1905s[1]; 1905g, 203/192; 1906h; 1906d[1], 93/290; 1906s, 216/5; 1907o, 64/343; 1907l, 273/133–34; 1907k, 313/168; 1907a, 30/17; 1907b, 340–41/319–21, 363–64/344; 1912k, 507/177; 1911m, 300/377; 1911s, 337/16–17, 340/20; 1912e[1], 108/345; 1913c[1], 307–8/375–76; 1905r[3], 36 fn/23 fn; 1906r, 184/383). For a vivid first-hand description of a tsarist-sanctioned pogrom in Odessa, see Pianitsky's account (1933, 86–88).
57. On the ground, Bolsheviks and Bundists often worked closely together, as Pianitsky points out (Pianitsky 1933, 34–35).
58. See also the subsequent discussions of the bill (Lenin 1914e[1], 1914c). We will see later that this statement from 1914 contradicts Lenin's earlier position from 1903, at the height of arguments with the Bund, in which the Jews do not constitute a "nation" (Lenin 1903m, 99–102/72–76).
59. This leakage shows up in a structural feature of Lenin's draft resolution from the second RSDLP conference concerning the Bund. First, he states that the Bund may agitate as much as it likes and in its preferred language for national self-determination (according to the party platform). Then, immediately following, he proposes that the party "emphatically repudiates federation as the organisational principle of a Russian party" (Lenin 1903o, 468/246). The two statements rub so closely together that they begin to seep into one another.
60. Indeed, at times Lenin seems to have realized that the slippage between his carefully demarcated zones of the state and party membership was taking place in the struggle with the Bund, indeed that the Bund's position did deploy the argument for self-determination and autonomy in relation to the party. This realization leads him, in an earlier article from 1903, to a contradiction with his general position: He does not reassert the distinction between state and party, but attacks the idea that the Jews constitute a nation at all. The reason: Since a "nation" means a distinct language and territory (that mistaken Eurocentric notion), and since the Jews, due to their unfortunate history, no longer have either a distinct tongue or land, they do not constitute a nation at all. Therefore, they are not entitled to the claim to self-determination even within a state (Lenin 1903m, 99–102/72–76). Although this argument is an effort at more radical criticism, attacking the root of the Bund's argument for autonomy within the party and seeking to show the reactionary nature of Zionism, it contradicts the position Lenin would later take in 1914 (outlined earlier), namely that the Jews have the right to self-determination along with any other ethnic group. Did Lenin realize the mistake of the earlier position in 1903, amending it to the line taken in 1914? I suspect so and have assumed the latter to be the main position Lenin takes on the matter, for it is consistent with his treatment of the national question.
61. To my mind, this is a far better argument against Zionism than the one discussed in the previous note, in which Lenin seeks to block Zionism through a spurious argument that a "nation" is comprised of territory and a single language and the Jews have neither.
62. Again, the relevant references to this long tussle are too many to cite in full (Lenin 1903d, 1903i, 1903m, 1905p[3], 1905r[1]; 1906y[1], 309/394; 1906b, 310/395; 1906l[1],

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323/5; 1906x[1], 1906i; 1907l[1], 419/234; 1907s[1], 429/301). On the second RSDLP congress, when the Bund decided not to be bound by the congress, thereby effectively withdrawing, see Lenin's texts from 1903 and 1904 (Lenin 1903o, 468/245, 477/300; 1903a; 1903p, 58/440; 1904d, 212–15/197–99).

63. Occasionally, Lenin unwittingly provides an insight into precisely this logic. Writing to Bogdanov in 1905: "we talk of organisation, of centralism, while actually there is such disunity, such amateurism among even the closest comrades in the centre, that one feels like chucking it all in disgust. Just look at the Bundists: they do not prate about centralism, but every one of them writes to the centre weekly and contact is thus actually maintained" (Lenin 1905i[1], 143/244).

2 Gospels and Parables

1. *What Is to Be Done?* is usually understood to be a programmatic statement of Lenin's distinctive reinterpretation of the Marxist tradition for the sake of party reorganization under tsarist repression in Russia. Here we find, it is argued, that Lenin evinces a "worry about workers," that they are not revolutionary enough. For that reason, the party needs a cadre of radical intellectuals, the vanguard, which would nudge and redirect the workers. Lars Lih's monumental *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? in Context* has successfully destroyed that "textbook" position, showing that the book was a specific engagement in a specific debate, that Lenin was committed to Kautsky's "Erfurtian program" of a merger between workers and intellectuals, and that Lenin shows an extraordinary enthusiasm for and confidence in worker radicalism (Lih 2008).
2. Of all the commentators, only Lih notices Lenin's biblical engagements, but he makes little of them. For instance, at the opening of his book, he writes: "And a sower went forth sowing seeds . . . This image from the Gospels unexpectedly turns up in *Chto delat?*" (Lih 2008, 3). But then Lih passes on without further remark.
3. In undertaking this task here, I take up in my own way the intermittent discussion of Lenin's language that began in the avant garde *Lef* journal (issue 1, number 5) in 1924. There, some of the formalists, Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, Iurii Tynianov, Boris Tomashevsky, Lev Yakubinsky, and Boris Kazansky, argued that the power of Lenin's language lay in its irony, enabling him to operate in an unrestricted manner, free of ideology and dogma. The catch is that Lenin's linguistic power lay in his ability to betray that dogma for the sake of power (see Eisen 1996, 68–69). Of course, this is an early manifestation of Lenin as an unprincipled opportunist (see the discussion in my introduction to this book). In 1972–94, a vast project was undertaken, called the "Dictionary of Lenin's Language," at the Russian Language Institute, USSR Academy of Sciences. The group aimed to finish work by 2010–12, but ceased the project during Perestroika and the demonization of Lenin. All that has appeared is Bairamova's *Phraseological Dictionary of V.I. Lenin's Language* in 1991. What I undertake in this chapter may be seen, despite its rather different focus, as a continuation of that project.
4. Zubatov was the police chief, who attempted to divert workers from revolutionary activity with the Social-Democrats by establishing legal, police-controlled unions. I. Kh. Ozerov (as well as A. E. Worms) was a professor at the University of Moscow who became spokesman for Zubatov's "police socialism."
5. A married couple from Gogol's short story, "Old-World Landowners," in which Pulkheria Ivanovna tends her flowerpots to the exclusion of any concern with what is happening elsewhere on the estate, let alone the world beyond.

6. As for the best way to treat spies: "We must get the workers to understand that while the killing of spies, *agents provocateurs*, and traitors may sometimes, of course, be absolutely unavoidable, it is highly undesirable and mistaken to make a system of it, and that we must strive to create an organisation which will be able to render spies *innocuous* by exposing them and tracking them down. It is impossible to do away with all spies, but to create an organisation which will ferret them out and *educate* the working-class masses is *both possible and necessary*" (Lenin 1902d, 243 fn/17).
7. For some strange reason, Lih feels that the presence of the parable adds to the opaqueness of the passage (Lih 2008, 402, n. 26).
8. And thereby, he argues for a dialectic of radical centralization and decentralization: "while *the greatest possible centralisation* is necessary with regard to the ideological and practical *leadership* of the movement and the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, *the greatest possible decentralisation* is necessary with regard to keeping the Party centre (and therefore the Party as a whole) *informed* about the movement, and with regard to *responsibility* to the Party" (Lenin 1902d, 246/21).
9. As Lih points out so forcefully, the widespread assumption that Lenin and Russian Marxism were exceptions, due to Russia's specific circumstances, makes little sense in light of the early adherence to the Western Social-Democratic model (Lih 2008, 2011). Earlier than Lih, both Levine and Harding made a very similar argument, stressing the thoroughly orthodox nature of Lenin's thought and its close relation to Western Social-Democracy (Levine 1988; Harding 2009, vol. 1: 161–89; see also Miliukov 1905, 244–45; Laue 1964). Donald (1993) goes perhaps too far in this direction, arguing that Lenin was entirely unoriginal, borrowing all his key ideas from Kautsky, while both Le Blanc and Hillquit try to mediate between continuity and exceptionalism, albeit in different ways. Le Blanc wavers between arguing that Lenin was committed to a vanguard and had little appreciation of workers and arguing that Lenin did indeed take a merger position (Le Blanc 2006, 96–98, 144). Hillquit suggests that Russian Marxism was the "illegitimate child of Asiatic Russia and European socialism" (Hillquit 1921, 29). Lenin repeatedly argues for a dialectic of action from both "above" and "below" (Lenin 1905t[1], 474–81/241–50; 1905r[3], 29–31/16–17, 76/65; 1907j[1], 155/21–22).
10. See especially the section called "Criticism in Russia" from the first chapter of *WITBD* (Lenin 1902p, 361–67/15–22). Furthermore, in a piece from few years earlier, Lenin had already attacked *Rabochaia Mysl'* for ignoring the crucial step of the formation of the RSDLP, which, in the spirit of the *Erfurt Program*, "is the biggest step taken by the Russian working-class movement in its fusion with the Russian revolutionary movement" (Lenin 1899h, 256/243; on economism, see also Lenin 1902l, 95–96/292–93; 1903j).
11. The full text of the *Credo*, by Ekaterina Kuskova, may be found in Harding's collection, *Marxism in Russia* (Harding 1983, 250–52), as also in Lenin's "A Protest by Russian Social-Democrats" (Lenin 1899g, 171–74/165–69), along with a detailed treatment of the text in the same work. For the position of another economist, Konstantin Takhtarev in "Our Reality," see the treatment in Harding (1983, 242–50). Lih and Harding also have useful and extended discussions of these documents and economism (Lih 2008, 221–40; Harding 2009, vol. 1: 141–51).
12. On "legal" Marxism, see the discussion later.
13. For a full discussion of the legal–illegal question in relation to parliamentary involvement, see chapter 5.
14. For more than a century, this feature has been termed the "messianic secret," a term coined by Wilhelm Wrede in 1901, at first in relation to the Gospel of Mark (Wrede

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1987). It remains a crucial point of departure for studies even today. Compare Lenin's continual urging of the need for revolutionary secrecy in *WITBD* (Lenin 1902p, 452–67/112–27, 477–80/138–41).

15. The legal–illegal struggle opens out to some other crucial theo-political questions, especially in light of Lenin's favored term, "miracle," and thereby the nature of revolution, formal and absolute freedom, as well as democracy. All of these topics appear in later chapters.
16. Note also: "In the first place, it is necessary to reassert the truth about the attitude of the Social-Democrats towards the legal forms of the working-class movement. 'The legalisation of non-socialist and non-political labour unions in Russia has begun,' we wrote in 1902 in *What Is to Be Done*? 'Henceforth, we cannot but reckon with this tendency.' How shall we reckon with it?—the question is raised there and answered by a reference to the need of exposing, not only the Zubatov theories, but also all liberal harmony speeches about 'class collaboration.' (In inviting the collaboration of the Social-Democrats, *Osvobozhdenie* fully acknowledges the first task, but ignores the second.) 'Doing this,' the pamphlet goes on to say, 'does not at all mean forgetting that in the long run the legalisation of the working-class movement will be to our advantage, and not to that of the Zubatovs.' In exposing Zubatovism and liberalism at legal meetings, we are separating the tares from the wheat. 'By the wheat we mean attracting the attention of ever larger numbers, including the most backward sections, of the workers to social and political questions, and freeing ourselves, the revolutionaries, from functions that are essentially legal (the distribution of legal books, mutual aid, etc.), the development of which will inevitably provide us with an increasing quantity of material for agitation' " (Lenin 1905p[1], 214–15/299–300). It may also be worth noting the interpretation of the parable of the tares and wheat in a popular Orthodox commentary on Matthew by Blessed Theophylact of Bulgaria: "While they were tares they were not cut down, but were permitted to live so that later their virtue might grow. Therefore He says to the angels, At the end of the world you will gather the tares, namely, the heretics. But how? Into bundles, that is, binding them hand and foot. For at that time a man will no longer be able to do anything, but all his power to act will be bound. The wheat, namely, the saints, will be gathered by the angelic reapers into heavenly granaries." Note also: "He will clean His threshing floor, namely, the Church, which holds many who are baptized, just as the threshing floor holds all the crop. But some of those who are baptized are chaff (плевелы—*plevely*), those who are light-minded and moved about by the evil spirits, while others are the wheat, who bring benefit to others and nourish them with teachings and deeds." The commentary may be found at www.holytrinitymission.org/books/english/matthew_theophilactos.htm#_Toc67666080 and Toc67666059.
17. Note also: "One of Turgenev's characters thus adapted a verse of the great German poet: Wer den Feind will versteh'n, Muss im Feindes Lande geh'n; that is, 'To know your enemy you must go into the enemy's country' to get first-hand knowledge of his customs, manners ways of thinking and acting" (Lenin 1907q, 490/466; see also Lenin 1908a, 317/336; 1914p[1], 166/9).
18. The Narodniks typically agitated for egalitarianism, the abolition of private property in land, and the equal division of the land (or of land tenure) as the means to destroy the roots of want, poverty, unemployment, and exploitation. They were largely urban intellectuals, having infamously decided to go to the countryside to bring their message to the peasants, only to meet bewildered looks and immediate calls to the police—"they came unto their own, and their own received them not" (Lenin 1894a, 434/454–55). Although Lenin appreciated their resort to Marx and the revolutionary heritage they

provided, especially Narodnaia Volia (his brother had been executed as a result of a botched plot to kill the Tsar), he was scathing about this form of Russian exceptionalism (which Lenin consistently resisted in all its forms [Lenin 1894a, 404/422; 1899b]), its liberalism, its reliance on the utopian socialist tradition, its lack of awareness of the growth of capitalism in the countryside, and its lack of a merger with the working class. Although the liberal and revolutionary wings of Narodism are some of the main targets in his early works on agriculture (Lenin 1893; 1899b, 28/9, 249–51/244–46, 494–95/494–95), Narodism returns in his later writings as one of the inspirations for the SRs. Perhaps the best statement of Lenin's opinion of Narodism is the following: "The old Russian revolutionary Narodniks held a utopian, semi-anarchist point of view. They considered the peasants in the village communes ready-made socialists. Behind the liberalism of the educated Russian society they clearly perceived the ambitious desires of the Russian bourgeoisie. They repudiated the struggle for political freedom on the grounds that it was a struggle for institutions advantageous to the bourgeoisie. The Narodnaia Volia members made a step forward when they took up the political struggle, but they failed to connect it with socialism. The clear socialist approach to the question was even overshadowed when the waning faith in the socialist nature of our communes began to be renewed with theories in the spirit of V. V. [Struve] about the non-class, non-bourgeois nature of the Russian democratic intelligentsia. The result was that Narodism, which in the past had positively rejected bourgeois liberalism, began gradually to merge with the latter in a single liberal-Narodist trend. The bourgeois-democratic nature of the movement among the Russian intellectuals, beginning with the most moderate, the uplift movement, and ending with the most extreme, the revolutionary terrorist movement, became more and more obvious with the rise and development of a proletarian ideology (Social-Democracy) and a mass working-class movement" (Lenin 1905u[3], 72–73/179–80; see also Lenin 1897a, 1894b, 263/270–71; 1897b, 1903j, 1907r, 464–65/338–39; 1907h, 503–4/382–83; 1911a; 1913n[1], 430/60; 1914t, 1914v, 1914c[1], 1914u, 1914w, 1914d[1], 1913y[1]).

19. Before this "legal Marxism" was closed down by the clumsy censors, "Marxist books were published one after another, Marxist journals and newspapers were founded, nearly everyone became a Marxist, Marxists were flattered, Marxists were courted, and the book publishers rejoiced at the extraordinary, ready sale of Marxist literature" (Lenin 1902p, 361/15–16).
20. For Bernstein, "socialism is merely a further and higher development of the modern community," thereby opening the door for a merger with progressive liberals (Lenin 1899h, 275/263; see also Lenin 1903j; 1902p, 362–63/17; 1914o).
21. Technically, liquidationism meant the end of the illegal party, but Lenin interprets it as the "negation of the revolutionary class struggle," a position embodied in the journal *Golos* (Lenin 1909l, 454/45). Only a sample of the many references may be given here (Lenin 1913b[1], 1914w[1], 1914x, 1914a[2], 1914j[1], 1914a[1], 1914z, 1914n[1]).
22. In addition to all the material presented in the chapter on the God-builders, I would add a number of references (Lenin 1910b[1], 1910l, 1911c).
23. Concerning the conciliators, Lenin writes: "You will understand why I call Trotsky's move an adventure; it is an adventure in every respect. It is an adventure in the ideological sense. Trotsky groups all the enemies of Marxism, he unites Potresov and Maximov, who detest the 'Lenin-Plekhanov' bloc, as they like to call it. Trotsky unites all to whom ideological decay is dear, all who are not concerned with the defence of Marxism; all philistines who do not understand the reasons for the struggle and who do not wish to learn, think, and discover the ideological roots of the divergence of views. At this time of confusion, disintegration, and wavering it is easy for Trotsky

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to become the 'hero of the hour' and gather all the shabby elements around himself. The more openly this attempt is made, the more spectacular will be the defeat" (Lenin 1910l, 21/45–46; see further Lenin 1914l). At times, the tares are named in terms of a flagship journal, such as the Golosists (liquidators and the journal *Golos*), Vperedists (otzovists and *Vpered*), or individuals like the Trotskyists (usually conciliators), Plekhanovites (various positions depending on Plekhanov's own predelictions), Potresovites, and so on.

24. Lenin's texts contain numerous references to the SRs, of which only a sample may be given (Lenin 1902q, 1902m, 1902o, 1902b, 1902h, 1903g, 1905z, 1909h; 1905x[1], 22–23/64–65). For a contemporary account of the SRs and their differences with the Social-Democrats, see Alexinsky's *Modern Russia* (1913, 258–62). On Lenin's effort to locate the SR inspiration in Narodism, see especially: "Russia's backwardness naturally accounts for the firm footing that various obsolete socialist doctrines gained in our country. The entire history of Russian revolutionary thought during the last quarter of a century is the history of the struggle waged by Marxism against petty-bourgeois Narodnik socialism. While the rapid growth and remarkable successes of the Russian working-class movement have already brought victory to Marxism in Russia too, the development of an indubitably revolutionary peasant movement—especially after the famous peasant revolts in the Ukraine in 1902—has on the other hand caused a certain revival of senile Narodism. The Narodnik theories of old, embellished with modish European opportunism (revisionism, Bernsteinism, and criticism of Marx), make up all the original ideological stock-in-trade of the so-called Socialist-Revolutionaries. That is why the peasant question is focal in the Marxists' controversies with both the pure Narodniks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries" (Lenin 1905z[1], 439/40). As for the Mensheviks, the literature purely by Lenin is almost endless, functioning like an unresolved trauma that he keeps revisiting. Volume 19 of the *Collected Works* (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [*LPSS*] 23 and 24) is particularly voluminous, but see also literature from the moment of the split and afterward (Lenin 1903s, 1903u, 1903h, 1903v, 1903l, 1904g, 1904b, 1904d, 1904f; 1905i[1], 145–46/246–47; 1905j[3], 544–54/317–27; 1906l[1], 322–33/4–5; 1906j, 362–64/170–72; 1907n[1], 1907u, 1907e[1], 1912b, 1913g[1]).
25. A small sample of the multitude of references from this time, gathered in volumes 24–33 of the *Collected Works* (*LPSS* 32–44), may be cited (Lenin 1917b[2], 1917n, 1917j, 1917v[1], 1917c[1], 1917c[2], 1917s, 1917z[1], 1917n[1], 1917u, 1917a, 1918j, 1918l; 1919t, 232–42/415–25; 1921u, 361–62/241; 1921v, 409–18/307–18; 1921g).
26. Chamberlin also stresses that Lenin was extremely thoughtful and considerate in his personal relations with many opponents and with those who bristled in each other's company—the prime example being the ability to manage Trotsky and Stalin (Chamberlin 1987, 139). See also Cliff (2002, 99–101).
27. A good example of this effort is as follows: "In the approximately twenty years (1894–1914) that Russian Social-Democracy has existed as an organisation linked with the mass working-class movement (and not only as an ideological trend, as in 1883–94), there was a struggle between the proletarian-revolutionary trends and the petty-bourgeois, opportunist trends. The Economism of 1894–1902 was undoubtedly a trend of the latter kind. A number of its arguments and ideological features—the 'Struvist' distortion of Marxism, references to the 'masses' in order to justify opportunism, and the like—bear a striking resemblance to the present vulgarised Marxism of Kautsky, Cunow, Plekhanov, etc. It would be a very grateful task to remind the present generation of Social-Democrats of the old *Rabochaia Mysl'* and *Rabochee Delo*, as a parallel to the Kautsky of today. The 'Menshevism' of the next period (1903–08) was the direct successor, both ideological and organizational, to Economism. During

the Russian revolution, it pursued tactics that objectively meant the dependence of the proletariat upon the liberal bourgeoisie, and expressed petty-bourgeois, opportunist trends. When, in the ensuing period (1908–14), the mainstream of the Menshevik trend produced liquidationism, the class significance of that trend became so apparent that the best representatives of Menshevism were continually protesting against the policy of *Nasha Zarya* group. It is that very group—the only one which, during the past five or six years, has conducted systematic work among the masses in *opposition* to the revolutionary Marxist party of the working class—that has proved to be *social-chauvinist* in the war of 1914–15!" (Lenin 1915b, 258–59/264–65; see also Lenin 1905q³, 148/254; 1905u³, 72–73/179–80; 1905o¹, 505/284–85; 1909l, 1909i, 1909o, 1909m; 1910m, 208–14/252–59; 1912g¹, 1914i, 1914l, 1914a; 1915i, 331–35/343–47).

28. See the multitude of references in my *Criticism of Earth* (Boer 2012a).
29. See also his comment on the Bolshevik–Menshevik split at the second congress (Lenin 1903a, 19/5), as well as: "It is highly interesting to note that these fundamental characteristics of opportunism in matters of organisation (autonomism, aristocratic or intellectualist anarchism, tail-ism, and Girondism) are, *mutatis mutandis* (with appropriate modifications), to be observed in all the Social-Democratic parties in the world, wherever there is a division into a revolutionary and an opportunist wing (and where is there not?)" (Lenin 1904d, 395/385).
30. Lunacharsky too makes use of the image of the word falling "on prepared soil," the word in question being antireligious propaganda with a twist: It argues that early Christianity was characterized by justice, equality, and communal life, that it was betrayed but that workers and peasants can seize it again and bring the kingdom of God to fruition here on earth (Lunacharsky 1985, 114). I would also mention one of the inscriptions on the wall at Mars Field Memorial to the Victims of the Revolution in Petrograd: "1917–18 have inscribed a great glory into the annals of Russia. Mournful and bright days. Your sowing will mature into a harvest for all the inhabitants of Earth." I visited this memorial in April 2012 with Sergey Kozin.
31. As will become clear later, "democrat" here means socialist, for democracy was assumed by all to be inherently socialist.
32. In the struggles with the God-builders and otzovists, he also calls them "bad shepherds," now within the Bolshevik flock (Lenin 1909s, 86/132).
33. Again, compare the interpretation of Theophylact of Bulgaria: "Here are the marks of the shepherd: the shepherd enters through the Scriptures and the doorman opens up [the door] to him. Behind the doorman you may well understand also Moses for to him the words of God had been entrusted . . . And the Scriptures are the door." See http://feofilakt.org.ua/ot-ioanna/glava-10 for the Russian text (translation supplied by Sergey Kozin). Another English translation may be found at www.chrysostompress.org/catalog_explanation_4.html.
34. The same text is also quoted in Lenin's notes for a reply to Plekhanov and Axelrod (Lenin 1902w, 56–57/435–36). The road would become a central metaphor in Lenin's later works, for example, in pieces such as "On to the Straight Road" (Lenin 1908n), "On the Beaten Track!" (Lenin 1908m), and "On the Road" (Lenin 1909r).
35. In order to give some sense of the extensiveness of "philistine" (which translates Russian *fillister-filisterskii*, *meshchanin-meshchanskii*, *obyvatel'-obyvatel'skii*, *poshlost'-poshlyi*, etc.) in Lenin's texts, I offer a selection of references (Lenin 1894b, 159/159, 181/183; 1903p, 57/439; 1904i, 140/108, 141/109; 1904d, 221–22/206–7, 236/221, 278/265, 305–6/292–3, 312–14/299–301, 321/308, 343/331, 410–12/401–3; 1904j, 450/10; 1904h, 458/20; 1905q³, 152/259; 1905u², 172/269; 1905w², 287–88/14–15; 1905q²,

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299/26; 1905t[1], 464–66/230–33; 1905r[3], 77/66, 94–95/84–85, 111–12/101–2; 1905r[1], 295/328; 1905d[2], 354/352; 1906b[2], 218–19/291; 1906l[1], 358/42; 1906z, 386/70, 387/71; 1906t, 462/149–50, 475/163; 1906e, 138/334; 1906f[1], 1906d, 415/229–30; 1907i[2], 462–66/281–84; 1907o[1], 107–9/374–76; 1907x, 185–86/70–71; 1907k[1], 215/85; 1907f, 330/185; 1907p[1], 368/239, 372/242; 1907a, 23/9, 38/25, 40/27, 42/29, 46/33; 1907g[1], 64/56; 1907q[1], 151/157; 1907b, 334/314, 340/319, 344/323, 346/325, 359–60/339–40, 362/343; 1907q, 492/468; 1908a, 265/281, 320/339, 349/370, 350/371; 1908e, 50/37; 1908c, 168/159, 176–77/167–68; 1909g, 51/97; 1911v, 71/123; 1911n, 94/145; 1913y[1], 560/368; 1913r, 563/371; 1913i[1], 549/237; 1913x, 555–57/265–67; 1916a, 33/83; 1918p, 255/265, 276/287, 282/293, 285/296, 288/299, 290/301, 292/303, 298/310, 325/338).

36. In this respect, they would have served as excellent models for Lenin's "revolutionaries by trade."
37. In this case, Lenin criticizes the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets) in the Duma, who, for all their bluster about bourgeois "freedoms," are happy to support the status quo. Elsewhere, he castigates the Menshevik editors of *Iskra*, who pessimistically view developments after the 1905 revolution. They "stand on the side lines, their innocent eyes raised heavenward, solemnly uttering as they beat their chaste breasts: 'We thank Thee, O Lord, that we are not like these wretches and have not sullied our lips with such word combinations' " (Lenin 1905q[2], 302–3/32; see also Lenin 1894b, 199/202; 1907y, 52/39). There are arguably more Pharisees in Lenin's texts than in the Bible (Lenin 1894a, 415/434; 1901f, 44/34; 1902p, 381 fn/37 fn; 1907g, 413/285; 1908a, 185/193; 1908i, 182/174).
38. Indeed, the Cadets in the Duma may cry, "Let the wolves have their fill without any harm to the sheep, let the monarchy with its Upper Chamber be inviolate and 'people's freedom' assured" (Lenin 1906b[2], 215/287–88).
39. Given the range of these references, they are relegated to the footnotes: Lenin 1901g, 291/337; 1903t, 391/161; 1902e, 54/234; 1902c, 94/290; 1897a, 159/142; 1907l, 283/143; 1907f, 325/180; 1894a, 434/455; 1903j, 103/77; 1906q, 388/200; 1907y, 53/41; 1907f[2], 124/140; 1913z[1], 262/335; 1905h[1], 378/378; 1905t, 400/11; 1908b, 305/310; 1914m, 315/173; 1917z, 73/324; 1917r, 294–300/123–28; 1917q, 402/193; 1919l, 378/374; 1920t, 325/352.
40. Lenin 1906b[2], 215/288; 1895a, 116/105; 1897e, 271/267; 1897d, 518/534; 1908i, 182/174; 1907q[1], 152/158; 1909d, 129–30/174; 1911v, 72/124; 1908m, 46/33; 1907n, 379/250; 1906n, 505/194; 1917g, 121/373.
41. Lenin 1907r, 471/346; 1906g[1], 154/352; 1901g, 300/346; 1907z, 316–17/171–72; 1912p, 178/415; 1905w[1], 338/75; 1905r[1], 297/330; 1905w[3], 160/148; 1911m, 300/377; 1914e, 472/338, 474/340; 1915e, 363/20–21; 1904j, 44/4; 1906a[2], 180/379; 1902m, 201–2/394–95; 1902k, 211/439; 1907t, 388/265; 1911r, 223/292; 1908a, 20/10; 1902p, 433/92; 1901a, 395/409; 1897a, 243–44/238–39; 1912a[1], 101/336; 1905m, 450/76; 1907n, 380/251; 1910a, 289/409; 1905w[2], 288/15; 1906s[1], 201/401; 1904d, 404/395; 1905k[3], 37/146; 1916i, 176/289; 1917r[1], 565–67/250–52; 1917b, 221/32; 1917h[2], 425/43; 1920d[1], 25/209; 1905m[3], 360/99; 1908s, 378/131; 1915–1916, 629/608; 1901m, 37/403; 1910a[1], 239/449; 1907g[1], 62/54, 64/56, 65/57; 1908e, 52/39.
42. This slogan was plastered throughout cities, towns, and villages during the dire situation of the "civil" war. It even became part of the new constitution. The ones not working were, of course, the old capitalists. In his debate with Lunacharsky, the Metropolitan Vvedensky comments on this slogan: "When you say you are for the principle of work, I remind you of the slogan, 'he who does not work shall not eat.' I have seen this in a number of different cities on revolutionary posters. I am just upset

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that there was no reference to the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, from where the slogan is taken" (Vvedensky 1985a, 193).

43. Lenin 1909g, 51/97; 1905f, 463/55; 1897c, 462/474, 487/501, 489/503; 1897d, 493/507, 506/521, 515/530, 525/541; 1917d, 37/130; 1917a[1], 317/457; 1917k[2], 67/161; 1908g, 228/230; 1905w[2], 289–90/16–17; 1912f[1], 142/369–70; 1914i[1], 221/68–69; 1902p, 505/167; 1902f, 281/64; 1905a[2], 410/21–22; 1907h[2], 172/56; 1913z, 224/302; 1903b, 306/90; 1917b[1], 242/315; 1905u, 239/349; 1908p, 217/218; 1908c[1], 302/306–7; 1917t[1], 59/309; 1917s, 286/132; 1917n[1], 293/61; 1917g[2], 358/140; 1918d[1], 514/325; 1917q, 403/194; 1920e, 517/160; 1901j, 65/106; 1898c, 26/15; 1899i, 39/19; 1901i, 85/134; 1907g[2], 370/114; 1902r, 112/187; 1914e[2], 273/272; 1910–1916, 50; 1912o[1], 304/102; 1920x, 497/294; 1917h[2], 467/89; 1905x[2], 237–38/222–23; 1905b[1], 33/141–42; 1906j, 358/166; 1907v[1], 116/383; 1910a, 289/409; 1913g, 549–50/349–50; 1918m, 391–92/357–58; 1921k, 308/402. By contrast, the peasants' efforts at knocking at the landlord's door have been notably futile. Lenin quotes a peasant representative, Moroz, at the Duma: " 'Unless you bring the priest some bread and a half bottle of vodka he won't baptise a child for you . . . And yet they talk about Holy Gospel and read: "Ask and it shall be given you; knock and it will be opened unto you." We ask and ask, but it is not given us; and we knock, but still it is not given us. Must we break down the door and take it?' " (Lenin 1907b, 385/365–66).
44. Lenin 1901b, 169/166–67; 1905r[1], 296/329; 1906n, 505–6/194–95; 1912a[1], 98–99/333; 1906f[2], 399/212; 1901e, 243/289; 1905w[2], 283/9; 1919o, 459/33; 1919r; 1921r, 110/308; 1904p, 113/174; 1903t, 392–93/162–63; 1913y[1], 559–61/367–69; 1917u[1], 32–33/123–24; 1917w[1], 265/94; 1906u, 268–70/67–69. Lenin also refers to milk and honey in his debates with other Social-Democrats: "It can, of course, be said that the struggle of different parties at the labour congress would lead to a wider field of action for the Social-Democrats and to their victory. If that is the way you look at the labour congress, you should say so straight out, and not promise the milk and honey of 'an element of unity' " (Lenin 1907f, 324/179).
45. This was especially the case after Menshevik control in 1902 of *Iskra*, the slogan of which was: "From a spark will burn a flame" (Lih 2008, 162).
46. Lenin 1917h, 129/332; 1902p, 499/161–62; 1900c, 611–12/613–14, 615/617, 620/622; 1905u[3], 78/185; 1909g, 51–52/97–98; 1903h, 114/93; 1905w[2], 289 fn/16 fn; 1911p, 166/210; 1907b, 293/270; 1903i, 62/26; 1908a, 81/79; 1905q, 51/155; 1906e, 138/334; 1907s, 142/170; 1913s, 254/325; 1901g, 288/333–34; 1910m, 237/282; 1905f[2], 230/340; 1916g, 108/99; 1918e[1], 458/265; 1920u, 452/71; 1921q, 147/353. The last quotation is applied to the Mensheviks (Lenin 1903n, 83/51).
47. Lenin 1905e[3], 543/316; 1903p, 57/439; 1901f, 55/45; 1905g[3], 247/232, 250/235; 1906i[1], 405/218; 1895b, 26/13; 1917e[1], 201–2/404–5; 1917s[1], 126/379; 1917w, 413/203; 1921s, 278/137; 1904l, 239/361; 1899a, 287/311; 1905j[1], 67/170. On the connections with Joshua, see Vaiskopf (2001).
48. For example, the parable of the Moss is based on the saying, "if it stays in one spot, a stone will gather moss," or, as it is known in English, "a rolling stone gathers no moss" (Lenin 1899b, 250–51/245–46). Or "Spitting in the Well" is drawn from the Russian proverb, "Don't spit into a well, you may want to drink from it" (Lenin 1902p, 503/165). Or, the parable of the Stinking Sewer comes from the saying, "Leave it alone and it won't stink" (Lenin 1905v[1], 192/180).
49. For example, the tale of the "Lion's Share" comes from I. A. Krylov (Lenin 1897e, 313/312), while that of the Sweetheart is drawn from the heroine of a story by Chekhov by the same name (Lenin 1905y[2]).

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50. Lenin 1894b, 236/244; 1905a, 318/47; 1897e, 313/312; 1897c, 453/418; 1899b, 250–51/245–46; 1901g, 278/324; 1902p, 501–2/163–64, 505/167; 1902d, 248/23; 1903h, 117/96; 1902b, 272–73/52–53; 1903t, 393–94/163–64; 1903f, 515/320–21; 1903n, 81/49–50; 1904d, 254/240; 1904e, 1904h, 455/16–17; 1905u, 240/350, 241/351, 242/352; 1905c[1], 311–12/40; 1905i[3], 414/183; 1905r[3], 64/53; 1905i, 184–85/171–72; 1905v[1], 192/180; 1905g, 202/191; 1906m, 122/318; 1905x, 258–59/243; 1905r[1], 295–96/328–29, 298/331; 1905h; 1905h[1], 377–78/377–78; 1912o, 352/150; 1905b, 392/1; 1907v[1], 116/382–83; 1905y[2], 1905y[1], 45–46/100–1; 1905c[3], 79/137; 1906b[2], 203/275; 1906t, 480/168–69; 1907x[1], 98–99/365–66; 1906j[1], 486/175; 1906l[1], 356/39; 1906e, 136/332; 1906j, 356/164; 1907l[1], 424–25/239–40; 1907j[1], 155/22; 1907l, 282–83/142–43; 1907f, 329/184; 1907n, 380/251; 1907a, 22/9, 27/13, 28/15; 1908a, 93/91; 1909h, 344/353; 1909m, 20–22/64–65; 1912b[1]; 1912e[1], 108–9/345–46; 1911d, 344–53/2–10; 1912i, 1913r, 572/380; 1913a, 107/176; 1913p[1], 346/414; 1913t, 377–78/6–7; 1910g, 372–73/94–95; 1915l, 138/134–35; 1916b, 330/27–28; 1917v[2], 267–68/344–45; 1917j[1], 330/45; 1917k[2], 88/183; 1917i; 1917h, 112–13/314, 119/321, 120/322; 1918o, 1918e[1]; 1918d, 155/157–58, 156/159; 1918c[1],1919a, 70–71/55–56; 1919j, 347–48/341–42; 1920a[1], 432/220; 1920i, 37/19–20; 1920b, 357–59/387–89; 1920l, 421/32; 1921n, 56–57/247–48; 1921i, 75/269, 93–95/289–91; 1921q, 147/353; 1921w, 190/31, 223–24/67–68; 1921u, 334/210–11; 1921v, 431/331; 1921h, 173/324–25; 1922g, 204–5/415–16, 207–9/418, 210/422; 1922a, 288/95–96; 1923a, 496/399; 1901g, 278/324; 1910z, 420/249; 1922i, 350/174; 1909y, 75/122–23; 1900e, 54/56; 1905n[3], 331/60; 1915m, 356/13; 1915b, 208/212; 1921j, 43/234; 1905x[1], 21/64; 1913z, 227/305; 1918i; 1918p, 279/290; 1919d[1], 311/307; 1919n, 59/220–21; 1913[1], 560–61/368–69; 1913v, 499–500/233–34; 1917t; 1902w, 69/251; 1918g, 1918b, 185/106; 1918e, 246–47/177, 274/205; 1918h, 434/409; 1920d, 252–53/166–67.
51. The text in question quotes Feuerbach: "'How banal,' wrote Feuerbach, 'to deny that sensation is the evangel, the gospel *(Verkündung)* of an objective saviour.' [Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke,* X. Band, 1866, S. 194–95.] A strange, a preposterous terminology, as you see" (Lenin 1908a, 130/132; see also Lenin 1897c, 386/348; 1899b, 317 fn/314 fn). Yet, Lenin was not averse to declaring a position of his own as the "gospel" or "holy truth!" [святая истина! – *sviataia istina!*] (Lenin 1905e[3], 542/315).
52. The story by Chekhov may be found at www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ac/jr/194.htm.
53. This story by Chekhov may be found at www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/ac/jr/189.htm. A multitude of further examples may be found with any reading of Lenin's works. Krupskaya mentions that, contrary to a rumor that Lenin had never read a novel in his life, she found he was "fond of the classics which he knew intimately" (Krupskaya 1930, 40; see also Rubenstein 1995, 369–72).
54. Apart from letters and telegrams, Lenin wrote more than 30 works on agriculture, ranging from book-length studies to brief newspaper articles, including the famous "decree on land" after the October Revolution (Lenin 1917f[2], 257–61/23–27). The earliest work is *New Economic Developments in Peasant Life* from 1893, the last is "How We Should Reorganise the Peasants' and Workers' Inspection (Recommendation to the Twelfth Party Congress)," written just before the third stroke that completely incapacitated him in early 1923 (Lenin 1893, 1923b). His massive work, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* from 1899, gives detailed assessments of the effect of capitalist practices on Russian Agriculture (Lenin 1899b). And then, there is the whole of volume 43 of the *Collected Works* given over to his notebooks on the agrarian question (Lenin 1910–16). For contemporary works that vividly depict the desperate and oppressive

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conditions of rural life in Russia and the massive changes underway, see Alexinsky's *Modern Russia* (1913, 114–61) and Walling's *Russia's Message* (1908, 166–91).

55. An excellent first-hand account of such a process may be found in Kanatchikov's autobiography, where he traces in both painful and exhilarating detail how he makes the transition from his religious peasant worldview to a radical socialist, all the while bearing within himself full knowledge of that world he felt he had left behind (Kanatchikov 1932).
56. He calls them the " 'vacillators'—in other words, the 'conciliators'—who are trying to bridge the gulf with hollow phrases and sweeping platitudes?" (Lenin 1911e, 179/234). More substantially, Lenin challenges Trotsky's argument that with the "maturing" of the proletariat, the various factions, which were themselves arguments among intellectuals, would fade away. For Lenin, the outcome is simply compromise (Lenin 1911l, 258/335).
57. As Krupskaya writes: "One could cite dozens of examples like this. Ilyich hit back hard when he was attacked, and defended his point of view, but when new problems had to be tackled and it was found possible to cooperate with his opponent, Ilyich was able to approach his opponent of yesterday as a comrade. He did not have to make any special effort to do this" (Krupskaya 1930, 251).
58. Lih provides another example of a heated argument with Georgy Solomon while both were in Brussels in 1908. Arguing about the role of Social-Democrats in the Duma, Lenin became increasingly heated and polemical. Solomon was offended and said so. "Lenin backtracked, gave him a sort of a hug, and assured him that the expressions that escaped him in the heat of argument were not meant to be taken personally . . . (Similar apologies can be found throughout Lenin's correspondence.) Lenin's curiously impersonal abuse was not directed at Solomon as an individual, but against all the sceptics, pessimists, defeatists" (Lih 2011, 110).
59. Sectarian to the extent that the Mensheviks chose that title for themselves, even though they had superior numbers at first, for to be in the "minority" was to be the advanced revolutionary group, cutting an innovative path of their own.
60. Again, as Krupskaya writes: "He always, as long as he lived, attached tremendous importance to Party congresses. He held the party congress in the highest authority, where all things personal had to be cast aside, where nothing was to be concealed, and everything was to be open and above board" (Krupskaya 1930, 89).
61. A small sense of the complex pattern of *konspiratsiia* may be found in the myriad code names in the letters from volumes 34 to 36 of Lenin's *Collected Works* (*LPSS* 46–54). An entertaining exercise is to match up the list of codes in the appendix with the names themselves—codes such as Bear, Beast, Demon, Heron, Uncle, and Orthodox. The many codes for women indicate the extensive role of women in the illegal movement.
62. On this count, Badiou is wrong with his analogy between Lenin and Paul. Badiou suggests that Lenin is to Marx as Paul is to Jesus (Badiou 2003, 1997), since Lenin himself finds Jesus's sayings much more useful for revolutionary organization.

3 Christian Revolutionaries and God-Builders

1. For a full text of the petition, see Harding's collection, *Marxism in Russia* (1983, 309–12). A good contemporary treatment of Gapon and Bloody Sunday may be found in Olgin (1917, 103–33).
2. On Lenin's "indulgence" to Gapon, see Liebman (1975, 92). Anna Ulyanova, who, along with Lunacharsky, had broken the news of Bloody Sunday to her younger

brother and Krupskaya, may well have suggested this approach to Lenin. Initially, Anna thought that Gapon was a provocateur, but after witnessing events, she wrote to them: "[Gapon] is apparently not, after all, a suspicious character. The wave of accumulated public indignation took this semi-literate person, half naive in his belief in the Tsar and half not entirely sane, to its crest, and he knew how to master the crowd in his pamphlet, *The Workers of Saint Petersburg Go to the Tsar*, sent out with the thirteenth issue of *Vpered*, 1905" (Turton 2007, 47–48). Lunacharsky took a similar line, arguing that Gapon may have been well intentioned, if a little naive, but that he was radicalized by the event and became a "courageous priest" (Lunacharsky 1905c).

3. In Krupskaya's account of Gapon, including the meeting with Lenin, she is noticeably cooler. Sly and naive priest, she calls him, unable to learn, inevitably slipping into his role of police spy (Krupskaya 1930, 111–19).
4. It is worth noting that Lenin's personal library in the Kremlin contained a copy of Gapon's book, *A Proclamation to the Entire Peasant Folk by Georgy Gapon*, which the latter presented to Lenin in 1905 with the following autograph: "To the most honored comrade Lenin by way of good memory from the author. Georgy Gapon April 14, 1905" (see Savinov 2010). The dates of the third congress were April 12–27 (old style), which means that Gapon gave his book as a present on the third day of the conference.
5. Upon meeting Gapon, Lenin describes him as "an enterprising and clever man, unquestionably devoted to the revolution, though unfortunately without a consistent revolutionary outlook" (Lenin 1905i[3], 416/180).
6. "It is to be hoped that Gapon, whose evolution from views shared by a politically unconscious people to revolutionary views proceeds from such profound personal experiences, will achieve the clear revolutionary outlook that is essential for a man of politics. It is to be hoped that his appeal for a militant agreement for the uprising will meet with success, and that the revolutionary proletariat, side by side with the revolutionary democrats, will strike at the autocracy and overthrow it all the more quickly and surely, and with the least sacrifices" (Lenin 1905m[1], 165–66/282; see further on Gapon, Lenin 1905w[2], 290/17, 291–92/19; 1905s, 349/82–83).
7. Mentioning an early rumor in St. Petersburg that Lenin had never read a novel in his life, Krupskaya writes that when they were married in Siberia, she soon found the story a sheer invention: "Vladimir Ilyich had not only read Turgenev, L. Tolstoy, Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* but reread them many times and was generally fond of the classics which he knew intimately" (Krupskaya 1930, 40; see also Rubenstein 1995, 369–72).
8. The first article was written in response to hypocritical celebrations of Tolstoy's eightieth birthday by the liberal press in the same year and the remainder after his death two years later (Lenin 1908j, 1910j, 1910k, 1910c[1], 1910g, 1911i).
9. For an interpretation of Gorky that attempts a reading inspired by that of Tolstoy by Lenin, see Lunacharsky's "Maxim Gorky" (Lunacharsky 1973, 170–85). Lunacharsky's treatment of Tolstoy as a variation on Christian communism is also indebted in part to Lenin (Lunacharsky 1985, 183–85). Although Macherey's reading (1992, 105–35) of Lenin's essays on Tolstoy is the most insightful of the sparse recent literature available, it is at heart a reading inspired by Althusser and Barthes. Lenin thereby becomes a means for developing Macherey's own theory of literature, with no room for the crucial religious element upon which I focus. Less useful are items by Lomunov (1983), Sánchez (1979), and Rubenstein (1995).
10. Unfortunately, Lukács veers closer to Plekhanov on this point than Lenin, despite claiming to base his lengthy reading of Tolstoy on Lenin's interpretation. In the end, Lukács flattens Lenin's analysis, seeking to find more grist for his realist mill. Thus,

9781137323903_10_not.indd 233 4/23/2013 3:50:43 PM

Tolstoy is much like Balzac, a reactionary who is brilliant enough to provide insights into the decay of the ruling class (Lukács 1972, 126–205). Rubenstein's brief engagement attempts to follow Lukács, suggesting that Tolstoy's confusion is a marker of the confused perspectives of the peasants and calling his solution a thin veil covering his insights into social chaos (Rubenstein 1995, 379–82).

11. It is worth noting that Lunacharsky offers a slightly different analysis (1911, 172–74), for he locates the tension within Christian thought and practice. Now it appears in terms of incisive social critique alongside a joyless, home-spun utopia.
12. On this matter, some very useful contemporary sources on the rapid and disruptive spread of capitalist relations in rural areas after 1861 include those by Olgin and Alexinsky, an erstwhile comrade of Lenin (Alexinsky 1913, 114–61; Olgin 1917, 3–36). It is also worth noting that from the time of *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* onward, Lenin argues for a more dialectical appreciation of capitalism, especially in light of its useful breaking down of restrictive feudal social and economic relations (Lenin 1899b). See the further discussion of this dialectic in chapter 4.
13. An excellent contemporary source for such transitions is the autobiography of Kanatchikov, who moves from his village to city, gaining various skills as he works in factory after factory, shedding his religious belief as a crucial part of the worldview of village life and becoming a socialist activist (Kanatchikov 1932).
14. Or, as Lunacharsky puts it, Tolstoy sought out the man "born of God," the "quiet, meek little angel" who divides the land up into little gardens: "he can grow cabbages there, eat them, fertilise his garden and plant more cabbage, and thus, sustaining himself self-sufficiently and ever so sweetly, he will have no need for his neighbour, except for soul-saving talks or mutual prayer" (Lunacharsky 1973, 180).
15. Macherey (1992, 120–34) focuses on these two features, drawing out the implications of what it means for Tolstoy to be both a "mirror" and an "expression" of peasant aspirations and the 1905 revolution. Like Morawski (1965), he downplays Tolstoy's own class location as a landlord, not least because this has a superficial resemblance to the sociobiological position of Plekhanov, in which Tolstoy merely expresses the ideology of the aristocracy.
16. Lenin is keen to avoid the mechanical interpretation of Plekhanov, in which Tolstoy simply expresses the ideology of his own class.
17. Here my assessment differs sharply from Macherey (1992, 131–35), who wishes to develop the position that the text mediates between ideology and the world.
18. Acts 4:32–35 provides a little more detail: "Now the company of all those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need." More than one reader has detected in these verses a loud echo of the famous slogan, "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his need!" (Marx 1891a, 87; 1891b, 21).
19. See also Marx's late acknowledgment of Engels's position (Marx 1881a, 67; 1881b, 161).
20. Tellingly, when Lenin produces a narrative of revolutionary forerunners, he does so with a studied avoidance of the religious component (Lenin 1912r).
21. John Roberts calls this tradition "invariant communism" (2008a, 2008b).
22. In a curious debate that foreshadows the treatment of the God-builders later, Lenin takes one of their number, Bazarov, to task. The debate is curious, since Lenin

and Bazarov seem to be arguing at cross-purposes. For Lenin, the key distinction is between Tolstoy's useful criticisms and his inadequate quietist response, while for Bazarov, one must distinguish between the unnecessary "subjective" elements of Tolstoy's position and those necessary elements that may be objectivized. The first group includes "the idealisation of the patriarchal-peasant mode of life, the attraction towards a natural economy, and many other utopian features of Tolstoyism" (Lenin 1910g, 369–70/92), while the second concerns the explicitly religious items, which need to be objectivized, to become a "genuinely human religion, of which Comte, Feuerbach, and other representatives of modern culture could only dream subjectively" (Lenin 1910g, 369/91). This effort to develop a thoroughly human religion, without any divine beings, was characteristic of the God-builders, but Lenin now reads this distinction in terms of economics versus religion, in which Bazarov opts for the latter. In this light, the distinction is misdirected, for Lenin is interested not in Tolstoy's wayward religious position but in his economics, especially his criticisms of the overlapping depredations of both a resistant feudalism and increasingly triumphant capitalism. However, this is not quite what Bazarov seems to be arguing. A closer consideration of their arguments shows some significant common ground—the inadequate nature of Tolstoy's simple Christian communal life—and differences as to what they wish to draw from Tolstoy. For Lenin, the value of Tolstoy lies in his critique, while for Bazarov, it may be found in the effort to develop a thoroughly human religion, a "warm stream," concerning the emotions, feelings, moral codes, and so forth, which may enliven Marxism's "cold stream" (to borrow terms from Ernst Bloch).

23. Is it possible to read a similarly muted revolutionary element in Tolstoy's own evocations of simple communes, in that they anticipate the moment when such communities may well be established after a revolution?
24. I do not mean the standard point that one may identify multiple strands of Christianity, some of them gleefully leaping into bed with all manner of despots while others wish to depose those despots and consign them to hard labor. My point is much stronger: The internal political logic of Christian theology is perpetually caught between reaction and revolution, which one may trace back to the contradictory moment of its emergence. See further my *In the Vale of Tears* (Boer, in press-a).
25. A certain Count Bobrinsky, in debate with the left-wing priest Tikhvinsky, cited Romans 13:1—"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities . . . anyone who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed"—in his defence of the tsar, before going on to defend private property (Lenin 1907b, 368/348).
26. Elsewhere, Lenin is more dismissive in his criticism. For instance, he mentions a Duma speech from 1907 by the peasant Moroz, who simply said, "The land must be taken away from the clergy and the landlords." Moroz goes on to quote Matthew 7:7: "Ask and it shall be given you; knock and it will be opened unto you." But, observes Moroz, "We ask and ask, but it is not given us; and we knock, but still it is not given us. Must we break down the door and take it?" Lenin observes acerbically, "this is not the first time in history that bourgeois revolutionaries have taken their slogans from the Gospel" (Lenin 1907b, 385/365).
27. Poyarkov also appears in other debates, such as one concerning capital punishment (Lenin 1906g, 430/115). See also Lenin's discussion of the speech by the Trodovik representative, Kiselyov, at the twenty-sixth session of the second Duma (April 12, 1907), in which Kiselyov deploys the Gospel parables of shepherds to castigate the landlords who seek to hold onto their vast estates (Lenin 1907b, 394–95/375–76). I have discussed this text in the second chapter on Lenin's parables. This is not to say

that the Orthodox Church hierarchy did not do its best to silence these village priests, as, for instance, the arch-priest Mitrofanushka (Bishop Mitrofan), who attacked the demand for land redistribution (Lenin 1908b, 306/311).

28. See also his deep appreciation of the genuine and vigorous nature of peasant socialism, compared with the Narodniks, from a piece in 1913 (Lenin 1913y[1]).
29. An incomplete bibliography of Lunacharsky's writings on literature and art alone lists more than 2,000 titles. The eight-volume edition of his *Collected Works*, first published in 1963–67 and now available online at lunacharsky.newgod.su/lib, contains works on literature, art, sculpture, and music, but is also incomplete. Beyond all these, he published a massive amount of material on education after being appointed Commissar of Enlightenment.
30. For an excellent study of the Commissariat and Lunacharsky's role, see Fitzpatrick's study (1970), as well as Ransome and the collection of articles and speeches by Lunacharsky, entitled *On Education* (Ransome 2011 [1919], 83–86; Lunacharsky 1981).
31. Despite initial strikes by schoolteachers, mass walkouts by bureaucrats, and widespread resistance to a new government generally regarded as illegitimate and soon to crumble, Lunacharsky was quite successful in this task: soon enough "teachers, workers, inventors, librarians, circus people, futurists, painters of all trends and genres (from the members of the old Peripatetic School to Cubists), philosophers, ballet dancers, hypnotists, singers, poets from the Proletcult movement, and people who were just poets, actors from the former imperial theatre—all of them came in an endless procession to Anatoly Vasil'evich" (*The October Storm and After* 1967, 266). For concrete measures to bring the intelligentsia on side, see Yermakov's study (1975, 68–71).
32. Although the available critical work on Lunacharsky is woefully thin, useful works include those of Tait, Yermakov, and Fitzpatrick (Fitzpatrick 1970; Yermakov 1975; Tait 1984). Bergman's frustratingly superficial article (1990) does at least provide a workable survey.
33. Another work written at the time, "Ateizm" (1908a), provides a concise statement of his position. *Religion and Socialism* has proved exceedingly difficult to find, largely due to Lenin's spirited attacks on God-building and the condemnation by the editorial board of *Proletarii*. The editors of the eight-volume *Collected Works* (Lunacharsky 1963–67) chose not to include the work in that collection. By contrast, the introduction to a separate volume, called *Religion and Enlightenment* (Lunacharsky 1985), offers a statement concerning the waywardness of *Religion and Socialism* and cite Lunacharsky's own somewhat half-hearted distancing from the work in his later statements. *Religion and Enlightenment* includes a wide range of material, including *Vvedenie v istoriiu religii* (Introduction to the History of Religion), lectures from 1918 which were reworked and published in 1923, and material that goes back to the early 1900s. Given this unfavorable early press and the subsequent Bolshevik victory, *Religion and Socialism* remained a work out of favor. A Yiddish translation exists (Lunacharsky 1921a, 1921b), but as far as the original work in Russian is concerned, only a few extant copies remain. The one in the National Library of St. Petersburg turned out to be too fragile to scan. Only after further inquiry (by my colleague, Sergey Kozin) was a copy found in the Lenin Library in Moscow. A high fee for scanning the two volumes resulted in a much treasured copy made, which is in our possession and is to my knowledge the only pdf in the world. Since then, the text has been screened, converted into modern Cyrillic script (it was published before the 1917 language reform), and proofread. Apart from republication in Russian, a translation is also planned.

34. Even so, he is all too conscious that the task remained incomplete, allowing him to give a general outline and touch on the most important points (1908b, 8).
35. Thus, Plato, usually seen as the pinnacle of Greek thought, is brought down the earth: "Platonism was an aberration of the life instinct" (1908b, 219).
36. He makes the point clearly in *Religion and Socialism* (1908b, 45), and found himself called upon to repeat it—see especially the lecture, "Why I Do Not Believe in God" (Lunacharsky 1985, 146–64), as well as his argument against a spiritual world (Lunacharsky 1985, 206–14). Lunacharsky claimed that he could not remember a time when he believed in God, already deriding religion and the monarchy among his school friends. He relates an occasion when he was playing in the workshop of a silversmith: Taking up the ubiquitous icon, he bashed it on the table and called on God to prove his existence with some suitable punishment. Instead of the Almighty, the silversmith grabbed him by the ear and sternly took him to his mother, who refused to stand in for God's wrath (Tait 1984, 6).
37. For instance, in an early and semiautobiographical poem, *Temptation*, from 1896, the hero is a youthful Manuel, a medieval Dominican monk in Ravenna, who also happens to be an inspired preacher. Enraptured by the young Duchess, urging social reform, the passionate monk is tempted by a gleeful Satan by means of the sensuous sprite, Foletta. Manuel initially resists her charms, only to have rampaging sex with her. But now Foletta herself is converted, renounces immortality, and joins Manuel, who throws aside his orders, to establish a League of the Joyful that will conquer even death (Tait 1984, 25–27). Other such examples include the stories *Wings*, published in *Pravda*, issue 4 (1904), *Charudatta the Wise*, from *Pravda*, issue 9 (1904), *The Funeral*, appearing in *Kur'er*, issue 27 (1903), *Smiling Philosopher* (an attack on Bulgakov), from *Kur'er*, issue 27 (1903), *An Interview with the Devil*, from *Vestnik zhizni*, issue 3 (1906), and the play, *The King's Barber* (Lunacharsky 1906, 37–129). Somewhat different is the poem, "In Commemoration of the Ninth of January," which deals with contemporary event of Bloody Sunday (Lunacharsky 1905b). See Tait's comments on these works (1984, 64–69, 80–82, 86–92, 101–2).
38. Toward the close of the second volume of *Religion and Socialism*, Lunacharsky at first suggests that Plekhanov's willful distortion (in a review) of the first volume may be due to weak eyes or a weak mind, but then settles on the point that the old man is blinded by polemical fervor (1911, 397).
39. "The ethical appeal in scientific socialism is tremendous; on the surface cold and exact, it harbours tremendous reserves of practical idealism. And so all one has to do is bring out in a semi-poetical, publicistic manner this latent content of the teaching of Marx and Engels for it to acquire a new attraction for such elements" (Lunacharsky quoted in Yermakov 1975, 34–35). Note that later, when he was Commissar of Enlightenment, he would stress the need for both types, one technical and scientific and the other artistic and emotional: "The clearest of intellects can and should be joined with a warm and responsive heart" (Lunacharsky 1981, 198). Yet, even here, he tends to side with the latter.
40. Over time, his position on religion and art would vary. At times, he sees a strong overlap between the two, with mutual rubbing together producing some of the great works of art, which need to be defended and preserved against the desires of the puritans within the Soviet government. Thus, both religious and artistic treasures need to be preserved and restored, since communism draws upon and raises to another level all that is best from the past. After all, "God is good when he is dead" (Lunacharsky 1985, 233–53). At other times, he argues that art, which can be either religious or

antireligious, may be used in the struggle against the churches (Lunacharsky 1985, 170–71, 274–76).

41. Describing these items as peripheral features that are often taken as the core, Lunacharsky impressively tackles head-on what was becoming an orthodox position in Second-International Marxism. He cites Plekhanov, Pannekoek, and even Engels in one of his atheistically doctrinaire moments (Lunacharsky 1908b, 22–25). Joseph Dietzgen fares better, but ultimately he too falls short (1908b, 32–37).
42. Or more neutrally, religion is "a way of thinking about the world, a feeling in which the laws of life (the human tendency) and the laws of nature are (or seem) to be reconciled. Every new relative balance between working people and nature brings with it a new form of religion" (1911, 213). These efforts at redefinition should not be understood as either another approach to the old shape of religion or as the antireligious position that attacks that old form, but as a new shape of religion itself (1911, 338).
43. Of course, Marx's own discussion in the Introduction to his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* draws its inspiration from Feuerbach. One of Lunacharsky's formulations quotes Feuerbach: "religion is the grand revelation of the hidden treasure in man, the recognition of his inner thoughts, the open confession of his secret love" (Lunacharsky 1908b, 32). Unlike the fashion among many of his comrades, who followed Engels in feeling that they had moved well beyond the limitations of Feuerbach, Lunacharsky openly relies heavily upon him, stating that he "cannot recommend strongly enough" Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*, for it penetrates to the heart of religion (1908b, 21; see also the whole section on Feuerbach that follows the one on Marx and Engels, 1911, 293–306).
44. When called upon to make some socioeconomic points, Lunacharsky is content to quote significant sections from the work of Karl Kautsky (1911, 27–31). The quotations are drawn from Kautsky's *Foundations of Christianity* (2007, 1977), "Socialism and the Catholic Church" (Kautsky 1903b, 1903a), and his "Ethics" (Kautsky 2010 [1906]). All of these lead Lunacharsky to observe: "Someone like Kautsky is essentially closer than many others to the position defended in this book. Yet, he would be the one to judge against this position . . . In a mild form but he would still do exactly that" (Lunacharsky 1911, 378). The problem: Kautsky emphasizes too heavily the scientific side of socialism, relegating "socialist idealism to a position most humble and unnoticed" (1911, 380). However, such an approach is like "saying that the telescope is more important than the eye; or the pharmacological mixture produced in strict conformance with the rules of pharmacology is more essential than the ill stomach that this mixture is supposed to cure" (1911, 382–83). In his debate with Lunacharsky in 1925, the Orthodox Metropolitan, Alexander Vvedensky, notes Lunacharsky's links to Kautsky (Vvedensky 1985a, 187).
45. For example, "Man is a god. Yes, we will not be other gods, nor worship them or serve them" (1908b, 90).
46. This quotation comes from a lecture, "What is Education?" (Lunacharsky 1981, 45–58). See also similar observations in other writings on education (Lunacharsky 1981, 165, 245, 247). Other statements make a similar point: "If there is a God—understood as life and its high representative—it is the human species. Serving science, labor, and, for the present age, the struggle for socialism, breaking up the old system and the old order of society and of the soul and creating a new society and a new soul—that is the religious purpose of the new man" (1908b, 95). Note also: "I saw before me omnipotent God who embodied not only absolute power, but an infinite lust for life. This God is transposed into his antipode—dark, mindless matter, a God in embryo as it were, the world-egg of the Hindus, out of which worlds gradually emerge, crystals

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and organisms develop, spirit is formed and soars ever higher. Fragmented into myriad finite beings he experiences thousands of destinies. There is not torment which he does not endure, no humiliation to which he is not subjected, no crime which he does not commit. But in the play of light and darkness, light always prevails; in the play of good and evil, the good is exalted until at last, at the price of all his strivings and sufferings, my God rises to his earlier eminence and is enthroned in glory. And all of us are revived in him and are resurrected. All of us are now God and remember ourselves, and the life of the Deity is enriched by the memory of his peregrination from absolute darkness to absolute light" (Lunacharsky 1905a, 262).

47. Here he follows what was already an established line on the Left, deriving from Engels, which he drew from none other than Bruno Bauer, and especially Karl Kautsky (Engels 1894–95c, 1894–95d, 1882a, 1882b; Kautsky 2007, 1977; see also Boer 2012). He also follows Kautsky in arguing that it was a communism of consumption rather than production, which was a crucial reason why it did not become a central feature of Christianity.
48. Indeed, one of the ways of characterizing this collective dimension is through the tradition of defining religion by means of the Latin etymology of the term: "religion is a 'bond' [религия—'связь'; *religiia*—'*sviaz*''']" (Lunacharsky 1908b, 14).

AQ: Please check whether the inserted word is correct.

49. A wonderful doctrine for the bourgeoisie, which "seeks mystery and faith. Gnosticism is deep, beautiful, and flexible" (1911, 104).
50. See also his later statements in the same vein (Lunacharsky 1985, 177–78).
51. "Christ, according to the Gospel, not only heralded the demise of the world, but the overthrow of the proud and the exaltation of the poor and downtrodden" (Lunacharsky 1911, 15). Notably, the prophet Ezekiel is not among the prophets, for he is the conservative purveyor of the priestly spirit (Lunacharsky 1908b, 183).
52. From February 1534 until June 1535, Münster was under the control of radical Anabaptists. During this brief and tumultuous period, a communism of goods was instituted (based on Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35); all non-Anabaptists were expelled or executed; 12 judges were appointed as in Israel of old; the kingdom of David proclaimed, the self-appointed king, Jan van Leyden, took many wives; Münster was declared the "New Jerusalem"; everyone believed that Christ was about to return to earth with a massive army to wipe out all their enemies; and there were myriad dreams, visions, and direct encounters with God. Not content with taking over the government of Münster, these radicals set about organizing campaigns to conquer the rest of the world. In less than 18 months, it was all over (see further Boer 2009c, 9–13).
53. A comparable interweaving of biblical allusions may be found in a much reworked piece, originally three articles, on Vladimir Korolenko (Lunacharsky 1918–21). Korolenko had written a series of letters to Lunacharsky, drawing attention to the injustices occurring under the new government (Korolenko 1920), one of which Lunacharsky forwarded to Lenin, at the latter's request (Lunacharsky 1920). In his reflections on Korolenko, Lunacharsky writes: "should we win, we will by no means chastise him [for his errors], but will say to him with all kindness and love: Our father [Matthew 6], our dear apostle of pity, truth, and love. Don't be mad at us that freedom and brotherhood have to be obtained through violence [Matthew 11:12] and civil war. Yet the task has been accomplished [John 19:30]. Having engaged in this war, the butchers of all people have signed the verdict against themselves [like Pilate]. The world congress of the Soviets of Labour is being summoned [Isaiah 43:1; 51:4]. Russia, which has been torn by the battle yet is victorious and is now venerated by all, is signing new treatises with her sisters who are free [Ezekiel 16, 22–23]. Behold now [Genesis 12:11

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and throughout the Bible to 2 Corinthians 6:2], the spring of beauty, and love, and truth is drawing near [Hosea 6:2; Ezekiel 16:60]—so be creative, oh father [Genesis 1], and teach us [Torah]. The dark period when you, being soft of heart, got confused without really willing it, is gone now [Psalm 23]. The flood has passed. Behold, here's the pigeon with an olive branch [Genesis 6–9], so go out and plant roses upon the earth that has been renewed [Hosea and the prophets]." My thanks go to Sergey Kozin for directing me to these texts and providing the translation. On the high regard held by the peasants for Korolenko, who criticized in a similar fashion the excesses of the autocracy, especially through his journal, *Russian Wealth*, see Walling (1908, 237–41, 344–46).

54. For a full discussion of the political ambivalence at the core of Christianity, see my *In the Vale of Tears* (Boer, in press-a).
55. Sukhanov provides a telling example: "We discussed everything: regardless of the theme, Lunacharsky's talk, stories, and repartee were interesting, clear and picturesque, just as he himself was interesting and brilliant, glittering with every hue and attractive through his culture and the astonishing inborn talent that permeated him from head to foot. I remember hearing a woman I knew, who didn't know Lunacharsky, tell of her trip home from a boring meeting. Sitting opposite her in the tram Lunacharsky, who was also on his way home from the same place, was telling his neighbour about the meeting. Though the meeting had bored her to death the entire evening, it now, as reported by Lunacharsky, flashed and glittered, adorned with colours whose existence had not been suspected by the average person there. Lunacharsky's account of it was more interesting than the reality itself. Lunacharsky was like that always and with everything" (Sukhanov 1955 [1922], 375).
56. "We are surrounded by great numbers of people for whom the appeal of religion fills some definite need. Among them are elements (in particular the peasantry, as I saw it) for whom it would be easier to reach the truths of socialism through their religio-philosophical way of thinking than in any other way" (Lunacharsky quoted in Yermakov 1975, 34).
57. A recent example of such an effort to import—now in a positive register—Christian themes into a reading of Lenin is made by Lars Lih, for whom Lenin becomes analogous to the evangelical, Bible-thumping revivalist propagating the "Gospel" of Marxism during a "great awakening" (Lih 2007). See also Lih's monumental *Lenin Rediscovered*, where he insists on using the language of preaching "the good news," religious fervor, proselytizing, calling, outward sign and inward grace, and *ecclesia militans* (Lih 2008, 22, 42, 48–49, 55, 71, 76, 80, 82, 106–7, 113, 117, 140–41). Even Kautsky could write: "Socialism is no message of woe for the proletariat but rather good news, a new gospel [*ein neues Evangelium*]" (Kautsky 1910, 230–31).
58. This was an argument already propagated by those in the Orthodox Church who were sympathetic to the communists. In his debate with Lunacharsky in 1925, the Metropolitan of Moscow, A. I. Vvedensky, calls Marxism an atheistic gospel [*evangelie*] (Vvedensky 1985a, 190). For a recent example, see Gabel's superficial analysis (Gabel 2005, 179–83).
59. See Lunacharsky's observations on the strongly anticommunist development of Berdyaev's thought, who predicted a new Dark Ages with the communist revolution and the need for a new Renaissance (Lunacharsky 1985, 139–45).
60. In this light, Jesus was "the model of an avenger, a judge, and a founder of life . . . the model of blissfulness in chiliastic force, the model of earthly life in his love, patience, and communism" (Lunacharsky 1911, 16).
61. See also her positive comments, in her memoirs, on the first impression made by Lunacharsky (Krupskaya 1930, 121).

62. See also Lenin's articles in *Pravda* and *Put' Pravdy* (Lenin 1913m[1], 1914h).
63. One cannot say that Lenin is inconsistent. As with the priest or the believing worker I discussed in chapter 1, Lenin writes concerning the God-builders: "Another example. Should members of the Social-Democratic Party be censured all alike under all circumstances for declaring 'socialism is my religion,' and for advocating views in keeping with this declaration? No! The deviation from Marxism (and consequently from socialism) is here indisputable; but the significance of the deviation, its relative importance, so to speak, may vary with circumstances. It is one thing when an agitator or a person addressing the workers speaks in this way in order to make himself better understood, as an introduction to his subject, in order to present his views more vividly in terms to which the backward masses are most accustomed. It is another thing when a writer begins to preach 'god-building,' or god-building socialism (in the spirit, for example, of our Lunacharsky and Co.). While in the first case censure would be mere carping, or even inappropriate restriction of the freedom of the agitator, of his freedom in choosing 'pedagogical' methods, in the second case party censure is necessary and essential. For some the statement 'socialism is a religion' is a form of transition from religion to socialism; for others, it is a form of transition *from* socialism to religion" (Lenin 1909a, 409/422–23).
64. Note that this work was published after the first volume of *Religion and Socialism* and before the second. As I argued earlier, the second volume may in some respects be seen as Lunacharsky's response.
65. Harding provides a useful survey of the various elements of this complex situation (Harding 2009, vol. 1: 276–81).
66. For example: "The spring of 1909 saw a formal break between the Bolsheviks (as represented by their leading body) and the so-called Vperedists, who accepted otzovism or considered it a 'legitimate trend' and defended 'god-building' and the reactionary philosophy of Machism. This break revealed the main features of 'Left liquidationism,' its leaning towards anarchism, just as Right liquidationism, or liquidationism proper, leans towards liberalism" (Lenin 1914i, 266/119). Lenin repeatedly attempts to link these various strands (Lenin 1909x, 1909s, 1909g, 1908c[1], 1909p, 1909b, 1909e, 1909l, 1909n, 1909j, 1909y, 1910e[1], 1910o, 1912b)
67. See Lenin's letters to Gorky on this matter (Lenin 1908u, 1908q, 1908r, 1909v, 1909w).
68. For an insightful reading of Gorky's famous novel *Mother* (1906), especially in terms of its secular hagiography of martyr and saint, as well as distinct elements of God-building, see Clark's *The Soviet Novel* (1981).
69. For a judicious and sympathetic treatment of Proletcult, as well as futurism, and Lunacharsky's mediating role in fostering both proletarian culture and drawing upon all the best traditions of art from before communism (which he saw as the culmination of these traditions), see Yermakov's discussion (1975, 77–121).
70. Or, as he puts it elsewhere: "A healthy life intensified to the 'maximum' is at the same time the 'maximum' of pleasure. This ideal 'maximum' would be achieved where all the organs of a living body, including the organs of so-called spiritual life, function absolutely correctly, that is, *in accordance with their structure*" (Lunacharsky 1963–67, vol. 7: 14).
71. In a letter to Lunacharsky of April 16, 1908, Lenin adds a postscript to the effect that philosophical differences would no longer remain a private matter: "P. S. *Privately*, about philosophy: I cannot return your compliments and I think you will soon take yours back. As for me, I have parted company (and probably for a long time) with the preachers of 'the union of scientific socialism and religion' and with all Machists as well" (Lenin 1908w, 392/155).

72. As the notes to volume 14 of the *Collected Works* make clear, Lenin toned down some of polemic—at the advice of his sister Anna who was seeing it through to publication in Russia—in order not to alert the censors unduly. For example, the sentence, "Lunacharsky even 'mentally projected' for himself—well, to use a mild expression—religious conceptions" (Lenin 1908a, 78/75), had been softened from "Lunacharsky even 'mentally projected' for himself a god." Lenin wrote to Anna: " 'Mentally projected for himself a god' should be altered to 'mentally projected for himself'—well to use a mild expression—'religious conceptions,' or something of that sort" (Lenin 1908a, 371/400). For other examples, see further notes (Lenin 1908a, 366–67/391). On Anna's crucial role in seeing the book through to publication in Russia, see Turton's account (2007, 57–58).
73. As Le Blanc points out, it was no accident that Lenin drew much, for good or ill, from *Anti-Dühring*. Le Blanc quotes David Riazanov: "for the dissemination of Marxism as a special method and a special system, no book except *Capital* itself has done as much as *Anti-Dühring*. All the young Marxists who entered the public arena in the early eighties . . . were brought up on this book" (Le Blanc 1990, 159). It was an astute strategic choice, since all would have recognized its authority. For sensitive and balanced treatments of Lenin's argument, see Le Blanc (1990, 156–67) and Marot (1993).
74. Again and again, Lenin hammers home this point. For example: "According to Bogdanov, various forms of space and time adapt themselves to man's experience and his perceptive faculty. As a matter of fact, just the reverse is true: our 'experience' and our perception adapt themselves more and more to *objective* space and time, and *reflect* them ever more correctly and profoundly" (Lenin 1908a, 187/195).
75. In the case of empirio-criticism, idealism equals a psychical starting point, which is a "lifeless abstraction that conceals a diluted theology" (Lenin 1908a, 227/238). In his characteristic style, Lenin beats this drum repeatedly: He writes of the "loophole for fideism," the "open door to fideism," which is surreptitiously opened by the "graduated flunkeys of clericalism or fideism" and the "arrant reactionaries and preachers of priestlore" (Lenin 1908a, 47/41, 76/72–73, 114/117, 167/173, 179–80/186–87, 308/326–27, 335–50/356–70; 1913x[1], 80/118).
76. "Feuerbach very ingeniously and clearly explains how ridiculous it is to postulate a 'transcendence' from the world of phenomena to the world in itself, a sort of impassable gulf created by the priests and taken over from them by the professors of philosophy" (Lenin 1908a, 118/119; see also Lenin 1908a, 153–57/157–61, 200–2/209–11, 304/322).
77. Thus, the "philosophy of the scientist Mach is to science what the kiss of the Christian Judas was to Christ" (Lenin 1908a, 348/369). See also the sections that concentrate on Lunacharsky (Lenin 1908a, 187–94/195–201, 343–46/364–67).
78. In the context of a longer discussion of Bogdanov on the matter of objective truth (Lenin 1908a, 121–27/122–27), note especially: "And however much Bogdanov tries to 'correct' himself by saying that fideism, or clericalism, does not harmonise with science, the undeniable fact remains that Bogdanov's denial of objective truth completely 'harmonises' with fideism. Contemporary fideism does not at all reject science; all it rejects is the 'exaggerated claims' of science, to wit, its claim to objective truth. If objective truth exists (as the materialists think), if natural science, reflecting the outer world in human 'experience,' is alone capable of giving us objective truth, then all fideism is absolutely refuted. But if there is no objective truth, if truth (including scientific truth) is only an organising form of human experience, then this in itself is an admission of the fundamental premise of clericalism, the door is thrown

open for it, and a place is cleared for the 'organising forms' of religious experience" (125–26/126–27).

79. This lack of a necessary connection between the empirio-criticism of Mach and Avenarius and Lunacharsky's ethical, aesthetic, and religious project was noted by Nikolai Berdyaev, albeit unkindly in terms of a "Russian salad of Marx, Avenarius and Nietzsche" (Berdyaev 1909, 16; see also Tait 1984, 62–63).

4 Returning to Hegel: Revolution, Idealism, and God

1. Kouvelakis notes that such periods of isolation were part of a recurring pattern in Lenin's life: Apart from 1914, Lenin also took time to gather 800 pages of notes and write a booklet on imperialism, as well as the theoretical work on the state, resulting in the Blue Notebook and then, while in exile in Finland, the writing of *The State and Revolution* (Kouvelakis 2007, 168). However, Kouvelakis fails to locate these retreats within a broader pattern of Lenin's life, in which he would undertake with much pleasure and relief long bicycle rides, hikes in the mountains, swims, ice-skating, and, while in exile in Siberia, long hunting expeditions in which he spectacularly failed to secure game. I will return to this feature of Lenin's life in the last chapter.
2. Relatively few authors realize the importance of Lenin's immersion in Hegel, although the exceptions are generally excellent (Löwy 1973; Anderson 2007, 1995; Bensaïd 2007; Kouvelakis 2007; Michael-Matsas 2007). Molyneux briefly recognizes the importance of this engagement with Hegel for Lenin's dialectical approach to revolution, but then mistakenly states that it was the first time Lenin clearly grasped Marx's dialectics (Molyneux 2003, 72–73). At first, Harding, in *Lenin's Political Thought* (2009), skips by this moment, identifying the shift in Lenin's *Imperialism* and *The State and Revolution*. However, in *Leninism* (1996, 228–37), he does note the importance of Lenin's reading of Hegel, especially the contrast with *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. Initially, Harding emphasizes Lenin's dependence on Engels, but then in the last few pages (235–37), he identifies the break: Now consciousness may have a creative role, not merely a reflective one in relation to the world. For Harding, who is a political scientist and not a philosopher, the dialectic becomes fluidity and Lenin's conclusion—that ideas may have historical force—is necessary preparation for the 1917 revolution. This flattens Lenin's engagement with Hegel.
3. It is also worth noting, as Kouvelakis does (2007, 178–79), the textual form of the notes, for they were written for private use and self-clarification. As a text, it exists only after the fact, published after the October Revolution, manifested thus as a radical collage.
4. More fully: "The dialectic had become, instead a forgotten folly, a living scandal . . . Nonetheless, it was no longer Hegel who was forgotten, but rather a chic ignorance of enlightened positivism . . . Lenin renewed authentic Marxism not least by a return to the 'core' of the Hegelian dialectic ('contradiction as the source of all movement and life') and through Hegelian logic itself: 'It is impossible completely to understand Marx's *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the *whole* of Hegel's *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!' In this way, it was precisely orthodox Marxism, as restored by Lenin, that presupposed knowledge of Hegel, as against a vulgar, schematic and traditionless Marxism, which, like a shot out of pistol, isolated Marx from Hegel, thus isolating itself from Marx" (Bloch 1985c, 382–33).

5. At the same time, Lenin was all too aware of his own lack of philosophical training, expressing a desire to make amends through extensive study, as he points out in a letter to Potresov in 1899 (Lenin 1899j, 41/31).
6. Kouvelakis (2007, 178–94), whom I follow here, offers a brilliant and detailed reading of Lenin's notes on this matter. Kevin Anderson's study (1995), while lacking in philosophical depth, offers a useful historical survey. Anderson's later essay (2007) is largely a summary of the earlier monograph. Nonetheless, Anderson's detailed reading of the "subjective logic" is a useful guide (1995, 57–97). See also Michael-Matsas's careful reconstruction of Lenin's pattern of reading and note-taking over these months (2007).
7. "**The *richest* is** the *most concrete* and most *subjective*" (Lenin 1914–16, 231/212).
8. "Thought proceeding from the concrete to the abstract—provided it is *correct* (NB) (and Kant, like all philosophers, speaks of correct thought)—does not get away *from* the truth but comes closer to it. The abstraction of *matter*, of a *law* of nature, the abstraction of *value*, etc., in short *all* scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and *completely*. From living perception to abstract thought, *and from this to practice*,—such is the dialectical path of cognition of *truth*, of cognition of objective reality" (Lenin 1914–16, 171/152–53).
9. As Kouvelakis puts it, the genuine "materialist reversal" of Hegel lies "in understanding the subjective activity displayed in the 'logic of the notion' as the 'reflection,' idealist and thus inverted, of revolutionary practice, which transforms reality by revealing in it the result of the subject's intervention" (Kouvelakis 2007, 183).
10. Perhaps, the fullest definition of dialectics appears in these notebooks, where the "Elements of dialectics" are outlined as:
    1. the *objectivity* of consideration (not examples, not divergencies, but the Thing-in-itself). X
    2. the entire totality of the manifold *relations* of this thing to others.
    3. the *development* of this thing, (phenomenon, respectively), its own movement, its own life.
    4. the internally contradictory *tendencies* (*and* sides) in this thing.
    5. the thing (phenomenon, etc.) as the sum *and unity of opposites*.
    6. the *struggle*, respectively unfolding, of these opposites, contradictory strivings, etc.
    7. the union of analysis and synthesis—the break-down of the separate parts and the totality, the summation of these parts.
    8. the relations of each thing (phenomenon, etc.) are not only manifold, but general, universal. Each thing (phenomenon, process, etc.) is connected with *every other*. X
    9. not only the unity of opposites, but the *transitions* of *every* determination, quality, feature, side, property into *every* other [into its opposite?].
    10. the endless process of the discovery of *new* sides, relations, etc.
    11. the endless process of the deepening of man's knowledge of the thing, of phenomena, processes, etc., from appearance to essence and from less profound to more profound essence.
    12. from coexistence to causality and from one form of connection and reciprocal dependence to another, deeper, more general form.
    13. the repetition at a higher stage of certain features, properties, etc., of the lower and
    14. the apparent return to the old (negation of the negation).

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15. the struggle of content with form and conversely. The throwing off of the form, the transformation of the content.
16. the transition of quantity into quality and *vice versa* ((*15* and *16* are *examples* of *9*)) (Lenin 1914–16, 220–22/202–3). *NB: The double parentheses are in Lenin's text.

11. "Hegel exalts knowledge, asserting that knowledge is knowledge of God. The materialist exalts knowledge of matter, of nature, consigning God, and the philosophical rabble that defends God, to the rubbish heap" (Lenin 1914–16, 171/153). And: "a tribute to mysticism = idealism" (1914–16, 177/159).
12. "Plekhanov criticises Kantianism (and agnosticism in general) more from a vulgar-materialistic standpoint than from a dialectical-materialistic standpoint, *insofar as* he merely *rejects* their views a limine [from the threshold], but does not *correct* them (as Hegel corrected Kant), deepening, generalising and extending them, showing the *connection* and *transitions* of each and every concept" (Lenin 1914–16, 179/161). See also: "Dialectics *is* the theory of knowledge of (Hegel and) Marxism. This is the 'aspect' of the matter (it is not 'an aspect' but the *essence* of the matter) to which Plekhanov, not to speak of other Marxists, paid no attention" (Lenin 1914–16, 360/321).
13. Apart from many others, that would include all the writers gathered in Harding's useful *Marxism in Russia: Key Documents 1879–1906* (Harding 1983). In the brief text—"On the Question of Dialectics"—that followed soon after Lenin's reading of Hegel, he also castigates Engels for giving "inadequate attention" to the dialectic, reducing the "the identity of opposites" to "the sum-total of *examples* ('for example, a seed,' 'for example, primitive communism')," all in the "interests of popularisation' (Lenin 1914–16, 357/316). On eclectic approaches to the dialectic, see also a piece from a few years earlier (Lenin 1905w[2], 290/17).
14. Thus, Anderson's statement that "before 1914 Lenin held to the concept of dialectical materialism elaborated by Engels and Plekhanov" is simply mistaken, as the following analysis shows (Anderson 1995, 17).
15. For readers less interested in the detail of Lenin's engagement with Hegel (in which theological questions are more implicit), it is possible to pick up the discussion in the last section of this chapter, as long as the tension between ruptural and vulgar approaches to the dialectic is kept in mind.
16. Or, as Dühring accused Marx: his theory was "based on this nonsensical analogy borrowed from the religious sphere" (Lenin 1894b, 169/170).
17. See Lenin's critiques of abstract, universally compulsory historical schemes, which are mystical and metaphysical and thereby not Marxist (Lenin 1894b, 192–94/195–97; 1894a, 408/26–27).
18. Some ten years later, when he faces the tension between objective and subjective in the dialectic, Lenin sides with the objective conditions of a subjective move, as in his comparison between France and Russia in 1905 (Lenin 1905q[2], 297–98/24–25).
19. A sentiment similar to the "eternal process of development" may be found in statements through the following years (Lenin 1904d, 409–10/400–1; 1910d, 39/84–85; 1913r[1], 24/43–44). And in his *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Lenin deploys a rather mechanical, developmental pattern of thesis, antithesis, and negation of the negation that leads to a higher synthesis, to interpret the struggles and development of the RSDLP, especially in light of the Bolshevik–Menshevik split during the second congress: "In a word, not only do oats grow according to Hegel, but the Russian Social-Democrats war among themselves according to Hegel" (Lenin

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1904d, 409/400–1). It is useful to contrast this use of "triads" with his earlier castigation of such use in "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social-Democrats" (Lenin 1894b, 163–74/163–75, 183/185, 379/395, 394/411).

20. So also: "In the theory of knowledge, as in every other sphere of science, we must think dialectically, that is, we must not regard our knowledge as ready-made and unalterable, but must determine how knowledge emerges from ignorance, how incomplete, inexact knowledge becomes more complete and more exact" (Lenin 1908a, 103/102; see also Lenin 1908a, 261–62/275–76; 1913r[1], 243–44/40, 43).
21. Note also from 1908: "The professors treated Hegel as a 'dead dog,' and while themselves preaching idealism, only an idealism a thousand times more petty and banal than Hegel's, contemptuously shrugged their shoulders at dialectics" (Lenin 1908k, 33/19).
22. This distinction comes from studies of the biblical prophets, for the texts that "record" (or create) their activities often contain prophecies that were made after the event mentioned. It was thereby a foolproof way of being correct. By contrast, prophecies looking forward to events to come always bear the risk of being false.
23. As Krupskaya notes, Lenin was immersed in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* at the time. It is no wonder, then, that the dialectic of lord and bondsman should appear in that text (Lenin 1899b, 217/212).
24. This argument may also be found in earlier works from the 1890s (Lenin 1897a, 214/207–8, 229/223–34, 235/230, 245/240; 1897d, 176/168, 532/548).
25. Here we find yet another subset of dialectical argument, now in terms of the category of "peasant," which had technically been abolished in 1861: "We put the word 'peasantry' in quotation marks in order to emphasise the existence in this case of an absolutely indubitable contradiction: in present-day society the peasantry of course no longer constitutes an integral class. But whoever is perplexed by this contradiction forgets that this is not a contradiction in exposition, in a doctrine, but a contradiction in life itself. This is not an invented, but a living and dialectical contradiction. *Inasmuch* as in our countryside serf-owning society is being eliminated by 'present-day' (bourgeois) society, *insomuch* the peasantry ceases to be a class and becomes divided into the rural proletariat and the rural bourgeoisie (big, middle, petty, and very small). *Inasmuch* as serf-owning relationships still exist, *insomuch* the 'peasantry' still continues to be a class, i.e., we repeat, a class of serf-owning society rather than of bourgeois society. This 'inasmuch—insomuch' exists in real life in the form of an *extremely complex* web of serf-owning and bourgeois relationships in the countryside today" (Lenin 1902a, 113–14/312). Note also Miliukov, who points out, like Lenin, that the village-commune was a thoroughly exploitative organization, a tool for the government to levy taxes and tasks (Miliukov 1905, 250–51).
26. Note especially: "We are consequently faced with an already crystallised class of workers, possessing no homes of their own and virtually no property, a class bound by no ties and living from hand to mouth. And its origin does not date from yesterday. It has its factory genealogy, and a fairly large section of it is already in its third generation" (Lenin 1899b, 539/540).
27. Note that "advanced" refers not to a revolutionary elite of intellectuals, a position which is all too often attributed to Lenin, but the advanced class of workers in which "purposive" workers and intellectuals meld into a revolutionary force.
28. A similar point is made a couple of years later: "Marxism differs from all other socialist theories in the remarkable way it combines complete scientific sobriety in the analysis of the objective state of affairs and the objective course of evolution with the most

emphatic recognition of the importance of the revolutionary energy, revolutionary creative genius, and revolutionary initiative of the masses" (Lenin 1907a, 36/23).

29. Lih misses the subtlety of Lenin's analysis here, praising the "freedom" of the bourgeois (which he prefers to call "democratic") revolution and lamenting the "loss" of freedom in the later USSR (Lih 2011, 84–86, 201–2). For an articulate contemporary statement of the need for and nature of bourgeois reform in 1903–4, see Miliukov's *Russia and Its Crisis* (1905).
30. "In every country the bourgeoisie inevitably devises two systems of rule, two methods of fighting for its interests and of maintaining its domination, and these methods at times succeed each other and at times are interwoven in various combinations. The first of these is the method of force, the method which rejects all concessions to the labour movement, the method of supporting all the old and obsolete institutions, the method of irreconcilably rejecting reforms . . . The second is the method of 'liberalism,' of steps towards the development of political rights, towards reforms, concessions, and so forth. The bourgeoisie passes from one method to the other not because of the malicious intent of individuals, and not accidentally, but owing to the fundamentally contradictory nature of its own position" (Lenin 1910e, 350/67–68).
31. As one of the better examples of this argument: "The Russian revolution is proceeding along a hard and difficult road. Every upsurge, every partial success is followed by defeat, bloodshed and outrage committed by the autocracy against the champions of freedom. But after every 'defeat' the movement spreads, the struggle becomes more intense, ever larger masses of people are drawn into the fight, more classes and groups of people participate in it. Every onslaught of the revolution, every step forward in organising the militant democrats is followed by a positively frantic attack by the reaction, by another step taken in organising the Black-Hundred elements of the people, and by the increased arrogance of the counter-revolution, desperately fighting for its very existence . . . More and more workers, peasants and soldiers, who only yesterday were indifferent, or even sided with the Black Hundreds, are now passing over to the side of the revolution" (Lenin 1906e, 135/135).
32. Here we find a much earlier and detailed expression of what Negri would come to describe as constituent resistance, to which power must always respond (Lenin 1907a, 36–38/23–25).
33. Already a year before Lenin had voiced his criticisms of Plekhanov's abstract formulations: "The source of all these comical and sad misunderstandings, from which Comrade Plekhanov later tried so comically and so sadly to extricate himself, lay precisely in the violation of that basic principle of dialectics: concrete questions should be examined in all their concreteness" (Lenin 1904d, 372/357). See also Lenin's criticism of Plekhanov for justifying all manner of zigzags in the development of the RSDLP in terms of dialectics, which is no more than a version of eclecticism (Lenin 1904d, 408–9/399–401).
34. See also Lenin's statement that the dialectic involves "examining the movement from every aspect, taking into account both the past and the future" (Lenin 1905l[1], 328/58).
35. See the detailed discussion of various approaches taken to Lenin's political and intellectual biography in the Introduction.
36. So also from 1908: "In order to make a genuinely Marxist assessment of the revolution, from the standpoint of dialectical materialism, it has to be assessed as the struggle of live social forces, placed in particular objective conditions, acting in a particular way and applying with greater or less success particular forms of struggle" (Lenin 1908e, 55/43).

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37. One other, slightly more humorous, approach to the dialectic involves personal relations. Picture a group of people over drinks or maybe a couple whose relationship is on the rocks. The dialectic begins with "impermissible witticisms, rude behaviour, frenzied controversy, slamming of doors, and shaking of fists, as so many philistines imagine to this day." It then moves on from "wagging of tongues" to "giving expression to convictions which were to be translated into deeds." And so the couple enters a fully-fledged fight until they reach the point at which they need only a little more "for the cup to overflow." At that moment, "Quantity is transformed into quality. The negation is negated. All the offended forget their mutual scores, fall weeping into each other's arms" (Lenin 1904d, 404–5/395).
38. In his notebooks on imperialism, Lenin identifies Kautsky, Huysmans, Plekhanov, Hyndman, Heine, and Vandervelde as engaged in "eclectics instead of dialectics," which involves "the 'middle way': 'reconciliation' of extremes, absence of clear, definite, firm conclusions; vacillation" (Lenin 1915–16, 30/4). See also his later comment on "Sophistry instead of dialectics. Everywhere there is play with the catchword 'dialectics,' used in very banal sense. **Not the slightest attempt to see the whole picture**" (Lenin 1915–16, 598/577, emphasis in original).
39. The alternative also applies, as Lenin points out in his reply to "The Junius Pamphlet." While an international war may turn into a national one, a national, revolutionary war may well become an imperialist war, as may be seen in the case of Napoleon. The key is how a given phenomenon develops in relation to its specific conditions as well as the way crucial agents act in such circumstances (Lenin 1916e, 309/5–6). Yet, it needs to be pointed out that this is not the first time Lenin argued in favor of civil war. Under the different conditions of the 1905 revolution, he argues that the uprising that follows a general strike requires not restricted individual acts but the "higher and more complex form of a prolonged civil war embracing the whole country, i.e., an armed struggle between two sections of the people. Such a war cannot be conceived otherwise than as a series of a few big engagements at comparatively long intervals and a large number of small encounters during these intervals . . . In a period when the class struggle has become accentuated to the point of civil war, Social-Democrats must make it their duty not only to participate but also to play the leading role in *this civil war*. The Social-Democrats must train and prepare their organisations to be really able to act as a *belligerent side* which does not miss a single opportunity of inflicting damage on the enemy's forces" (Lenin 1906s, 222–23/11).
40. The argument for a Europe-wide, if not worldwide revolution, does not appear for the first time in these texts after 1914, for we find it already after the 1905 revolution (1905w, 433–44/34–35; 1906l[1], 334/16; 1908g, 227/229; 1908i).
41. As Anweiler and Cliff make clear, Lenin had to overcome substantial inertia among the Bolshevik leadership in order to persuade them of his approach, so much so that he was virtually isolated when he returned to Russia (Anweiler 1974, 154–57, 185–89; Cliff 2004, 122–40, 361–64). In an analogous fashion, the membership of the Bolshevik party exploded at the same time that Lenin was winning over the party to his approach. In January 1917, it had a membership of 23,600, by the end of April 79,204, and by the end of August, it had attained, according to Sverdlov's estimate, approximately 200,000. By October, it had become a mass party (Molyneux 2003, 78). For details on the phenomenal growth in different party centers, see Cliff (2004, 150–51). Even much earlier, when the Bolsheviks were numerically smaller, it is worth noting the circulation of leaflets. Alexinsky mentions that between 1905 and 1907, no less than 26 million books and pamphlets were issued by the Social-Democrats and 24 million by the SRs (Alexinsky 1913, 262).

42. Such an approach even involved an argument that anticipates Agamben's deployment of potentiality: "the democratic revolution in Russia, far from subsiding, is on the eve of a new upswing, and that the present period of comparative lull must be regarded, not as the defeat of the forces of revolution, but as a period of accumulation of revolutionary energy, assimilation of the political experience of preceding stages, enlistment of new strata of the people in the movement and, consequently, of preparation for a new and mightier revolutionary onslaught" (Lenin 1906w[1], 151/225; compare Agamben 2005b, 97–98).
43. Harding uses a characteristically earthy metaphor redolent of Lenin: "The revolution was not like a plum falling into the hand when fully ripe without so much as a shake of the tree. It was, to characterise Lenin's account, more like a turnip. It would swell and ripen in the ground but would take a stout pull to harvest it—otherwise the action of the elements and of parasites would combine to rot it away" (Harding 2009, vol. 2: 73). Or, in Liebman's formulation: "Without wishing to underestimate the weight of economic conditions in deciding the course of political and social evolution, one must take account of the evidence: when, acting 'in the direction of history,' that is, in the narrow margin that social reality allows to human freedom, an individual possessing exceptional powers intervenes, then facts, institutions and states may all find themselves topsy-turvy" (Liebman 1975, 147). See Liebman's excellent account, which illustrates this point, of the period from February to October in 1917 (1975, 116–47). However, Liebman leaves his brief treatment of Lenin's engagement with Hegel to a few pages at the close of the book, almost as an afterthought (1975, 442–48).
44. As Lukács observes, Lenin brought about a "double break with mechanical fatalism; both with the concept of proletarian class-consciousness as a mechanical product of its class situation, and with the idea that revolution itself was only the mechanical working out of fatalistically explosive economic forces which—given the sufficient 'maturity' of objective revolutionary conditions—would somehow 'automatically' lead the proletariat to victory" (Lukács 1970, 31).
45. "By the way, is there still time for some corrections to the section on dialectics? Perhaps you will be so kind as to let me know when it is being sent for setting, and what the deadline is for corrections. It is a question I have been working on these last six weeks, and I think I could add something if there is still time" (Lenin 1915k, 317/48–49).
46. The list includes discrimination against women, the monarchy, social estates, landed proprietorship, and ethnic or national groups.
47. This is really an elaboration of his observation in *Religion and Socialism*: "Was it revolutionary? Yes, of course. In terms of the denial, the radical, ruthless denial of the then civilized world, in terms of opposition to it in light of entirely new forms of life, it is revolutionary. Every ideology that genuinely reflects the mood of the oppressed masses, can only be revolutionary in its depth" (Lunacharsky 1911, 139).
48. See also similar observations in other writings on education (Lunacharsky 1981, 165, 245, 247).
49. As yet a further example, Yermakov relates that Lenin once asked Lunacharsky at an informal gathering to give a talk on the devil. Lunacharsky leapt to his feet and gave an impromptu discourse that lasted over an hour, painting a picture of the diverse representations of the devil throughout the Middle Ages, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in literature and in folk art (Yermakov 1975, 11).
50. A sample of one of the more entertaining pieces on this topic: "Go to the library of the missionary brotherhood, and take down the handbook of laws. There you will read in Article 783, Volume II, Part I, that it is the duty of the rural chief of police, in addition to preventing duelling, lampooning, drunkenness, hunting in the close season,

and men and women washing together in public baths, to keep observation over the arguments directed against the dogmas of the Orthodox Church and to prevent the seduction of the orthodox to other faiths and schisms!" (Lenin 1901g, 291). This policy of freedom of religious expression continued after the revolution until Lenin's death, although by 1927, it became clear that the sects were not so enamored with the Soviet state and the favoritism ceased (Gabel 2005, 412–36).

51. Etkind observes: "The history of *Dawn* demonstrates that this sectarian project was rather an idiosincratic fad (*uvlechenie*) of Lenin and Bonch-Bruevich than the main party line; but it is these two men with this particular fad who ended up claiming a victory in the party and the country alike" (1998, 636).
52. The Old Believers had broken away from the Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century and now had between three and four million members. This was not the first time Lenin had shown interest in this group, for already in 1917, he wrote warmly to Inessa Irmand of an Old Believer, a peasant from Voronezh, a "man of the earth" and a "breath from the Black Earth," who had spent a year in a German prison camp. Even here, Lenin notes that "he sympathises with socialism" and yearns to return to the land (Lenin 1917r[2], 279–80/377).
53. It is worth noting that the Church played an important legitimizing role in the February Revolution of 1917, as a new generation of Russian historians has shown (Rogoznyi 2008; Babkin 2011).

5 Miracles Can Happen

1. In this section, I develop more fully the brief comments on legal and illegal activities discussed in the second chapter.
2. Lih occasionally mentions Lenin's use of "miracle" but does not develop the idea in any systematic fashion (Lih 2011, 79, 118, 184; 2008, 4, 135, 287).
3. See also his digs at the Menshevik sloppiness in writing resolutions (Lenin 1907u, 222/92). Here Lenin seems to be responding to gibes from others in the Party that his own apparently contradictory changes in position were "miraculous" (Lenin 1905c[1], 310/39) and that he entertains a belief in the "miracle-working powers of the intelligentsia" (Lenin 1894b, 331/345). In the early days of *Iskra*, it was accused of the "miracle" of forgetting existing Social-Democratic organizations (Lenin 1902p, 493/154). He also notes the non-socialist critics who attack socialists and their "theory of collapse," "utopianism," and "belief in miracles" (Lenin 1901b, 108/100). But the terminology of miracles is also deployed by right-wing rhetoric, such as the defense of the "miracle" of individual peasant ownership that will turn—as with the rest of Europe—the poverty-stricken and degraded peasants into prosperous, useful, and self-respecting citizens (Lenin 1907b, 368/348).
4. A very different response to the Soviet campaign against relics, although in some ways analogous to Lenin's approach, appears in the work of the erstwhile socialist, Bulgakov. He argues that earthly relics are not the relics per se, but rather an important signifying link with the transfigured body of the saint in heaven, thereby providing an avenue of grace, between the spiritual and physical realms, as also in the incarnation, eucharist, and thereby miracles (Bulgakov 2011).
5. Other references to this negative sense of miracle include the observation that the victory of the revolution and then survival of the Soviet state may appear to be a miracle from a bourgeois perspective but that it is actually due to the unleashing of energy and enthusiasm by communist power (Lenin 1919c, 256/4–5). At the Stockholm conference

of 1917, the possibility of coming to an agreement between socialist parties that supported the national war efforts (the "social chauvinists") and those who opposed the war is described as an ill-founded faith in miracles (Lenin 1917j[2], 270/99–100). In a unique twist, the possibility that the whole communist endeavor in Russia might suddenly be wiped out is dismissed with a curt comment, "this is impossible since miracles do not happen" (Lenin 1918d, 154/156). When speaking of others, the reference to miracle may still have a sarcastic dimension, as when the 1914 "August bloc" of opponents to the Bolsheviks fades away, when the new provisional government after 1917 introduces a rash of legislation, when opponents accuse the Bolsheviks of hoping for miracles (призрак, фантазия [ghost, phantasy] and сказка [fable]), or when the British bourgeoisie manages to get so many of its representatives into parliament (Lenin 1914m[1], 379–80/243; 1917q[1]; 1918z, 357/374, 363/380; 1920b[1]).

6. In contrast to an earlier (1894) quotation from Engels that stresses the negative side of miracles (Lenin 1894b, 172–73/174), now Lenin is comfortable referring to the Engels who wrote: "Miracles are happening here in Elberfeld" (Engels 1845, 23; Lenin 1913x, 556/266). Already in 1902, before any of the revolutions that evoked a flood of miraculous terminology from Lenin's pen, we find a reference to the miracles that even an individual may perform in a revolutionary situation (Lenin 1902p, 447/107).
7. Given his pattern, Lenin would repeat the call on a number of occasions through 1917 (Lenin 1917m[2], 355/72, 360/77; 1917l[1], 43–44/132–33).
8. Instead of чудо, the Russian of this text reads призрак, фантазия (ghost, phantasy), and сказка (fable).
9. Conversely, without the people's support—in the case of a peace with the capitalists—miracles are not possible (Lenin 1917k[1], 376/53). Already in 1915, he was writing of the army: "Today they perform miracles in sheltering from bullets and shrapnel; tomorrow they perform miracles in hand-to-hand-combat" (Lenin 1915b, 253/258).
10. In a more tangential reference, Lenin writes to his mother concerning Lowell's *Mars and Its Canals* that the author describes the canals as "a miracle of engineering" (Lenin 1908a[1], 389/254). And Lenin could be more playful, now that "miracle" was a regular part of his vocabulary: "The greatest miracle of all, in my opinion, would be if the Commission for the Abolition of Illiteracy were completely abolished, and if no proposals, such as I have heard here, were made for separating it from the People's Commissariat of Education. If that is true, and if you give it some thought, you will agree with me that an extraordinary commission should be set up to abolish certain bad proposals" (Lenin 1921f, 74/170).
11. So also with Trotsky, as Cliff reports on a conversation between Lenin and Gorky: "Show me any other man capable of organizing an almost model army in one year and moreover of winning the sympathy of professional soldiers. We have that man. We have everything. You will see miracles" (Cliff 1987, 203).
12. Given the importance of the term in the reception of Lenin's arguments from *WITBD*, Lih gives *stikhiinyi* extensive attention, tracing is various usages in the debates within which Lenin was engaged at the time (Lih 2008, 143, 145, 147, 183–84, 204, 273–74, 309–17, 322, 350–52, 359, 366–67, 376, 387, 389–98, 414–15, 418, 421, 423–28).
13. Note here a quotation by Lenin from *Rabochee Delo*, which criticized the Social-Democratic arguments for the crucial role of consciousness in response to revolutionary spontaneity: "setting up their programme against the movement like a spirit hovering over the formless chaos" (Lenin 1902p, 396/52).
14. The text appears at the close of the section, "The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats" (Lenin 1902p, 373–97/28–53). Note also Walling's observation: "They know that no revolution can be planned beforehand; but

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they propose to be as ready as possible when the psychological moment has arrived" (Walling 1908, 363).

15. For instance, in response to the argument that a constituent assembly may arise in and of itself, Lenin argues—in a piece called "The Theory of Spontaneous Generation" (Lenin 1905g[3])—that such an approach is deluded, much like the story of Christ's immaculate conception. Elsewhere, he stresses that the approaching "wave of the people's spontaneous wrath" must be rendered "as little spontaneous and as conscious, consistent, and steadfast as possible" (Lenin 1907v[1], 116–18/383–85). As Shandro makes clear in an astute analysis, the problem with working-class spontaneity is that it is often locked into the ideological apparatuses of the bourgeoisie, so much so that such spontaneity is unable to develop any strategic independence from its adversaries—hence the specific need for a leadership informed by Marxist theory to contest this troubled hegemony (Shandro 2007, 308–13).
16. For instance, "*Wäre er nur mit etnigem Verstand geleitet warden*. Poor Engels! A pity he was not acquainted with the new *Iskra!* He would have known then how disastrous, noxious, utopian, bourgeois, technically one-sided, and conspiratorially narrow is the 'Jacobin' idea that an insurrection can be *conducted* (*geleitet werden*)!" (Lenin 1905t[1], 479 fn/247 fn).
17. Note also on the general strike of 1905: "The spontaneous growth of this strike, unexampled in point of magnitude, was far, far in advance of the planned participation in the movement on the part of the organised Social-Democrats" (Lenin 1905p[2], 117/223).
18. Note also: "Revolution, in the strict and direct sense of the word, is a period in the life of a people when the anger accumulated during centuries of Avramov brutalities breaks forth into *actions*, not merely into words; and into the actions of *millions of the people*, not merely of individuals" (Lenin 1906b[2], 247/321).
19. That coup may have been unexpected, "a downright unbelievably sharp turn in events" (Lenin 1917t[2], 289/119), but it was not a spontaneous upsurge. On putsches: "The term 'putsch,' in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses" (Lenin 1916b, 355/53). By comparison, note the vast numbers that joined the Bolsheviks by the time of the October Revolution; see Molyneux and Cliff (Molyneux 2003, 78; Cliff 2004, 150–51).
20. Often this emphasis was in opposition to the Mensheviks, who tended to oppose rigorous organization and revolutionary tactics. See especially "Should We Organise the Revolution?" (Lenin 1905u[2]). Note particularly the following: "For the factory, which seems only a bogey to some, represents that highest form of capitalist co-operation which has united and disciplined the proletariat, taught it to organise, and placed it at the head of all the other sections of the toiling and exploited population . . . Mortal fear of this school and utter failure to understand its importance as an organising factor are characteristic of the ways of thinking which reflect the petty-bourgeois mode of life and which give rise to the species of anarchism that the German Social-Democrats call *Edelanarchismus*, that is, the anarchism of the 'noble' gentleman, or aristocratic anarchism, as I would call it. This aristocratic anarchism is particularly characteristic of the Russian nihilist. He thinks of the Party organisation as a monstrous 'factory'; he regards the subordination of the part to the whole and of the minority to the majority as 'serfdom' (see Axelrod's articles); division of labour under the direction of a centre evokes from him a tragi-comical outcry against transforming people into 'cogs and wheels' (to turn editors into contributors being considered a particularly atrocious species of such transformation); mention of the organisational Rules of the

Party calls forth a contemptuous grimace and the disdainful remark (intended for the 'formalists') that one could very well dispense with Rules altogether" (Lenin 1904d, 389/379–80).

21. Only a sample of this extensive literature may be cited (Lenin 1902g, 1903o, 1903n, 1904e, 1904d, 1904j, 1905j, 1905a[1], 1905n, 1905n[1], 1905h[2], 1905i[3], 1907s[1], 1907r, 1907a[1], 1907b[1], 1909e, 1911k, 1911j, 1912h[1], 1913n[1], 1906t[1], 1906u[1], 1906a[1], 1907m, 1907j, 1908h, 1917e[2]; 1917h, 105–8/306–9; 1917w, 1918s; 1919p, 425–27/449–52; 1919k). The revolutionary reconstruction after October 1917 ranges from emergency matters relating to food, fuel, and transport, through appropriating the best of capitalist practices, such as banking, production methods, and accounting, to the constant urging for disciplined effort in organization in reconstructing everything from libraries to industry. Myriad references may be found in volumes 26–33 of the *Collected Works* (*LPSS* 34–45).
22. "Facts, if we take them in their *entirety*, in their *interconnection*, are not only stubborn things, but undoubtedly proof-bearing things" (Lenin 1917i[2], 272/350). And: "This is a fact and facts are stubborn things" (Lenin 1917e[1], 197/400). See also: "This documentary material is dry, of course. Not everybody will have the patience and perseverance to read the draft resolutions and compare them with the resolutions that were adopted, to ponder over the significance of the different formulations of each point and of each sentence. But whoever takes a really intelligent interest in the decisions of the Congress cannot shirk such serious work" (Lenin 1906l[1], 377/61).
23. When he did not have the data to hand, he would occasionally be thrown and then reflect on the role of memory and textual analysis. An insight into these reflections appears after the Unity Congress of 1906. He writes when reading through the minutes: "Before proceeding with the subject, I must make an important reservation. It is quite impossible for me to remember in detail everything that happened at the Congress . . . I was unable to take notes during the sessions. One cannot entirely trust one's memory without notes . . . The experience of previous congresses (the Second and the Third), which were attended by fewer delegates, has convinced me that, even if one pays the closest attention to the proceedings, one cannot draw an exact picture of the congress from memory. When the minutes of the Second and Third Congresses appeared, *I read them as if they were new books, although I myself was present at those congresses*" (Lenin 1906l[1], 321/4; emphasis added).
24. A sample of such material may be cited here (Lenin 1899e, 1899c, 1902p, 1902d, 1902e, 1904f, 1905y[3], 1905y[3], 1905r[3], 1905u[1], 1905k[2], 1906w[1], 1906y[1], 1908l; 1906m, 125–26/321–22; 1907r[1], 1907b[2], 1907v, 1907a[2], 1907o, 1907x[1], 1907c[2], 1907w, 1907f[1], 1907t[1], 1907z[1], 1907p, 1907k[1], 1911b, 1911f, 1907h[1]).
25. Engels's works, gathered in MECW 11 onward (with less in MEW 11), cover the European revolutions of 1848–49, the Crimean War, the Franco-German war, the Indian uprising against the British, and so on. Many also appear in MECW 18, including articles on topics such as "Attack," "Bayonet," "Army," "Bivouac," and many more for *The New American Cyclopaedia*. Perhaps, the best are those on "Cavalry," "Infantry," and above all "The History of the Rifle," written for a journal with the intriguing name of *The Volunteer Journal, for Lancashire and Cheshire* (Engels 1860). Most importantly for Lenin, Engels also wrote extensively on the relations between social relations and the nature of the army, especially how the nature of the military is a good indicator of the nature of social relations. He argued for a militia as the best form for communist society, argued for the vital role of guerrilla warfare, and even saw the value of the clergy becoming involved in such militias (Engels 1870c, 198–200).

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26. The army, especially the St. Petersburg garrison, would become crucial to the success of the October Revolution, as Cliff and Wade make clear (Cliff 2002, 162–65; Wade 2005, 231–32). And this experience would imprint itself on subsequent communist revolutions. Not only is the army vital for the initial success of the seizure of power, but it is needed for the defense of the new order against the onslaught of those who would seek to bring the new order undone.
27. What is needed, therefore, are: "1) the armed proletariat and peasantry, 2) organised advance detachments of representatives of these classes, and 3) sections of the army that are prepared to come over to the side of the people. It is all this taken together that constitutes a *revolutionary army*" (Lenin 1905f[1], 366–67/365). See the mature statements in *Letters from Afar* and other works from 1917 (Lenin 1917j[1], 320–32/34–47; 1917p[2]).
28. "The nuclei of such organisations should be very small, voluntary units of ten, five, perhaps even three persons . . . Less formality, less red tape, more simplicity in organisation, which must be as mobile and as flexible as possible . . . No Party organisation will 'arm' the masses. On the contrary, the organisation of the masses into light, mobile, small fighting units will, when things begin to move, render a very great service in regard to procuring arms . . . People who are well known to each other will form them in advance. People who do not know each other will form squads of five and ten on the day of the fight, or on the eve of the fight, on the spot where fighting takes place, if the idea of forming such units is spread widely among the masses and actually adopted by them" (Lenin 1906m, 126–67/322–23; see also Lenin 1906w[1], 153–54/228–29).
29. Shandro offers an excellent analysis of the workings of this dialectic of spontaneity and organization in the developments of the soviet during the 1905 revolution (Shandro 2007). While I have gained much from Cliff's study of Lenin, on this matter, I disagree with him to some extent. He argues that Lenin "bent the stick" as far as it would go, moving sequentially from a spontaneous, "economist" position in the 1890s to an absolute emphasis on organization thereafter (Cliff 2002, 43–68). The problem with this narrative is that Lenin expresses full awareness of the spontaneous, elemental aspect of revolution after the time Cliff claims that he bent the other way toward organization. This awareness grew stronger after actual revolutionary experience, especially in 1905 and 1917.
30. The first hint of an awareness of the importance of agitation among the military appears in *WITBD*, although on this occasion, it is significant precisely because it is a peripheral observation. The hint appears in the footnote: "As soon as our available forces permit, we must without fail devote most serious attention to propaganda and agitation among soldiers and officers, and to the creation of 'military organisations' affiliated to our party" (Lenin 1902p, 468 fn/129 fn). As for the military training of workers, a comment may also be found in 1902, once again in a footnote (Lenin 1902d, 243 fn/18 fn); see also a couple of other brief and early comments (Lenin 1903t, 399–400/170; 1903o, 478/302). The shattering effect of the *Potemkin* and the subsequent, intense focus on the need for agitation in the armed forces and training of socialist detachments takes place, of course, in 1905 (Lenin 1905o[2], 1905s[2]). Statements on the need to develop an armed force and agitate within the army, with a view to merge the two, occur again and again (Lenin 1906k[1], 117–18/11; 1905v[3], 208/411; 1905e[1], 220–22/205–7; 1905y, 283–85/268–71; 1905f[3]; 1905w, 428–29/28–29; 1905x[1], 22/65; 1905[2], 50/106; 1905c, 1906c; 1906w, 174–75/372; 1906s, 220/8; 1907g, 412–13/283–84; 1910r, 1912d[1]).

31. The role of the *Potemkin* mutiny influenced Lenin so deeply that it plays a crucial role in his lecture from 1917 (Lenin 1917b[1], 243–44/317).
32. These elements of the strike include the relations between the economic and political strike, and between individual strikes and the general strike, as well as features such as street-fighting, revolution, unions, strike funds, the mistake of restricting action to strikes, and the role of strikes as teachers of workers that they can indeed stand together against exploitation (Lenin 1905e, 1905k, 1905d[2]).
33. See also Lenin's use of the terminology of "strike-breaking" and "blacklegs" in attacking the public efforts by Kamenev and Zinoviev to counter the decision for an uprising on October 10 (Lenin 1917g[1], 1917e[1]).
34. Many texts are relevant here, of which only a sample may be cited (Lenin 1905e, 1905p[2], 1905v[3], 1905h[1]).
35. See especially: "On October 3 (16) the St. Petersburg correspondent of the liberal Berlin *Vossische Zeitung* wired to his paper about his interview with Trepov's *chef de cabinet*. As the police underling told the correspondent: 'You cannot expect the government to follow a consistent plan of action, since every day brings with it events that could not have been foreseen. The government is obliged to manoeuvre. Force cannot crush the present movement which may last for two months or two years' " (Lenin 1905h[1], 379/379; see also Lenin 1907a, 36–38/23–25).
36. Other examples of this formal tension appear in many places (Lenin 1905i[3], 424/191; 1905c[2], 425–26/195–96; 1905j[2]; 1905d[1], 441/211; 1905m[2], 150–52/138–40; 1907m, 135–36/2–3, 138–39; 1905r[3], 72 fn/61 fn).
37. See also: "a revolution is marked precisely by the possibility and inevitability of sharp changes, sudden turns, unexpected situations, and violent outbursts" (Lenin 1907k[1], 209/79).
38. Compare Lenin's advice to the military units: "Each group should remember that if it allows a favourable opportunity for such an operation to slip by today, it will be guilty of *unpardonable inactivity*, of passivity—and such an offence is the greatest crime a revolutionary can commit at a time of insurrection, the greatest disgrace that can befall anyone who is striving for liberty in deed, and not in word alone" (Lenin 1905f[3], 423/342).
39. See also his effort to discern the signs of the times by outlining conditions for revolution in the early years of the First World War. These include: (1) a crisis of the ruling class; (2) intensification of suffering by the toiling class; (3) a combination of the preceding two that is marked by increased activity by workers and peasants (Lenin 1915b, 213–14/218).
40. Thus, in "On Slogans," Lenin argues that "all power the Soviets" was a valid slogan from February to July 4, but after the counterrevolutionary move, that peaceful slogan was no longer relevant. Now it was to be simply "take power" by armed insurrection (Lenin 1917v[1]; 1917c[2], 253–54/77–78).
41. On this intense period, see Cliff's account (2004, 333–53). One may trace similar utterances throughout August, September, and October—August 30: "It is possible that these lines will come too late, for events are developing with a rapidity that sometimes makes one's head spin" (Lenin 1917t[2], 289/119); September 6: "Every revolution means a sharp turn in the lives of a vast number of people. Unless the time is ripe for such a turn, no real revolution can take place" (Lenin 1917c[1], 229/55); September 12–14: "at this very moment" (Lenin 1917e, 21/241); September 13–14: "determine the right moment" and "at the present moment" (Lenin 1917m[1], 27/247); October 1–2: "No, *not for one more day* are the people willing to suffer postponement" (Lenin

1917u[2], 139/286); October 1: "Events are prescribing our task so clearly for us that procrastination is becoming positively *criminal*... To wait would be a crime to the revolution" (Lenin 1917h[1], 140–41/340–41); October 8: "Our revolution is passing through a highly critical period... The situation is such that, in truth, delay would be fatal" (Lenin 1917f[1], 182/385); October 17: "We are living in a time that is so critical, events are moving at such incredible speed" (Lenin 1917e[1], 195/398); October 19: "the time is ripe" (Lenin 1917g[1], 227/427).

42. Many further samples may be cited (Lenin 1903t, 427–28/200; 1905s, 351/84; 1905e[3], 537/310; 1905r[3], 106–7/96; 1905t[3], 177/157–58; 1905m, 453–54/79–80; 1905k, 337/314; 1918v, 43/29; 1918a).
43. Or in a lecture from 1917, on the revolution of 1905: "It shows that in a revolutionary epoch—I say this without the slightest exaggeration, on the basis of the most accurate data of Russian history—the proletariat *can* generate fighting energy a *hundred times greater* than in ordinary, peaceful times" (Lenin 1917b[1], 240–41/312). In regard to the strike, Lenin writes: "Every crisis reveals the real nature of phenomena or processes, sweeps away the superficial, the trivial, the external, and demonstrates the more profound fundamentals of what is taking place. Take, for instance, the most common and least complicated of crises in the sphere of economic phenomena, a strike. Nothing serves to reveal more clearly the actual relationships between classes, the real nature of contemporary society, the fact that the vast majority of the population has to submit to the power of *hunger*, and that the propertied minority resorts to organised violence in order to maintain its rule" (Lenin 1911q, 189/245; see also Lenin 1905d[2], 347–48/345–46; 1906w, 172–73/370–71).
44. The tension between spontaneity and organization is also manifested in the historiography of revolutions. Given the assumptions of modern historiography, in which one seeks by various means to narrate the overlapping and messy patterns of cause and effect, the unexpected nature of revolution becomes problematic. An excellent instance is Olgin's work from 1917, where he struggles with precisely this problem. Torn between seeking patterns of causation in the lead-up to the revolutions of that year and between developing a mode of narrating the spontaneity of the uprising, he writes: "The simultaneous spreading of revolutionary ideas; this miraculous change in the minds and in the attitude of individuals, this growing willingness of many to sacrifice their lives for what had suddenly become their highest ideal, this response of large masses to the call of a few leading organizations, is to the observer the most beautiful yet also the most inexplicable public phenomenon ever beheld" (Olgin 1917, 85–86).
45. "Accordingly, we present the new, the dialectical method of doing history: with the intensity of a dream, to pass through what has been, in order to experience the present as the waking world to which the dream refers!" (Benjamin 1999, 838, 845, 854–55, 863, 883; 1982a, 1006, 1012, 1023, 1033, 1057–58). Surrealism's influence is more obvious in the earlier drafts of *The Arcades Project*; yet, Benjamin differed from the Surrealists by emphasizing waking from the dream rather than the dream itself. The stunned moment of waking becomes the rupture (Cohen 1993; Pensky 1996; Benjamin 1999, 261–64, 831; 1982a, 577–80, 998).
46. But see Agamben's carefully perverse effort (2005b, 138–45) to trace Paul's influence in some of Benjamin's key statements, in which some of Benjamin's manuscripts are understood to refer to Paul by the spacing out of letters of crucial words (see Boer, in press-b).
47. Even more, this heightened moment is conversely a period of deactivation, when the law (Agamben's other great motif in his interpretation of Paul) is deactivated so that

its potentiality may be pumped up, awaiting its fulfillment. Like the scribe whose full potentiality is manifested when he does not write, *energeia* (act) becomes disengaged so that *dynamis* (potentiality) may flourish. For a sustained critique of Agamben, see Boer and Ojakangas (Boer 2009a, 181–204; Ojakangas 2009).

48. On Žižek's changing positions regarding the Jewish law, see Kotsko (2008, 88–93).
49. As Žižek puts it, "it is easy to suspend the big Other by means of the act *qua* real, to experience the 'non-existence of the big Other' in a momentary flash—however, what do we do *after* we have traversed the fantasy?" (Žižek 1996, 133). One cannot help wondering whether this tension, to which Žižek returns again and again, marks the trauma of his own part in the breakup of Yugoslavia.
50. "This is how we pass from the politics of 'resistance' or 'protestation,' which parasitizes upon what it negates, to a politics which opens up a new space outside the hegemonic position *and* its negation. We can imagine the varieties of such a gesture in today's public space: not only the obvious 'There are great chances of a new career here! Join us!'—'I would prefer not to'; but also 'Discover the depths of your true self, find inner peace!'—'I would prefer not to'; or 'Are you aware how your environment is endangered? Do something for ecology!'—'I would prefer not to'; or 'What about all the racial and sexual injustices that we witness all around us? Isn't it time to do more?'—'I would prefer not to.' This is the gesture of subtraction at its purest, the reduction of all qualitative differences to a purely formal minimal difference" (Žižek 2006, 382–83).
51. Low key despite his various statements—the future as "radical and systemic break" (Jameson 2005, 228) and disruption as "the name for a new discursive strategy" (Jameson 2005, 231).
52. Like Marx, Lenin is less enthused by the terminology of grace, given that the Tsar repeatedly asserted that he was in such a position "by the grace" of God, that is, by the arbitrary exercise of God's singular will, who had appointed him as a singular representative on earth. In Lenin's hands, grace becomes an epithet for all who oppress the people—landlords, capitalists, Duma, provisional government (Lenin 1895a, 119; 1901a, 411; 1903c, 346; 1906b[2], 214). Occasionally, he uses it when referring to a high-handed comrade: "In criticising the Menshevik resolution for what may mildly be called its imprudent and optimistic attitude towards the State Duma, I also criticised the words I have underlined, and said jestingly: should we not add 'and sent by God's grace' (meaning authority)? Comrade Plekhanov, a member of the committee, was frightfully angry with me for cracking this joke" (Lenin 1906l[1], 364). For a full discussion of Marx's usage, see my *Criticism of Earth* (Boer 2012a).
53. Occasionally, he equivocates, suggesting that an event emerges from the "Order of Being" or the "there is" (Badiou 2004, 98–99), but these moments are swamped in the incalculability of the event.
54. Even more: "All the parameters of the doctrine of the event are thus disposed within Christianity" (Badiou 2006a, 212; 1988, 235). See the full discussion in my *Criticism of Religion* (Boer 2009a, 155–204).
55. This distinction between *kairós* and *krónos* is also common to Benjamin, yet it is a curious distinction. In classical Greek, the opposite of *kairós* is not *chrónos-krónos*, for that term designates an old fool or dotard, especially in the comedies of Aristophanes. Through *chrónos-krónos* elision, the connection is made with *Krónos*, the father of Zeus, thereby marking the time before the era of the speaker, the distant past which may be either a golden age or the dark ages, depending on one's perspective (Boer, in press-b).
56. When Negri does refer to the biblical connections of his ideas, he notably prefers the Hebrew Bible. For example, in the conversations with Anne Defourmantelle, he

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describes *kairós* as the moment each day when "one creates God"; everything one does is a creation of God, since "to create new Being is to create something that, unlike us, will never die" (Negri and Defourmantelle 2004, 146–47). Furthermore, this process of creativity is marked by naming: "Whatever thing I name exists" (Negri 2003, 147), which is then explicated as "at once the Bible and what makes epistemology possible" (Negri and Defourmantelle 2004, 119).

57. Lenin's position on miracle is also a far cry from the "state of exception" theory that now has a spirited half-life in debates in political theology. The rediscovery of Schmitt's now infamous observations on the analogies, if not the sublimation, of the miracle in jurisprudence (the omnipotent God becomes the omnipotent law-giver), in the sovereign's intervention in a legal order, and thereby the valid "suspension" of standard procedures of the modern, secular Enlightenment state by the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, have become grist for a range of responses (Schmitt 2005, 36–37; Taubes 2004; Agamben 2005a). Schmitt, of course, accepts the Humean definition of miracle as a "transgression of the laws of nature through an exception" (Schmitt 2005, 36), but more telling for my purposes is the fact that Lenin foresees, as it were, the profoundly conservative nature of Schmitt's argument. The latter opts to call upon the counterrevolutionary Roman Catholic tradition of Bonald, de Maistre, and Donoso Cortés, theorists for whom the French Revolution, the abolition of the monarchy, and thereby the exception, was to be much lamented. Exactly, points out Lenin; indeed, your theory is entirely appropriate for an autocracy like Russia, in which "a state of siege is always in force, supplemented, now here, now there, by provisional regulations. Are not all political affairs in Russia conducted according to provisional regulations?" (Lenin 1901g, 273 fn/318 fn). That is, the normal way for the system to operate is by the constitutive exception, by suspending its own "normal" operations.
58. To some extent, this sense of *ákairos* is drawn into the biblical perception of *kairós*, except that what appears *ákairos* to poor mortals is exactly at the right time and place for God. A truly akairological occurrence would thereby be one that fell outside God's omniscient purview.
59. "We are concerned now not with the 'day,' or 'moment' of insurrection in the narrow sense of the word. That will be decided by those who are in contact with the masses of workers and soldiers" (Lenin 1917e, 20/240).
60. For a recent expression of the dismissal of and bewilderment at such revolutions, see Eagleton's *Why Marx Was Right* (Eagleton 2011, 12–29).
61. After the Unity Congress of 1906, Lenin distinguishes between the right-wing as those who wish to work within existing structures and the left-wing as those who want to do away with those structures (Lenin 1906l[1], 378–80/62–64).
62. See the references given to these struggles in chapter 2, to which a few more may be added (Lenin 1909l, 1909o, 1909m, 1911v, 1911t, 1911e, 1912a, 1912p, 1912t, 1912q[1], 1912v, 1913h[1], 1914b[1], 1914d[1], 1914i, 1914w[1]; 1913z, 224–25/302–3; 1909b, 388–90/399–401; 1914g).
63. On arguments for the boycott (Lenin 1906m[1]; 1906w[1], 161–62/236–37). A few basic facts: The second Duma was as equally short-lived as the first, lasting from February to June in 1907, while the third, convened later in 1907, lasted the full five-year term. The stronger limitations on representatives, with larger numbers of landowners and owners of city properties (forming the bulk of the Octobrist and Rightist parties), ensured a greater alignment with the Tsar's policies. The fourth Duma lasted from 1912 until the 1917 February Revolution (with a year's dissolution due to the war from August 1914 to the same month in the following year). After that revolution,

the "Progressive Bloc" within the fourth Duma formed the basis of the Constituent Assembly.

64. Already in *WITBD*, Lenin's model for making a mass movement possible under the autocracy was to centralize the functions of *konspiratsiia*—"the fine art of not getting arrested"—and limit them to as few people as possible, while at the same time to expand all other forms of party organization. This semi-mass participation would work better if those organizations were relieved of *konspiratsiia* tasks (Lih 2008, 447). A decade later, he was expounding the same position: "the Party is made up of illegal Social-Democratic nuclei, which must establish for themselves 'strong-points for work among the masses' in the form of as wide and as ramified a network of various legal workers' societies as possible" (Lenin 1912q, 387/176).
65. Many further references reinforce the same point (Lenin 1906l, 299/103; 1907m, 150/17; 1907i[2], 458/276; 1907s, 141/170; 1909b, 388–90/399–401; 1911b, 1912k, 1912n, 1914q[1], 500–1/368–69; 1919n, 57–58/217–18, 61/221; 1916d, 380/461; 1906b[2,] 1912w, 238/6). By the time of the third Duma, the Bolsheviks had but six representatives (one of them even a police agent, Malinovsky), outnumbered by the Mensheviks with seven.
66. Although Lenin was probably taught Calvin in the popular school textbook, *Catechesis*, by Metropolitan Philaret (see chapter 1).
67. Lenin deploys the terminology to speak of the contradictions between the formal freedom and equality proclaimed by the bourgeoisie and the real limitations and subterfuges that turn the workers into wage slaves. Trotsky speaks of the Constituent Assembly being the last vestige of formal freedom. Žižek also deploys the distinction, although without actually citing Lenin or acknowledging Trotsky (Žižek 2001b, 113–14). Žižek quotes a supposed retort from Lenin—"Freedom—yes, but for WHOM? To do WHAT?" Yet, despite being frequently cited by others who list Žižek as the source, this "quote" is one that—like the Gospel writers—Žižek seems to have placed in Lenin's mouth. The closest I have been able to find is: "It is natural for a liberal to speak of 'democracy' in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: 'for what class?' " (Lenin 1918p, 235/243); "Kautsky does not understand this truth, which is so clear and obvious to every worker, because he has 'forgotten,' 'unlearned' to put the question: democracy *for which class*?" (Lenin 1918p, 249/259); "Until classes are abolished, all arguments about freedom and equality should be accompanied by the questions: freedom for which class, and for what purpose; equality between which classes, and in what respect?" (Lenin 1920k, 393/425). As usual, Žižek reads too quickly, charging a postrevolutionary Lenin with his own version of formal freedom (I decide what the conditions of freedom are) and asserting the need to invoke actual freedom once again. This will turn out to be a superficial reading of Lenin.
68. This is not to say that Lenin was not willing to exploit even the limited freedoms after the Tsar's concessions of 1905: "It is high time, furthermore, to take steps to establish local economic strong points, so to speak, for the workers' Social-Democratic organisations—in the form of restaurants, tea-rooms, beer-halls, libraries, reading-rooms, shooting galleries, etc., maintained by Party members" (Lenin 1905i[2], 35/90). It does make one want to ask where the socialist restaurants, tearooms, and beer halls are today. Of course, shooting galleries had another purpose, as he points out in a footnote: "I do not know the Russian equivalent of *tir* [French], by which I mean a place for target practice, where there is a supply of all kinds of fire-arms and where anyone may for a small fee practise shooting at a target with a revolver or rifle. Freedom of assembly and association has been proclaimed in Russia. Citizens have the right to assemble and to learn how to shoot; this can present no danger to anyone. In any big

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European city you will find such shooting galleries open to all, situated in basements, sometimes outside the city, etc. And it is very far from useless for the workers to learn how to shoot and how to handle arms" (35/90).

69. Note also: "Enough of liberal lies! As if a union between freedom and the old rule were possible, as if political reforms were conceivable under a tsarist monarchy" (Lenin 1912k, 509/179).
70. Losurdo builds upon Lenin's examples, which include the Dreyfus case in republican France, the lynching of African Americans in the democratic republic of America, the treatment of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain, the baiting of the Bolsheviks in the democratic republic of Russia in 1917, and the reaction by the bourgeoisie to the German republican revolution in 1918 (Lenin 1918p, 245/254–55; 1919p, 417/441; 1919k, 461–63/279–81).
71. Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that his detailed reflections on ethics are not for persons of low tastes, who are the vast majority: "The utter vulgarity of the herd of men comes out in their preference for the sort of existence a cow leads" (Aristotle 1955, 30; *Eth. Nic.* 1.5; see also 1955, 309–10; *Eth. Nic.* 10.9). He means, of course, the slaves, peasants, artisans, and women who made up the vast bulk of the Greek polis.
72. In 1916, in the context of the massive upheavals during the First World War, Lenin grants that the bourgeoisie may also undertake a fundamental "change in the relation of social forces," and not merely deceive "the masses with words." In this case, it involves "helping 'one's own' national bourgeoisie to rob other countries (and calling this 'defence of the fatherland' or 'saving the country')"—not quite what is desired by the proletariat (Lenin 1916i, 170/285–86).
73. The formal–actual distinction also appears in Lenin's arguments for a boycott of the first Duma. That boycott, he argues, was a fight for the "path of struggle," whether the revolution would be steered into a constitutional–democratic path or whether it would push further on the path of revolutionary overthrow. At that moment, the issue was one of either being forced into the limited freedom established by a system that wished to constrain the types of freedom or of being able to exercise the absolute freedom of dashing that system to pieces. Yet, when we think he has sided resolutely with that option, he goes on to argue the dialectical point that, in a given situation of revolutionary downturn, the possibility of absolute freedom, the chance to agitate for it, and foster its emergence, may well take place within the constraints of formal freedom—as long as one keeps the tension firmly in mind and does not become absorbed (Lenin 1907a; 1907e[2], 60/49).
74. As he observes already in 1916: "The socialist revolution is not one single act, not one single battle on a single front; but a whole epoch of intensified class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., battles around all the problems of economics and politics, which can culminate only in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie" (Lenin 1916k, 144/62).
75. This argument may be formulated in five steps: (1) the state is the result of the irreconcilability of class conflict; (2) the state is a weapon, a special coercive force in the hands of the bourgeoisie to oppress the workers; (3) given this nature of the state, the working class must smash the state apparatus; (4) in order to do so, it uses that apparatus to destroy the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie through the dictatorship of the proletariat; (5) only when that process is complete does the state begin to wither away (Lenin 1917h[2]; 1917h, 102/303; 1919a[1], 1919e). See also his close integration of the argument from *The State and Revolution* and the argument concerning freedom and democracy (Lenin 1919k, 457–67/491–502; 1919f, 107–9/91–93; 1920k, 392–96/424–26).

76. Throughout 1917–23 (see the *Collected Works*, volume 26–33), Lenin returns again and again to this burning issue, especially in response to widespread international criticism of the apparent lack of freedom.
77. Lenin moves between the lapidary and the metaphoric: "It is no easy matter to create a socialist system" (Lenin 1918w, 77/72); "Our society is one which has left the rails of capitalism, but has not yet got on to new rails" (Lenin 1922a, 278/95). Lukács describes this philosophically in terms of socialism being a process of becoming rather than a state of being, for there is little in Marx and Lenin of socialism as a completed condition (Lukács 1970, 72–73). Already in 1905, Lenin sensed that the complexity of postrevolutionary reconstruction would be the most difficult task of all: "Yet we must not shut our eyes to the fact that the serious struggle is only beginning, that there are great trials in store for us. Both the revolutionary army and the revolutionary government are 'organisms' of so high a type, they demand institutions so complicated and a civic consciousness so developed, that it would be a mistake to expect a simple, immediate, and perfect fulfilment of these tasks from the outset" (Lenin 1905o[2], 564/339). This becomes a constant refrain from 1917 onward, when "the revolution itself *always* creates an *exceptionally* complicated situation" (Lenin 1917h, 118/320; see also Lenin 1918e[1], 471/278; 1918d[1], 513–15/324–26; 1918l, 216/223–24; 1919a; Hillquit 1921, 48–60).
78. In an astute analysis, Lenin points out that any transition as profound as that from one mode of production to another will produce immense problems, setbacks, blunders, and relapses (Lenin 1919m, 426/20; 1919l). Once again, I cannot provide all of the many references concerning the admissions of mistakes and "sins" from volumes 27–33 of the *Collected Works* (Lenin 1918x, 1919u, 392/413; 1920d[1], 25/209; 1921w, 171–74/8–12; 1922a, 315/122). This was not the only time Lenin deployed the terminology of evil, sin, and repentance, for it was constant in earlier stages of the struggle (Lenin 1902p, 466/127; 1902e, 70/252; 1905d, 25/132; 1905b[1], 33/141–42; 1905f[3], 423/342; 1906s, 218/8; 1906u, 268–70/67–69; 1907o, 68/347; 1907e, 337–38/208–9; 1907q[1], 152/158; 1908a, 98/97; 1908k, 35/21; 1911o, 127–28/179–80; 1912u, 125/362; 1912x, 330/101; 1913h[1], 55/246; 1914d[1], 140/357; 1914s[1], 193–96/38–40; 1903q, 310/269; 1903o, 501/289; 1905v[2], 534/359; 1905o[3], 346/338; 1906h[1], 410/223; 1911l, 264–65/342; 1912i[1], 112/349).
79. Much has also been made of the exclusion of other socialist parties from the government (Rabinowitch 2007), whether mainstream Mensheviks, Right SRs, Anarchists, and eventually Left SRs, Menshevik-Internationalists, and Mezhraiontsy (Interdistrict Group). But on this matter, some excluded themselves (mainstream Mensheviks and Right SRs) by organizing resistance to the government. Others were in coalition until they shot themselves in the foot by letting loose assassins on the Bolsheviks in 1918, one of whom put a couple of bullets in Lenin (Left SRs). Others joined the renamed Russian Communist Party (from all groups, but especially Mezhraiontsy, Left SRs, and Menshevik-Internationalists).
80. Did this pattern already establish itself much earlier, during the period of the illegal party and the need for *konspiratsiia*? Lih suggests so. In the early years of the twentieth century, Lenin argued that the key to a democratic party was *konspiratsiia*. Standard forms of democratic practice were entirely impractical, since they would enable the police to infiltrate. However, the more the culture of *konspiratsiia* spread among the workers, the more would it be possible to broaden the base of revolutionaries by trade and thereby exercise new forms of democracy at the party congress and central committee (Lih 2008, 450). In other words, the very partisanship of *konspiratsiia* was the avenue to freedom. It is in this light that I would suggest we read Lenin's observation

from 1907: "The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party is organised on democratic lines. This means that all the affairs of the Party are conducted, either directly, or through representatives, by all the members of the Party, all of whom without exception have equal rights; moreover, all officials, all leading bodies, and all institutions of the Party are subject to election, are responsible to their constituents, and are subject to recall" (Lenin 1907y[1], 434/252).

81. Note also: "When I was in Moscow in the spring of this year the Russian Trades Unions received a telegram from the Trades Union Congress at Amsterdam . . . It encouraged the Unions 'in their struggle' and promised support in that struggle. The Communists immediately asked 'What struggle? Against the capitalist system in Russia which does not exist? Or against capitalist systems outside Russia?' " (Ransome 1921, 36).
82. To this, I would add Ransome's perspicacious observation on Lenin from 1919: "More than ever, Lenin struck me as a happy man. Walking home from the Kremlin, I tried to think of any other man of his calibre who had a similar joyous temperament. I could think of none. This little, bald-headed, wrinkled man, who tilts his chair this way and that, laughing over one thing or another, ready at any minute to give serious advice to any who interrupt him to ask for it, advice so well reasoned that it is to his followers far more compelling than any command, every one of his wrinkles is a wrinkle of laughter, not of worry. I think the reason must be that he is the first great leader who utterly discounts the value of his own personality. He is quite without personal ambition. More than that, he believes, as a Marxist, in the movement of the masses which, with or without him, would still move. His whole faith is in the elemental forces that move people, his faith in himself is merely his belief that he justly estimates the direction of those forces. He does not believe that any man could make or stop the revolution which he thinks is inevitable. If the Russian revolution fails, according to him, it fails only temporarily, and because of forces beyond any man's control. He is consequently free with a freedom no other great man has ever had. It is not so much what he says that inspires confidence in him. It is this sensible freedom, this obvious detachment" (Ransome 1919, 56).
83. "The December events confirmed another of Marx's profound propositions, which the opportunists have forgotten, namely, that insurrection is an art and that the principal rule of this art is the waging of a desperately bold and irrevocably determined *offensive*. We have not sufficiently assimilated this truth. We ourselves have not sufficiently learned, nor have we taught the masses, this art, this rule to attack at all costs. We must make up for this omission with all our energy" (Lenin 1906w, 176/374).
84. In regard to the soviet, it may have had a precursor in the Paris Commune of 1871, but Lenin also stresses: "The Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies are a form of state which does not exist and never did exist in any country" (Lenin 1917e[2], 241/356).
85. Or: "Socialism is inconceivable without large-scale capitalist engineering based on the latest discoveries of modern science. It is inconceivable without planned state organisation which keeps tens of millions of people to the strictest observance of a unified standard in production and distribution" (Lenin 1921u, 334/210).

6 Venerating Lenin

1. Translation by Sergey Kozin (private communication). One may view the song on www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5AOnbTIXLQ. Russian lyrics may be found on www.litera.ru/stixiya/authors/oshanin/den-za-dnem.html.

2. Of necessity, I will engage from time to time with Tumarkin's frustrating *Lenin Lives!* (1997). Although marked by superficial analyses, glib conclusions, and factual errors, it does provide useful raw material that usually leads to different conclusions to the ones Tumarkin proposes.
3. These campaigns are presented as often futile attacks against popular devotion to the church. A useful corrective comes from Walling, who notes the widespread distrust of a venal clergy and of a church too enmeshed with the hated power structures (Walling 1908, 153–56, 224, 231–32). Walling concludes: "In what, then, does the peasant's loudly proclaimed Orthodoxy consist? In the first place he has shown an unconquerable tendency not to be Orthodox at all, but to do his own religious thinking" (1908, 155).
4. As Lenin writes, "An icon is something you pray to, something you cross yourself before, something you bow down to; but an icon has no effect on practical life and practical politics" (Lenin 1920m, 356/133).
5. Or, as he delicately balances both denial and assertion of prophecy, "We do not claim to be prophets able to foresee all the possible outcomes of the present highly complicated political situation. Social-Democrats, however, must carefully weigh up the trends of all the forces that are operating in politics in order wisely to decide their own tactics" (Lenin 1906y, 212/18).
6. Or, as Lih quotes Lenin: "We are living through a happy time, when this prophecy of the great socialists is beginning to be realised" (Lih 2011, 153).
7. A comparable example is: "Famine . . . People selling cattle, selling girls; throngs of beggars, typhus, death from starvation. 'The population have but one privilege—to die quietly and unobtrusively,' writes one correspondent" (Lenin 1911m, 300/377).
8. References to "honeyed words" may be found in other texts (Lenin 1903t, 393–95/163–65, 410–11/182, 430/203; 1913y[1], 559–61/367–69; 1917u[1], 32–33/123–24; 1917w[1], 265/94). Such prophetic utterances may be found through Lenin's writings (Lenin 1897e, 278/274–75; 1899b, 237–48/232–43, 293/290, 414–15/413–14, 418/417, 431/430, 442–43/441–42, 537/538; 1901b, 164–66/161–64, 177–80/175–78, 205/204; 1901c; 1903t, 378–79/148–49, 384–85/150–51, 389/159, 392/162, 413–14/184–85, 423/195; 1906k[1], 112/175; 1906b[1], 16/207; 1907l, 269/129; 1910b, 355/72; 1912m, 527–28/196–97; 1917h, 127/329–30; 1906j, 351/159–60), especially works like his fiery Mayday articles (Lenin 1904c, 1905s; 1913l[1], 142/130).
9. "Our grandchildren will examine the documents and other relics of the epoch of the capitalist system with amazement. It will be difficult for them to picture to themselves how the trade in articles of primary necessity could remain in private hands, how factories could belong to individuals, how some men could exploit others, how it was possible for those who did not work to exist" (Lenin 1919e[1], 330/325). More famously, Lenin called upon his comrades to dream a little more in *WITBD* (Lenin 1902p, 509–10/171–72).
10. "But every sensible man understands that socialism cannot be attained at once: to attain it a fierce struggle must be waged against the entire bourgeoisie and all governments; all urban workers all over Russia must unite in a firm and unbreakable alliance with all the rural poor. That is a great cause, and to that cause it is worth devoting one's whole life" (Lenin 1903t, 411/183).
11. Even if it occasionally comes from a "dream" (Lenin 1902p, 509–10/171–72).
12. Note his interest in the speeches of the peasant members of the Duma (Lenin 1907b, 398–99/379–80; 1907l, 297/157; 1906y[1], 287/370–71; 1906l[1], 345/28–29; 1911o, 125/177).
13. Three of Lenin's speeches have been preserved, one at Sverdlov's grave, another at a special session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, and a third on

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gramophone record that draws a number of sentences from the speech at the special session (Lenin 1919v, 1919w, 1919z).

14. See also John Reed's account of the extraordinary mass funeral of the Bolsheviks, common workers mostly, who fell in the winning of Moscow and were buried in Red Square (Reed 1919, 228–30).
15. To her credit, Tumarkin notes the popular origins of much of the veneration of Lenin, however much she would like to argue for a carefully managed "cult." Yet, she misses entirely the tradition of the revolutionary martyr (apart from one brief and passing reference on p. 196), preferring somewhat curiously to find a religio-political source in the "canonized princely passion-sufferers," princes who became martyred saints simply for the reason that they encountered early deaths at the hands of their enemies while exercising their calling as a prince (Tumarkin 1997, 6, 173). Needless to say, Tumarkin understands "martyr" in religious sense, without seeing that such a sense is one form that martyrdom may take.
16. The relatively flippant, brief and anticommunist discussion by Elwood is the only other attempt to deal with these matters (Elwood 2011, 155–66).
17. The appreciative references in Valentinov appear in the midst of largely hostile accounts. The one useful feature of Read's otherwise atrociously superficial biography is that he notes Lenin's love of exercise, although he mistakenly states that cycling was a "new" discovery in 1909 (Read 2005, 30, 33, 47–48, 64–65, 102, 104–5).
18. On skating—of which he was "terribly fond"—in all manner of circumstances, from Shushenskoe on to Krakow, both Krupskaya and Lenin comment frequently (Lenin 1894c, 71/6; 1898f, 204/114; 1899k, 227/133; 1900f, 307/195–96; 1912m[1], 485/332; 1913s[1], 489/335; Krupskaya and Lenin 1914a, 509/348; Krupskaya 1930, 39–40, 262; 1898d, 573/404; 1899a, 574/406; 1899b, 576/408; 1899e, 582/412; 1899f, 583/414). He enjoyed swimming throughout his life—naked, for he and Krupskaya (and Lunacharsky, Bukharin, Bogdanov, and others) were keen nudists—see maysurian.narod.ru/doloi-stid.html#lenin). He and Krupskaya swam in the Yenisei River in Shusheskoe, or later in Longjumeau, or in Pornic on the French coast, or in Stjernsund in Sweden, or in swimming pools in Munich, or in Poronino or in the Vistula River in Krakow, or wherever there was water (Lenin 1895c, 78/12; 1897g, 112/40; 1898e, 176/92; 1901l, 332/212; 1904o, 365/137; 1908y, 387/252; 1910x, 463/316; Krupskaya and Lenin 1907, 366/238; 1913a, 494/338; Lenin and Krupskaya 1907, 369/240; Krupskaya 1930, 209, 238; 1898b, 560/391; 1899c, 578/410; 1899d, 579/411; 1901b, 602/433; 1901c, 604/434; 1911, 610/440).
19. On the "famous gun," elaborate plans for hunting expeditions, and missed shots, Krupskaya and Lenin both comment (Krupskaya 1898a, 558/390; 1899d, 579/411; 1899f, 583/414; Lenin 1897g, 112/39–40). Aware of these "rumors," Lenin protested at length against the impression that he was a bad hunter in a letter to his brother, claiming all manner of successes, or rather, decisions not to succeed too much (Lenin 1898f, 204/114). As to why the gun was "famous," see the endless discussion of the type of gun he wants and its cartridges in a letter to his brother from Shushenskoe (Lenin 1899k, 224–26/130–32).
20. One finds constant references to such walks in the correspondence (Krupskaya 1898b, 560/391; 1899d, 579/411; 1899c, 578/409; 1899f, 583/414; 1901a, 601/431–32; 1913, 614/444; Krupskaya and Lenin 1904, 361/135; 1907, 366/138; 1914a, 509/348; 1914b, 516/352; Lenin 1897g, 112/40; 1901l, 332/212; 1904o, 365/137). Even on board a ship, Lenin "promenaded the deck incessantly" (Krupskaya 1930, 213).
21. Apart from what is discussed later, other references to long hikes, especially in the mountains, appear frequently (Lenin 1908z, 388/253; 1910v, 457/312; 1911x).

22. Note also: "Ilyich did not work at Bombon, and we tried to avoid talking shop. We went out for walks and cycled almost every day to the Clamart woods fifteen kilometres away" (Krupskaya 1930, 199).
23. On the stolen bicycle: "Studying in Paris was very inconvenient. The Bibliothèque Nationale was a long way off. Vladimir Ilyich usually cycled there, but riding a bicycle in Paris was not what it was in the suburbs of Geneva. Those cycle rides tired him out . . . In the end his bicycle was stolen. He used to leave it on the stairs of a house next door to the Bibliothèque Nationale and pay the *concierge* ten centimes a day for it. When he came for the bicycle and found it gone, the *concierge* declared that she had not been hired to look after the bicycle but only to let Ilyich keep it on the stairs" (Krupskaya 1930, 194).
24. The correspondence regularly mentions Lenin's tendency to overwork, his nerves before and during major congresses and conflicts, and being completely exhausted afterward. In that light, these times on the bicycle or in the mountains were absolutely vital (Krupskaya 1900, 585/416; Lenin 1908x, 384/250; 1917q[2], 535/368; 1902u, 105/170; 1902s, 106/207; 1902v, 108/210; 1901k, 100/158; 1908v, 162/160; 1902x, 84/189; 1903w, 112/280; 1915j, 476/112; 1917s[2], 634–35/443–44; Krupskaya and Lenin 1913b, 497/341). Note also that often the correspondence shows extensive concern for the illness of others and that they should obtain the best-possible treatment (Lenin 1909t, 1909u, 1913w[1], 1914x[1], 1914y[1], 1922v; 1922w, 439/124–25; 1922q, 441/127–28; 1922l; 1922u, 450/137; 1922r, 473–74/170; 1922k, 518/217–18; 1922o, 554/265; 1922p, 556–57/267; 1922n, 557/267).
25. So also with hunting, which was occasionally organized by party members. But even here, "When we lived in Moscow, Vladimir Ilyich in his latter years would still go out hunting, but nothing with like the old zest" (Krupskaya 1930, 39).
26. Lenin also used the metaphor of weeds or tares that need to be pulled out, as we saw earlier in the treatment of the Gospels (chapter 2).
27. See also the image of piercing the blisters and letting the pus run, now in an infant (the party) (Lenin 1910z, 420/249).
28. A slightly different image, now of capitalism, depicts it in terms of a parable of the brutal locomotive: "The rulers of the capitalist state are no more concerned about the vast numbers of famine and crisis victims than a locomotive is concerned about those whom it crushes in its path. Dead bodies stop the wheels, the locomotive halts, it may (with too energetic a driver) jump the rails, but, in any case, after a delay, long or short, it will continue on its way" (Lenin 1901g, 278/324).
29. See also: "The liquidators have decapitated themselves. And it is no use weeping for the hair when the head is gone" (Lenin 1912a, 495/165).
30. A curious twist to this image of the decaying corpse connects it with childbirth in a way that reinforces the very different realities of giving birth in Lenin's day. Inevitably, some children die, some are stillborn: "Modern physics is in travail; it is giving birth to dialectical materialism. The process of child-birth is painful. And in addition to a healthy, living being, there are bound to be produced certain dead products, refuse fit only for the garbage-heap" (Lenin 1908a, 313/332).
31. In this text, the Russian *trupolozhestvo* (трупоположество) is much earthier than the mere sense of "affection," or "love" of corpses. Lenin also uses a derogatory-dimunitive form, *bozhen'ka* (боженька), for "divinity," which makes the whole paragraph—on God-seeking in a letter to Gorky—into a very earthy piece of polemic. Many thanks to Sergey Kozin for this point,
32. Here I draw data but not conclusions from Tumarkin's *Lenin Lives* (1997). Among many problems, Tumarkin's understanding of God-building is deeply flawed, asserting that

Bogdanov held to this position and bending the evidence to suggest that they believed in forms of human immortality.

33. The other two were the nominal chair, Viacheslav Molotov, and the secretary of the Congress of Soviets' Central Executive Committee, Avel' Enukidze.
34. As Tumarkin notes, the Funeral Commission reported, "time did its work" (*vremia delalo svoe delo*) (1997, 183).
35. The other scientist directly involved was V. P. Vorob'ev, professor of anatomy at the Kharkov Medical Institute. In the 1990s, the formula used for the preservation of Lenin's body was finally revealed. It was simply a combination of glycerol and potassium acetate, which replaced all the moisture in the body's tissues. The advantage of this mixture is that it prevents the growth of bacteria and does not absorb water or evaporate if the temperature is kept at 16 degrees centigrade and 70% humidity. The body was soaked in the solution, although it also required periodic repairs and rejuvenations. Even now the body is examined every Monday and Friday and embalming liquid is painted on the hands and head, apart from a weekly soaking. Every 18 months, a more thorough examination is undertaken, and then every five years a complete assessment (Quigley 1998, 35–36).
36. For a useful collection of images of the funeral, the wooden and then permanent mausoleum, see www.aha.ru/~mausoleu/m-hist_e.htm.
37. As Abramov writes: "All Soviet republics took part in the construction of Lenin's tomb-memorial. Ukraine shipped the unique black Labrador with blue sparkles (the 'cornflower'), as well as red granite and grey granite; Belorussia shipped its best granite mined in the vicinity of Minsk near the Drozdy village; Armenia shipped black stone with golden threads; Tajikistan shipped granite from the ancient opencast mine in the mountains of Khovaling where, according to one legend, the blocks for the stronghold of Alexander the Great built on this spot had been made . . . From the forests of Karelia by the shores of Lake Onega where there is a one of a kind Shoksha mine, they delivered the crimson-colored quartzite used for the letters LENIN, for the pilaster of the Funeral Hall and for the upper crowning slab of the Mausoleum" (Abramov 2005, 25).
38. Tumarkin waters down her analysis by focusing merely on Tutankhamen's tomb, which had been discovered in 1922. Although she finds no direct influence, she suggests that it may have influenced the design (1997, 197–80).
39. Tumarkin's brief account of God-building gives it little justice (1997, 20–23; 1981, 41–43).
40. So also Leonid Krasin, who wrote on September 7, 1918, to his wife: "As it happens, the attempt to kill Lenin has made him much more popular than he was. One hears a great many people, who are far from having any sympathy with the Bolsheviks, saying that it would be an absolute disaster if Lenin had succumbed to his wounds, as it was first thought he would. And they are quite right, for, in the midst of all this chaos and confusion, he is the backbone of the new body politic, the main support on which everything rests" (quoted in Clark 1989, 206).
41. See also the tale of the counterrevolutionary hydra, which in its death-throws strikes via the assassinations of Uritsky and Lenin. It was probably written by a railroad worker and was published in the provincial weekly of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Moscow-Kiev-Voronezh railway (Tumarkin 1997, 86–87).
42. We may find such efforts soon after the revolution, as with the myth of the Red Star in a Red Army leaflet. Here the burning red star stolen by Krivda (falsehood) from the forehead of the beautiful maiden Pravda (truth) is recovered by a young man who defeats Krivda's supporters and returns the star to Pravda (Tumarkin 1997, 71–72).

43. The famous text in this regard is Lenin's memo to Bonch-Bruevich: "To: Vladimir Dmitriyevich Bonch-Bruyevich, Office Manager, Council of People's Commissars. In view of your failure to fulfil my insistent request to point out to me the justification for raising my salary as from March 1, 1918, from 500 to 800 rubles a month, and in view of the obvious illegality of this increase, carried out by you arbitrarily by agreement with the secretary of the Council, Nikolai Petrovich Gorbunov, and in direct infringement of the decree of the Council of People's Commissars of November 23, 1917, I give you a severe reprimand!" (Lenin 1918f[1], 333/78–79).
44. The official statement from the Central Committee, which was distributed in millions of copies, gave simple expression to this widespread veneration: "Lenin lives in the soul of every member of our party. Every member of our party is a particle of Lenin. Our entire communist family is a collective embodiment of Lenin. Lenin lives in the heart of every honest worker. Lenin lives in the heart of every poor peasant" (quoted Tumarkin 1997, 148).
45. For some, all of this production of Leniniana was too much. As *The Left Front of the Arts* (*LEF*) magazine, edited by Mayakovsky, put it (*LEF* 1 (1924):3–4)—after a reproduction of a commercial offering Lenin busts for sale in five different materials (alabaster, with a patina, bronze, marble, granite), "actual or double-size," all of which were manufactured by an official state agency following official guidelines:

    Do Not Make Business on Lenin!
    We are in agreement with the railway workers of the Kazan Railroadwho have suggested to their artist that he should decorate a Lenin Hall within their [worker] club featuring no busts and no portraits of Lenin, saying: "We don't want no icons."
    We insist:
    Do not mass-produce Lenin.
    Do not print his portraits on posters,
    on mats, on plates, on mugs, on cigar cases.
    Do not put bronze on Lenin.
    Do not deprive him of his living footstep and
    of his humanity which he was able to retain even as he became
    the leader of history.
    Lenin is still our contemporary.
    He is among the living.
    We need him alive rather than dead.
    Therefore:
    Learn from Lenin, but do not canonize him.
    Do not create a cult out of his name, because all through his life
    he battled against each and every cult.
    Do not buy or sell any objects of this cult.
    Do not make business on Lenin!
    LEF

    Note here that the theme of Lenin being among the living is used to counter such reproductions. Information supplied by Sergey Kozin (private communication).
46. Reporting the next year, Duranty attempts to find such a replacement religion in the "shrines" of the Lenin corners and in the "pilgrimages" to see the "saint" housed in the mausoleum (quoted in Tumarkin 1997, 242–43).
47. Christine André defines such "institutionalised compromise" as resulting "from situations of tension and conflict between socio-economic groups over a long period, at the conclusion of which a form of organisation is established, creating rules, rights and obligations for those involved. Institutionalised compromises act as frameworks

in relation to which the population and groups involved adapt their behaviour and strategies; their founding principles remain unchanged over the long term" (André 2002, 95).

48. The situation was, of course, devilishly complex, as Lenin recognizes presciently in *The State and Revolution*: I have quoted this text in part earlier, but let me now do so in full: "In its first phase, or first stage, communism cannot as yet be fully mature economically and entirely free from traditions or vestiges of capitalism. Hence the interesting phenomenon that communism in its first phase retains 'the narrow horizon of bourgeois law.' Of course, bourgeois law in regard to the distribution of consumer goods inevitably presupposes the existence of the bourgeois state, for law is nothing without an apparatus capable of enforcing the observance of the rules of law. It follows that under communism there remains for a time not only bourgeois law, but even the bourgeois state, without the bourgeoisie! This may sound like a paradox or simply a dialectical conundrum of which Marxism is often accused by people who have not taken the slightest trouble to study its extraordinarily profound content" (Lenin 1917h[2], 471/98–99).
49. Cockshott and Cottrell do not shy away from the conclusion that this outcome was largely what Marx anticipated, except that he envisaged a radically democratic process. I would add that in the early years of Soviet Russia, new forms of democratic involvement were in evidence, as I argued in the previous chapter, but that the exigencies of the attacks by the Entente and the "civil" war made a full realization impractical.
50. For Fitzpatrick, using a very different model of revolutionary cycles, this was finally when the revolution ran out of steam (Fitzpatrick 1994).
51. As I did in April 2012.

Conclusion

1. Laue's suggestion (1964) is even closer to the structure of the biblical narrative of the fall, for he argues that the fall—as a shift from a revolution from below to one from above—was necessary for the USSR to become a superpower. (In the same way, the narrative of Genesis 2–3 requires the human beings to disobey so that the narrative itself may get under way.) His argument is full of bourgeois moralizing and offers an early version of the argument that communism merely facilitated the modernization and industrialization of Russia, indeed that the revolution and its aftermath were surface phenomena for a deeper need for power and global respect.
2. As I pointed out in chapter 5, the terminology of "sin" occurs frequently throughout volumes 26–33 (*LPSS* 34–45) of the *Collected Works* (Lenin 1918x; 1919u, 392/413; 1920d[1], 25/209; 1921w, 171–74/8–12; 1922a, 315/122).
3. Due to Trotsky's credentials of having been crucial to the revolution and yet having opposed Stalin, his own account of the revolution has been hugely influential (Trotsky 1980).
4. Cockshott and Cottrell call it "ideal Marxism," for which the Soviet Union was never communist at all (1993, 1).
5. In volumes 26–33, 36, 42 of the *Collected Works* (*LPSS* 34–54), alongside desperate efforts to counter the White Armies of Denikin, Kolchak, Iudenich, Wrangel, as well as the Poles in the West, one finds repeated and urgent calls to wage a "bloodless war" against hunger, cold, typhus, ignorance, and transport, if not wider economic chaos. More positively, it was a call for bread, fuel, trains, and the eradication of lice (as a sample, see Lenin 1919h, 183–85/357–59; 1919t, 225–28/407–11; 1920a, 347/123; 1920y, 398–99/185–86; 1920v, 412–13/197–98; 1920j, 460–62/255–57). The desperateness

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of the situation is reflected in a slogan from late in 1919: "Comrades, we must concentrate everything on this problem. *Either the lice will defeat socialism, or socialism will defeat the lice!*" (Lenin 1919t, 228/410). For a vivid account of the meager single meal allowed per day, usually soup and a scrap of meat, and the desperate effort to keep warm, see Ransome's account. He writes of attempting to sleep in a sheepskin coat, with all possible bed-clothes and another mattress on top; yet he was still miserably cold (Ransome 1919, 21, 25). Despite his hostility to communism and futile effort to blame the system rather than sanctions, blockade, and foreign-sponsored "civil" war, Pasvolsky provides a good picture of the desperate depths of the crisis (Pasvolsky 1921).

6. This question was raised by Sergey Kozin during discussion after a lecture on Lenin and miracles at the European University in St. Petersburg.
7. This is not to say that human rulers have not found ways to ensure that God is amenable to their aims; once God is on your side, anything may seem possible. But here again, the ontological reserve has been breached.

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NB: References to Lenin's *Collected Works* in English appear as *CW*, followed by volume number and page number. The original Russian references appear immediately after each English reference. In this case, the format is *LPSS*, with volume and page numbers. The full bibiliographic details are: *Collected Works*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960–72. *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [The Complete Collected Works]. 5th ed. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury. The only exception here is the *Notebooks on the Agrarian Question* (1910–16). In the "Introduction" to the fifth Russian edition, these notebooks are announced for publication as one of the ten accompanying addendum volumes (*LPSS* 1, 8–9), but apparently they were never released. One can find them only in the fourth Russian edition as Volume 40.

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Index

Abrikosov, Aleksei, 193
abscess, 4, 49, 176, 190, 265
  parable of, 49
  tension with exercise (physical), 4–5, 175–76, 183, 192, 265
  see also bodies; veneration
Agamben, Giorgio, 152, 153, 154, 156, 159, 249, 256–57, 258
  see also *kairós*
Agitprop, 5, 176
  veneration and, 5, 197, 200–202
agriculture
  Lenin's interest in, 54, 115, 132, 144, 226, 231–32
  parables and, 31–32, 40–43, 52–55, 191
  reconstruction and, 140
  veneration and, 198
Agursky, Mikhail, 7, 214
ákairos, 136, 157–58, 174, 210, 258
  revolution and, 158, 210
  see also *kairós*
Alexinsky, Gregor, 94, 215, 221–22, 227, 232, 234, 248
ambivalence (political)
  Bible and, 71–72, 89
  Bloch, Ernst, and, 88–89
  body and, 192
  Christ and, 83–84
  Christianity and, 20–24, 30, 78–80, 82–84, 88–89, 129–30, 133, 210, 235, 240
  God and, 79, 83–84
  Lenin and, 2, 4, 20–24, 59, 60, 129, 209–10
  Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 4, 60, 77, 79, 82–84, 88–92, 133, 210
  opium and, 3, 13–15, 17, 217
  of religion, 2, 4, 20–24, 30, 71–72, 82–84, 89, 129, 209–10, 240
  Tolstoy and, 71–72
anti–Semitism
  Bund and, 28–29
  opposition to, 27, 219
  pogroms, 19, 27, 219
  right–wing, 19, 27, 182, 219
  see also Bund
atheism
  Bloch, Ernst, and, 88–89
  Lenin and, 13, 110, 128, 210
  Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 12, 75, 129, 237
  not as party platform, 9, 18–20, 24, 219
Avenarius, Richard, 60, 93–94, 96–97, 99, 243

Badiou, Alain, 1, 214
  kairós and, 152, 154–55, 156, 159, 257
  on Lenin, 2, 213–14, 232
  on Paul (Apostle), 2, 154–55, 156, 213–14, 232
  see also *kairós*
Benjamin, Walter, 152–54, 156, 157, 159, 256, 257
  see also *kairós*
Bernstein, Eduard, 226
  see also Bernsteinians
Bernsteinians, 33, 37, 39, 227
Bible, 31–58
  Agamben, Giorgio, and, 152, 153, 154, 156, 159, 256, 258
  ambivalence of, 71–72, 89
  Bloch, Ernst, and, 88–89

Bible—*Continued*
earthiness of, 53–55
Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) allusions, 47–49, 179, 230
Judas Iscariot, 44–45
literary nature of, 78
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 74–75, 78–84, 239–40
Negri, Antonio, and, 155–56, 257–58
New Testament allusions, 43–47, 229–30
Pharisees, 44–45, 229
Philistines, 44
prophets and, 179
Žižek, Slavoj, and, 153–54
see also parables
biblical references
Genesis
1, 240
1–2, 218
1–3, 16
1:1, 142
1:26, 15, 81, 87
2–3, 79, 208, 268
6–9, 173, 240
11, 89, 211
12:11, 239
32, 88–89
Exodus
15:24, 81
27:20–21, 81
Leviticus
24:2–4, 81
Job, 89, 156
Psalms
5:9, 179
23, 240
55:21, 179
78:2, 36
Proverbs
2:16, 179
5:3, 179
6:24, 179
7:5, 179
7:21, 179
26:23, 179
Ecclesiastes, 48
Isaiah, 76, 81, 83
1:18, 82
30:10, 179
43:1, 239
44:8, 195
45:1, 195
51:4, 239
52–53, 82
Jeremiah, 81, 179
18, 48
Ezekiel, 179, 239
16, 22–23, 239
16:60, 240
Hosea, 81
6:2, 240
Joel
2:31, 82
Amos, 81
Matthew
2:16–18, 180
5:3, 220
6, 239
6:5–13, 44
6:26, 40
7:7, 47, 235
7:13–14, 43
8:29, 150
9:37–38, 40
11:12, 239
12:11, 41
13, 3, 31, 35–36, 40
13:10–17, 35–36
13:24–30, 31–32
13:30, 150
13:31–32, 40
13:35, 31, 36
13:36–43, 32–33
13:38, 33
15:21–28, 43
16:3, 149
18:12–13, 41
19:21, 69
19:24, 86
21:41, 149
23:27, 166
25:1–13, 150
25:24, 40
26:18, 150
28:18–20, 47
Mark, 224–25
1:16, 150
4:3–20, 40
4:26–32, 40

5:9, 46
7:24–30, 43
10:21, 69
10:30, 150
11:13, 149
12:2, 149
13:33, 150
Luke
1:20, 150
4:13, 149
8:4–15, 40
10:2, 40
11:1–4, 44
11:9, 47
12:24, 40
12:35–40, 150
12:42, 149
12:56, 149
13:18–19, 40
14, 43
15:3–7, 41
18:9–14, 44
18:22, 69
18:30, 149
19:21, 40
19:44, 150
20:10, 149
21:8, 150
21:24, 150
John
4:31–38, 40
5:4, 149
7:6, 150
7:8, 150
10, 41–42, 49
10:7, 42
13:27, 45
19:30, 239
Acts, 78
1:7, 149
2:20, 82
2:44–45, 69, 239
4:32, 132
4:32–35, 234, 239
6:8–8:3, 180
Romans
3:26, 149
5:6, 149
8:18, 149
8:24, 77
9:9, 149
13:1, 11, 235
13:11, 150
16:18, 179
1 Corinthians
1:20, 220
4:5, 150
7:29, 150
2 Corinthians
6:2, 150, 240
8:14, 149
Galatians
4:10, 149
6:9, 149
Revelation, 46
1:3, 150
3:20, 164
6:12, 82
11:18, 150
12:12, 150
12:14, 150
22:10, 150
bicycle, 4, 176, 184, 185, 186–89, 192, 243, 264, 265
see also exercise (physical)
biography
of Lenin, ix–x, 6–8, 206, 264
political biography, 6–8
of revolutionaries, 176, 181, 197–98
see also martyr
Black Hundreds, 19, 37, 38, 182, 247
Bloch, Ernst, 1, 54
ambivalence of religion and, 84, 88–89
atheism and, 88–89
Bible and, 88–89
dialectic and, 67
Hegel and, 105, 243
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 75, 78, 81, 84, 87–92
myth and, 78
“warm” stream of Marxism and, 73, 76, 87
bodies
abscessed, 4, 49, 176, 190, 265
decaying, 4, 176, 190–92, 265
diseased, 4, 49, 176, 190–91, 265
embalmed, 175, 177–78, 183, 192–96, 198, 201–2, 266
exercise (physical), 184, 188, 190
muscular, 4, 184

bodies—*Continued*
resurrection of, 49, 191–92, 195–96, 202, 239
rotting alive, 190–91
of saint, 177, 178, 250
see also embalming; exercise (physical); mausoleum; veneration
Bogdanov, Alexander
empirio–criticism and, 94, 96–97, 99, 128, 242
Lenin and, 95, 97, 99, 101, 103, 128, 213, 242
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, 93, 94–96, 101
nudism and, 264
otzovism and, 101
Bolsheviks
Duma and, 161–63, 259
empirio–criticism and, 3, 96–97, 100
flexibility of, 171
God–building and, 17, 59, 73, 94, 241
government of, 57
Left SRs and, 38, 46, 208, 261
legal and illegal forms of, 161–62
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 76–77, 93, 96, 129
mass support of, 209, 248, 252
Mensheviks and, 38, 43, 46, 55–57, 123–24, 158, 160–62, 228, 245
misinterpretation of, 57
otzovism and, 95
religious members of, 2–3, 9, 12, 17–18, 20–21, 93
revolution and, 123–24, 143–44, 148, 151, 158
women and, x, 171, 232, 240
see also God–building, otzovism and; Russian Social–Democratic Labor Party
Bonch–Bruevich, Vladimir D., 131–32, 193, 202–3, 250, 267
see also veneration
bourgeoisie
anti–democratic, 117, 169
anti–Semitism and, 28
Cadets and, 37
dialectic and, 122, 126, 246, 268
dictatorship of, 169, 173, 247, 260
economism and, 34
First World War and, 121
freedom and, 136, 163, 165–70, 172, 229, 247, 259
Narodism and, 225–26, 227
parables and, 41
reform and, 121, 160
religion and, 2, 10, 12–13, 18, 19, 219, 239
revolution, 18, 43, 76, 116–17, 123–24, 158, 260, 263
smashing of, 121, 170, 173, 260
socialists and, 18, 37, 56, 66, 80
state and, 121, 126, 166–67, 170, 172–73, 260, 265, 268
Tolstoy, Leo, and, 67
Brezhnev, Leonid, 16, 203–4, 205
Brotherhood Church, 2, 213
fifth congress of the RSDLP and, 2
Bund
anti–Semitism and, 28–29
freedom of conscience and, 3, 9, 26–29, 221–23
religion and, 18
"tares" and, 39, 55
Zionism and, 29

Cadets (Constitutional Democrats), 37, 45, 52, 56, 143, 161, 163, 169, 191, 215, 229
capitalism
"civil" war and, 140
communism and, 37, 46, 62, 121, 126, 182, 204, 261, 262–63, 268
compulsion and, 202–4
development in Russia, 6, 16, 114–15, 144, 158, 226, 231, 234
dialectic and, 106, 112, 114–15, 117–18, 122, 126, 173, 234, 252, 253, 262, 268
feudalism and, 3, 64–67, 114–15, 117, 210, 234–35
freedom and, 165–66, 169
ruling class and, 11, 19, 20, 52, 121–22, 143, 165, 190–91, 257
Tolstoy and, 3, 64–67
Capri school, 94–95, 220
Chekhov, Anton Pavlovich, 53, 230, 231
Chernyshevsky, Nikolai, 7, 63
influence on Lenin, 7, 233
What Is to Be Done?, 7, 233
Christ, Jesus, 2
ambivalence of, 83–84
Badiou, Alain, and, 2, 213, 232
Christian communism and, 69, 234

Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 74, 76, 78, 81, 83–85, 87, 91–92, 239, 240
Orthodox theology and, 15, 87
parables of, 2, 31–33, 35–36, 40–43, 54
sayings of, 43–47, 54
theosis and, 15, 87
Tolstoy and, 65–66
Christian communism
Bonch–Bruevich, Vladimir D., and, 131–32
Brotherhood Church and, 2
communalism and, 69, 71, 80
Engels, Friedrich, and, 10, 21–22, 39–40, 70, 74, 82, 85, 90, 215, 220
Gapon, Georgi, and, 61
Karl, Kautsky, 69, 70, 75, 238–40
Lenin and, 1–2, 69–71, 131–32
in London, 1–2
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 3, 75, 77–80, 82, 85–86, 88–92, 196, 228, 235–36
Luxemburg, Rosa, 69
marginal Russian groups and, 4, 210
Marxism and, 80–81
peasants and, 3, 71–73, 132–33
as reactionary, 69
revolution and, 70–71, 80–82
sectarian communists, 131–32
Tolstoy and, 3, 63–64, 68–69, 73, 210, 235
Christian socialism, *see* Christian communism
Christianity
ambivalence of, 20–24, 30, 78–80, 82–84, 88–89, 129–30, 133, 210, 235, 240
see also Christian communism; Orthodox Church; religion
church
Lenin's attendance, 1–2
see also Christian communism; Christianity; clergy; Orthodox Church; religion; theology
"civil" war
after Russian Revolution, x, xi, 4, 58, 132, 181–82, 220, 268–69
fall narratives and, 208–9
miracle and, 4, 138, 139–40
class, *see* bourgeoisie; working class
clergy, 11
corruption of, 18, 23, 263
oppression and, 11, 217
party membership and, 2–3, 17–18, 20–21
progressive, 23, 61, 80, 121
ruling class and, 18, 23, 79, 217, 220–21, 249–50
state and, 11, 18, 219
see also Orthodox Church
Collected Works
Lenin, ix, 14, 61, 151, 227, 231–32, 242, 253, 261, 268, 271
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, 236
narrative of, ix–x
collective
dialectic of, 20–21, 27–29
freedom and, 169, 171
religion and, 76–77, 85, 88, 131, 239
veneration and, 178–79, 181, 192, 196–98, 202, 267
Commissar of Enlightenment, 4, 8, 12, 38, 57, 74, 86, 96, 127–32, 176, 192–93, 196, 217, 236, 237
see also Lunacharsky, Anatoly
communism
capitalism and, 37, 46, 62, 121, 126, 182, 204, 261, 262–63, 268
construction of after revolution, 170–74
democracy and, 169–72, 261–62
freedom of, 169–70
miracle and, 172, 173–74, 253
old and new in, 85–86, 122, 173–74
see also Christian communism
compulsion
Bonch–Bruevich, V. D., and, 202–3
capitalism and, 202–4
economic, 5, 202–3
extra–economic, 5, 202–3
Régulation theory and, 202–3
Stalin and, 203–5
veneration and, 5, 176–77, 183
see also veneration
conciliators, 33, 37–39, 55, 226–27, 232
see also Trotsky, Leon
contradiction
imaginary resolution of, 3, 63, 67–68
Tolstoy and, 60, 63–72
see also dialectic
"cult," *see* veneration
cycling, 4, 176, 184, 185, 186–89, 192, 243, 264, 265
lack after October 1917, 189
see also exercise (physical)

decay
body and, 4–5, 176, 190–92, 265
corpses and, 4, 191, 192, 265
decaying alive, 4, 190–91, 192, 265
Lenin's body and, 194
tension with exercise (physical), 4–5, 175–76, 183, 192
see also bodies; embalming; mausoleum; veneration
democracy
bourgeois betrayal of, 117, 169
Christian communism and, 82–84
communism and, 169–72, 261–62
freedom and, 4, 165–68
parliamentary, 35
post–revolutionary forms, 171–72, 261–62
Ransome, Arthur, and, 171–72
see also freedom
dialectic
of autonomy, 24–29
Bloch, Ernst, and, 67, 89, 105, 243
bourgeoisie and, 122, 126, 246, 268
Bund and, 27–29
capitalism and, 106, 112, 114–15, 117–18, 122, 126, 173, 234, 252, 253, 262, 268
of collectives, 20–21, 27–29
counterrevolution and, 116–18
discernment and, 120–21
ecumenism and sectarianism, 3, 38, 55–57
Engels and, 105, 111–13, 124–27, 245
freedom and, 21, 136, 163–72, 209, 260
freedom of conscience and, 21, 26–29
Gapon, Georgi, and, 61–62
Hegel and, 4, 103–27, 243–48
idealism and materialism, 103, 106–9, 127–28, 244–46
legal and illegal, 31, 34–37, 54, 94, 159, 162–63, 168, 225, 259, 261
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 82–83, 91–92
Marx and, 8, 20, 109–27, 158
miracle and, 141–49, 159–72
national question and, 24–26
old and new, 85–86, 122, 173–74
part and whole, 118–19
party struggles and, 39, 57–58
Plekhanov and, 103, 105, 108–9, 118–19, 121, 124–25, 227, 245, 247, 248
praxis and, 119–20
prematurity and ripeness, 123–24
reform and revolution, 4, 136, 159–60
religion and, 10–11, 20, 27–29, 129–33
revolution and, 4, 85–86, 89, 105–8, 116–18, 120–23, 209, 243
ruptural reading, 4, 70, 103–4, 109–28, 133, 207, 245
Second International and, 76, 98, 103, 104–5, 111, 113, 118–19, 127, 238–39, 245
spontaneity and organization, 4, 135, 141–50, 251–56
subjective and objective, 103, 105–7, 112, 115–16, 123–24, 243–46
Tolstoy and, 63–71
transcendence and immanence, 135–36
vulgar reading, 4, 103–4, 108–27, 133, 207, 249
within and without the system, 4, 136, 159–72
dictatorship
of bourgeoisie, 169, 173, 247, 260
of proletariat, 13, 74, 121, 165, 171, 208, 260
disease, 4, 176, 189–91, 265
parables of, 49
tension with exercise (physical), 4–5, 175–76, 183, 192, 265
see also bodies; embalming; exercise (physical); mausoleum; veneration
Dostoevsky, 63, 84
Duma, 3, 37, 45, 48, 52, 55, 258–59
Bolsheviks and, 161–63, 259
peasant representatives in, 3, 22–23, 217, 230, 235, 263
priests in, 12, 72–73
RSDLP representatives in, 17, 25, 27, 37, 94, 161–63, 219, 232
struggle over involvement in, 4, 35, 37, 55–56, 94, 136, 160–63, 260
see also illegal; legal

earthiness
Bible's, 53–55
Lenin's, ix, 5–6, 49–55
parables and, 4, 49–55
economism, 34–35, 37–38, 155, 190, 224, 227
ecumenism, 3, 38, 55–57
see also sectarianism

education
revolution and, 2, 12–13, 128
as way of dealing with religion, 2, 12–13, 128
embalming, 175, 177–78, 183, 192–96, 198, 201–2, 266
Abrikosov, Aleksei, and, 193
God–building and, 5, 175, 192–97
mausoleum and, 5, 175, 192–97
miracle and, 194
see also bodies; mausoleum; veneration
empirio–criticism
Avenarius, Richard, 60, 93–94, 96–97, 99, 243
Bogdanov, Alexander, and, 94, 96–97, 99, 128, 242
Bolsheviks and, 3, 96–97
God–building and, 3, 59–60, 94, 96–97, 99–100, 210
Lenin and, 59–60, 93, 97–101, 105–10, 113–14, 123, 125, 127, 164, 242–43
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 96–97, 100
Mach, Ernst, 60, 93–94, 96–97, 99, 109, 113, 128, 241–43
Engels, Friedrich
Anti–Dühring, 76, 98, 100, 111, 125–27, 164
atheism and, 19, 219
Christianity and, 10, 21–22, 39–40, 70, 74, 82, 85, 90, 215, 220
dialectic and, 105, 111–13, 124–27, 245
idealism and materialism and, 60, 98–100, 107
"Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy," 125
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 99–100
on the military, 144–45, 253
"On the History of Early Christianity," 22, 70, 76
Second International understanding of, 76, 98, 103, 105, 118, 127, 238–39
Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, 76, 98, 100
exercise (physical)
cycling, 4, 176, 184, 185, 186–89, 192, 243, 264, 265
hiking, 4, 175–76, 183–86, 188–89, 192, 243, 264–65
ice–skating, 4, 175–76, 183–84, 189, 243, 264
lack after October 1917, 189
nudism and, 4, 176, 183–84, 264
swimming, 4, 176, 184, 189, 192, 243, 264
tension with diseased bodies, 4–5, 175–76, 183, 192
see also bodies; veneration

February 1917 (revolution), *see* Russian Revolution
feudalism
capitalism and, 3, 64–67, 114–15, 117, 210, 234–35
religion and, 11–12
Tolstoy and, 63–67, 71, 210
Feuerbach, Ludwig
Engels and, 125
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 74–75, 77, 130, 217, 238
Marx and, 109, 113, 238
folktales
Lenin's death and, 198–200
"Wily Lenin," 199–200
see also veneration
freedom
bourgeois freedom, 136, 163, 165–70, 172, 229, 247, 259
Bund and, 3, 9, 26–29, 221–23
Calvin, John, and, 164
capitalism and, 165–66, 169
collective and, 169, 171
communist, 169–70
of conscience, 3, 9, 17–21, 24–27, 218
democracy and, 4, 165–68
dialectic and, 21, 136, 163–72, 209, 260
Erasmus, Desiderius, and, 164
formal freedom, 53, 154, 159, 163, 165–68, 170, 172, 259–60
Israel and, 167
Losurdo, Domenico, and, 166–68, 260
Luther, Martin, and, 164
miracle and, 4, 136, 163–72, 259–62
national question and, 3, 9, 24–29, 221–22
Orthodox theology and, 164
as partisan, 136, 163, 168–70, 172–73, 210
post–revolutionary forms, 171–72
Ransome, Arthur, and, 171–72

freedom—*Continued*
real freedom, 53, 154, 163, 168–70, 172, 259–60
religion and, 3, 9, 17–21, 24–27, 218
Rhodes, Cecil, and, 167–68
Roman Catholicism and, 164
United States and, 166–67

Gapon, Georgi, 60–63, 81, 216–17, 232–33
The General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, *see* Bund
Gnosticism, 74, 78–79, 239
God
ambivalence of, 79, 83–84
Hegel and, 107–9, 245
as ideal, 3, 77–78, 130, 174
idealism and, 60, 103, 105, 107–9
image of, 15–16, 217–18
Job and, 156
justice of, 79, 81
kairós and, 150, 258
likeness of, 15–16
ontological reserve and, 211
state and, 11
see also God–building
God–builders, *see* God–building
God–building, 3, 73–87
Bloch, Ernst, and, 87–92
Bologna school and, 94–95
Bolsheviks and, 17, 59, 73, 94, 241
Capri school and, 94–95, 220
Christian communism and, 78–80
empirio–criticism and, 3, 59–60, 94, 96–97, 99–100, 210
enthusiasm and, 3, 59, 74, 76, 196
freedom of conscience and, 17–18, 220, 241
gods as ideal in, 3, 77–78, 130, 174, 238–39
Gorky, Maxim, and, 92, 94–95, 220, 265
Hegel and, 4, 103–4, 110
Krasin, Leonid, and, 95, 176, 183, 192–97, 201
Lenin's attack on, 3, 92–101, 215, 236, 242
Lenin's tacit support, 4, 86–87, 103–4, 110, 127–33, 209
mausoleum and, 192–97
otzovism and, 37, 94–95, 241
revolution and, 3, 80–82
veneration and, 4, 192–97
see also Lunacharsky, Anatoly; veneration
God–seekers, 59
Gogol, Nikolai, 53–54, 84
Gorky, Maxim, 17, 59, 92, 94–95, 220, 233, 241, 251, 265
Gospels, *see* Bible, parables

Harding, Neil, 8, 99, 123, 208, 224, 241, 243, 245, 249
Hegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm
Bloch, Ernst, and, 105, 243
dialectic, 4, 103–27, 243–48
God and, 107–9, 245
God–building and, 4, 103–4, 110
idealism and, 103, 106–9, 127–28, 244–46
Marx and, 105, 110–13, 116, 243
Phenomenology of Spirit, 105, 110, 246
Plekhanov and, 105, 108–9, 118–19, 245
religion and, 103, 107–9
revolution and, 103, 105–7, 148, 246–47
ruptural reading of, 4, 70, 103–4, 109–28, 133, 207, 245
The Science of Logic, 4, 103–10, 119, 128, 133
Second International and, 4, 104–5, 111, 113
subject and object in, 105–7, 244–47
vulgar reading of, 4, 103–4, 108–27, 133, 207, 249
see also dialectic
hiking, 4, 175–76, 183–86, 188–89, 192, 243, 264–65
lack after October 1917, 189
see also exercise (physical)

ice–skating, 4, 175–76, 183–84, 189, 243, 264
see also exercise (physical)
idealism
Engels, Friedrich, and, 60, 98–99
God and, 60, 103, 105, 107–9
Hegel and, 103, 106–9, 127–28, 244–46
materialism and, 98–100, 106–9, 127–28, 132, 244–46

illegal
dialectic of illegal and legal, 31, 34–37, 54, 94, 159, 162–63, 168, 225, 259, 261
liquidators and, 161, 226
see also dialectic
imaginary resolution
in relation to Tolstoy, 3, 63, 67–68
Jameson, Fredric, and, 3, 63, 68
Iskra, 35–36, 48, 116, 118, 138, 222, 229, 230, 250, 252

Jameson, Fredric, 3
imaginary resolution and, 3, 63, 68
kairós and, 152, 154, 156
see also *kairós*
January 1905 (revolution), *see* Russian Revolution
Jesus, *see* Christ, Jesus
Jews, 3
Bund and, 26–29
freedom of conscience and, 26–29
Zionism and, 28–29
see also anti–Semitism; Bund
Judas Iscariot, 44–45, 53, 242

kairós
Agamben, Giorgio, and, 152, 153, 154, 156, 159, 256, 258
ákairos and, 136, 157–58, 174, 210, 258
Badiou, Alain, and, 152, 154–55, 156, 159, 257
Benjamin, Walter, and, 152–54, 156, 157, 159, 256, 257
Bible and, 149–50
Jameson, Fredric, and, 152, 154, 156
Lenin's use of, 150–52
military and, 150
miracle and, 4, 135–36, 149–58, 256–58
Negri, Antonio, and, 152, 155–56
strike and, 151–52
Žižek, Slavoj, and, 152, 153–54, 156
Kanatchikov, Semën Ivanovich, 6, 216, 232, 234
katheder–socialists, 33, 37
Kautsky, Karl
The Class Struggle (Erfurt Program), 34
Christian communism and, 69, 70, 75, 238–40
"Ethics," 238
Forerunners of Modern Socialism, 70
Foundations of Christianity, 70, 238
Lenin's criticisms of, 55, 120–21, 154, 219, 221, 227, 248, 259
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 238
merger hypothesis of, 34
"Socialism and the Catholic Church," 238
konspiratsiia, 58, 232, 259, 261–62
Krasin, Leonid, 5, 95, 176, 183, 192–97, 201
Krupskaya, Nadezhda
church attendance of, 1–2
exercise (physical), 183–89, 264–65
Luncharsky, Anatoly, and, 93, 130
Reminiscences of Lenin, 1, 7, 104, 105, 122, 176, 183–89, 197, 214, 220, 231, 232–33, 240, 264–65
veneration and, 197, 205
Krylov, Ivan, 53, 230

Le Blanc, Paul, 8, 61, 198, 208, 224, 242
legal
dialectic of legal and illegal, 31, 34–37, 54, 94, 159, 162–63, 168, 225, 259, 261
Lenin V. I.
agriculture and, 54, 115, 132, 144, 226, 231–32
anal sex and, xi
"April Theses," 6, 123
atheism and, 13, 110, 128, 210
"The Attitude of the Workers' Party towards Religion" (1909), 10–24, 93, 215, 217, 218, 219
biblical language of, 41–48
biography of, ix–x, 6–8, 206, 264
church attendance of, 1–2
"Classes and Parties in Their Attitude to Religion and the Church" (1909), 10–24, 93, 215
The Development of Capitalism in Russia, 16, 114–15, 231
fall narratives and, 208–9
"The Heritage We Renounce," 173
"How We Should Reorganise the Peasants' and Workers' Inspection (Recommendation to the Twelfth Party Congress)," 231
illness of, x, 189, 192, 202, 231
"Karl Marx," 124

Lenin V. I.—*Continued*
Kautsky, Karl, and, 55, 120–21, 154, 219, 221, 227, 248, 259
"The Latest in *Iskra* Tactics," 118
letter template of, xi–xii
"Letters from Afar," 123, 138, 254
Materialism and Empirio–Criticism, 59–60, 93–94, 97–101, 105–10, 113–14, 123, 127, 164, 213, 242–43
New Economic Developments in Peasant Life, 231
"On the Question of Dialectics," 122, 165, 245
"On the Significance of Militant Materialism" (1922), 10–24
One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, 245
The Philosophical Notebooks, 104–9, 110, 115, 123
"The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky," 121
relation between thought and practice, 6–8
smoking and, xi
"Socialism and Religion," 10–24
as speaker, 5, 214, 330
The State and Revolution, 126, 169, 173, 184, 217, 218, 243, 260, 268
"The Three Sources and Three Components of Marxism," 126
"Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution," 116
"What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social–Democrats," 111–12, 164, 246
as writer, ix, 5–6
Lévi–Strauss, Claude, 3, 63, 68
Lih, Lars, 7, 34, 35, 44, 57, 58, 141–42, 168, 208, 222–24, 230, 232, 240, 247, 250, 251, 259, 261, 263
liquidators, 21, 33, 35, 37, 39, 45, 48, 55, 94, 161, 162, 191, 204, 226, 227, 228, 241, 265
Losurdo, Domenico, 166–68
Lunacharsky, Anatoly
1905 revolution and, 81–82
1917 revolution and, 82
ambivalence of religion and, 4, 60, 77, 79, 82–84, 88–92, 133, 210
atheism and, 12, 75, 129, 237
"Ateizm," 236
Bible and, 74–75, 78–84, 239–40
Bloch, Ernst, and, 75, 78, 81, 84, 87–92
Bogdanov, Alexander, and, 93, 94–96, 101
Bologna party school and, 94–95
Bolsheviks and, 76–77, 93, 96, 129
Capri party school and, 94–95, 220
Christ, Jesus, and, 74, 78, 76, 78, 81, 83–85, 87, 91–92, 239, 240
Christian communism and, 3, 75, 77–80, 82, 85–86, 91–92, 196, 228, 235–36
as Commissar of Enlightenment, 4, 8, 12, 38, 57, 74, 86, 96, 127–32, 176, 192–93, 196, 217, 236, 237
dialectic and, 82–83, 91–92
definition of religion in, 76–77
discernment and, 82–84
on Dostoyevsky, 84
education and, 12–13
embalming of Lenin and, 5, 196–97
empirio–criticism and, 96–97, 100
Feuerbach, Ludwig, and, 74–75, 77, 130, 217, 238
Gnosticism and, 74, 78–79, 239
"Kak iubileiu 9 ianvaria" ["On the Anniversary of the Ninth of January"], 81–82
Kautsky, Karl, and, 238
Lenin's closeness to, 92–93
Lenin's criticisms of, 93–96, 128–29
Lenin's support of, 127–32
Lenin through the Eyes of Lunacharsky, 196
Marx and, 75–77, 85, 87, 99–100, 237
mausoleum and, 5, 193–95
On Education, 74, 75, 77–78, 84, 100, 130, 196, 217, 236, 237, 238, 249
Paul (Apostle) and, 74, 76–78, 79, 81, 83, 87
Plekhanov and, 76, 237–38
Proletcult and, 96, 173, 236, 241
prophets and, 76, 77, 81–83, 85, 87, 239
Religiia i prosveshchenie [*Religion and Enlightenment*], 12–13, 74, 78, 79, 84, 86, 228, 233, 236, 237–38, 239, 240
Religiia i sotsializm [*Religion and Socialism*], 74–87, 91–92, 100, 238–39, 240, 249
revolution and, 80–84

Revolutionary Silhouettes, 38
Vvedensky, Aleksandr, and, 79, 86, 130, 217, 229–30, 238, 240
"What is Education?," 130, 238
see also God–building, mausoleum, veneration
Luxemburg, Rosa, 17–18
Christian communism and, 69
freedom of conscience and, 17–18, 218

Mach, Ernst, 60, 93–94, 96–97, 99, 109, 113, 128, 241–43
martyr
Bauman, Nikolai, as, 180, 182
funeral celebrations and, 182
religious, 4, 180–81, 183, 264
revolutionary tradition and, 180–83
saints and, 180, 241
Sverdlov, Yakov, as, 181, 182
Uritsky, Moisei, as, 182
see also veneration
Marx, Karl
atheism and, 219
dialectic and, 8, 20, 109–27, 158
freedom and, 166, 218–19
Hegel and, 105, 110–13, 116, 243
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 75–77, 85, 87, 99–100, 237
opium and, 3, 14, 217
religion and, 10, 14, 21–22, 39–40, 85, 215, 234, 257
sectarianism and, 39–40
vulgar reading, 4, 111–13
materialism
dialectical materialism, 99, 108–9, 113, 119, 245, 247, 265
Engels, Friedrich, and, 60, 98–100, 107–9, 125
evil and, 91–92, 210–11
idealism and, 98–100, 106–9, 127–28, 132, 244–46
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, on, 99–100
Materialism and Empirio–Criticism, 59–60, 93–94, 97–101, 105–10, 113–14, 123, 127, 164, 213, 242–43
two types (mechanical and common sense), 99–100
see also dialectic; Hegel; idealism
mausoleum, 5
design competition, 176, 194–95
folktales about, 199–200
God–building and, 192–97
Krasin, Leonid, and, 5, 176, 192–96
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 5, 176, 192, 194–97
Shchusev, Aleksei, and, 195
stone, 176, 194–95, 198–200, 266
wooden, 176, 193–94, 201, 266
see also embalming; veneration
Mensheviks, 33, 39, 42, 55, 61, 93–95, 155, 161, 171, 190, 208, 213, 227–28, 232, 250, 252, 257, 259
Bolsheviks and, 38, 43, 46, 55–57, 123–24, 158, 160–62, 228, 245
Iskra and, 35, 116, 138, 229–30
mechanical materialism and, 76, 116, 121, 123, 154
on Tolstoy, 63–64
see also tares
military
Engels and, 144–45, 253
kairós and, 150
miracle and, 4, 137, 139–40, 144–45, 150, 251
Potemkin, 135, 144, 146–47, 254, 255
revolution and, 4, 146–47, 150, 254
tension between spontaneity and organization, 4, 135, 141–50, 254–55
see also revolution; spontaneity
Miliukov, Paul, 215, 222, 224, 246, 247
miracle
alcohol and, 218
"civil" war and, 4, 138, 139–40
construction of communism as, 172, 173–74, 253
dialectic and, 141–49, 159–72
definition of, 4, 135–36
economic reconstruction as, 4, 138, 139–40, 253
embalming and, 194
freedom and, 4, 136, 163–72, 259–62
human effort and, 4, 136, 139–40
kairós and, 4, 135–36, 149–58, 256–58
military and, 4, 137, 139–40, 144–45, 150, 251
negative senses of, 136–38, 250–51
parliamentary involvement and, 4, 161–63, 258–59

miracle—*Continued*
positive senses of, 138–40, 251
revolution as, 4, 135–40, 210–11, 252–56
saints and, 136–38, 177–78, 194
Schmitt, Carl, and, 258
science and, 194
strike and, 4, 147–48, 252, 255, 256
tension between reform and revolution, 4, 136, 159–60
tension between spontaneity and organization, 4, 135, 141–50, 251–56
tension between within and without the system, 4, 136, 159–72, 225, 258–59
transcendence and immanence in, 135–36
see also *kairós*; revolution
Münster revolution, 239

Narodism, 33, 37–38, 45, 51, 114, 173, 225–27, 236
bourgeoisie and, 225–26, 227
SRs and, 38–39, 42, 55, 63, 75, 131, 191
see also tares
Narodnaia Volia, 38, 225–26
Narodniks, *see* Narodism
national question, 3, 9, 24–29, 221–22
freedom of conscience and, 24–26
languages and, 25
Negri, Antonio
Bible and, 155–56, 257–58
constituent resistance and, 148, 247
Job and, 156
kairós and, 152, 155–56, 157, 159
miracle and, 135
see also *kairós*
nudism, 4, 176, 183–84, 264
see also exercise (physical); swimming

October 1917, *see* Russian Revolution
Octobrists, 37–38, 169, 258
Old Believers, 110, 131–32, 210, 221, 250
Olgin, Moissaye Joseph, 6, 60, 216, 232, 234, 256
opium
ambivalence of metaphor, 3, 13–15, 17, 217
for the people, 14–15
Lenin's translation of, 14–15
Marx's usage of, 3, 14, 217
of the people, 14–15, 217
religion and, 3, 14–15, 217
spiritual booze and, 3, 10, 14–17, 24, 210, 217, 218
Vvedensky, Aleksandr, and, 13–14, 16, 217
opponents, *see* tares
opportunism
definition of, 33
Lenin as principled opportunist, 8, 122
opponents as unprincipled opportunists, 38, 48, 227–28, 262
organization
military and, 4, 135, 141, 144–47, 150, 210, 255
miracle and, 4, 135, 141–49, 251–56
revolution and, 4, 143–46, 232, 252
spontaneity and, 4, 135, 141–50, 251–56
strike and, 4, 40, 135, 138, 141, 143, 144, 146–48, 210, 252
Orthodox Church
Adam and Eve in, 15
attacks on, 4, 11–12, 128–29, 132
Christ in, 15, 87
Fall and, 15–16
feudalism and, 11–12
freedom and, 164
God–seekers and, 59
image of God and, 15–16
miracle and, 136–37, 177–78, 194
peasants and, 22–23, 72–73, 177, 235–36, 263
Renovationists and, 183, 214, 240
ruling class and, 18, 23, 79, 217, 220–21, 249–50
saints and, 4, 177, 250, 264
state and, 11–12
theology and, 15–16, 218
Tsar and, 216
Tolstoy and, 67
see also clergy; theology
otzovists, 33, 37, 39, 55, 101, 161, 190, 241
Bogdanov, Alexander, and, 101
Capri school and, 95
God–building and, 93–95
Vpered and, 37, 94–95, 227, 241

parables
abscess, 49
agricultural, 31–32, 40–43, 52–55, 191

allegory and, 51
bricklayer, 50–51
Christ and, 2, 31–33, 35–36, 40–43, 54
cleaning the yard, 52–53
definition, 50
disease, 49
door, 40–42, 230
earthiness of, 3, 49–55
easy road, 43, 228
good shepherd, 40–42, 228
great banquet, 43
legal–illegal struggle and, 34–37, 225
Lenin's interpretations, 2, 3, 31–38, 223–25
Lenin's writing of his own parables, 3, 49–53, 230–31
lost sheep, 40–42, 228
lottery, 51–52
metaphorical tares, 3, 33, 37–40, 225–28, 232
mustard seed, 32
narrow gate, 43, 228
party organization and, 50–51
peasants and, 49–53
prodigal son, 43
revolution and, 3, 49–53
sower, 32, 36, 40, 223, 228
Syro–Phoenician Woman, 43
tares and wheat, 3, 31–38, 224–25
transmission belt, 52
parliament, *see* Duma
Paul (Apostle)
Agamben, Giorgio, and, 153, 156, 256–57
Badiou, Alain, and, 2, 152, 154–55, 156, 213–14, 232
Lenin as, 2, 213–14, 232
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 74, 76–78, 79, 81, 83, 87
Vvedensky, Aleksandr, 230
Žižek, Slavoj, and, 153–54, 213
peasants
Christian communism and, 3, 71–73, 132–33
Duma representatives, 3, 22–23, 217, 230, 235, 263
parables and, 49–53
religion and, 22–23, 72–73, 177, 235–36, 263
saints and, 54, 198, 216
socialism and, 3, 30, 59, 60, 71–73, 207, 210, 236
Tolstoy and, 65–67, 72–73
workers and, 2, 12, 43, 45, 47, 51, 61, 63, 87, 115, 132, 137, 140, 143, 148, 151, 160, 162, 166, 169, 179, 196, 197, 199, 204, 228, 255
Pharisees, 44–45, 229
Philistines, 44, 118, 226, 228–29, 248
philosophy
Avenarius, Richard, and, 60, 93–94, 96–97, 99, 243
Hegel and, 4, 103–27, 243–48
idealism and, 60, 98–100, 103, 106–9, 127–28, 132, 244–46
Mach, Ernst, and, 60, 93–94, 96–97, 99, 109, 113, 128, 241–43
materialism and, 60, 98–100, 103, 106–9, 127–28, 132, 244–46
physical exercise, *see* exercise (physical)
Pianitsky, O., 6, 185, 222
Plekhanov, Georgi. V., 7, 35, 76, 226–27, 245, 257
"cold" stream of Marxism and, 76, 100, 129
dialectic and, 103, 105, 108–9, 118–19, 121, 124–25, 227, 245, 247, 248
First World War and, 104
Hegel and, 105, 108–9, 118–19
Iskra and, 35
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 76, 237–38
Tolstoy and, 63–64, 233–34
Potemkin, 135, 144, 146–47, 254, 255
proletariat, *see* working class
Proletcult, 96, 173, 236, 241
prophet
Bible and, 114, 179
Bloch, Ernst, and, 88–89
false prophets, 39, 46
Lenin and, 4, 151–52, 178–89, 197, 198, 211, 263
Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 76, 77, 81–83, 85, 87, 239
see also God–building; veneration

Rabochaia Mysl', 35, 224, 227
Rabochee Delo, 35, 48, 227, 251
Ransome, Arthur, 5–6, 236, 262, 269
communist democracy and, 171–72

reform
  Christianity and, 65
  miracle and, 4, 136, 159–60
  revolution and, 4, 159–60, 247, 260
Régulation theory, 202–3
religion
  ambivalence of, 2, 4, 20–24, 30, 59, 60, 71–72, 82–84, 89, 129, 209–10, 240
  bourgeoisie and, 2, 10, 12–13, 18, 19, 219, 239
  cause of oppression, 2–3, 11–12
  definition of (by Lunacharsky), 76–77
  education and, 2–3, 12–13, 128
  freedom of conscience and, 3, 17–21
  Lenin's writings on, 9–24, 128
  mistake in opposing, 19–20
  as opium, 3, 14–15, 217
  party membership and, 2–3, 17–18, 20–21
  persistence after revolution, 12–13, 21–24
  as protest, 14
  response to oppression, 10–11, 14
  revolution and, 2–3, 12–13, 20, 70–71, 80–82
  as secondary phenomenon, 2, 10–11, 19–20, 128
  as spiritual booze, 3, 10, 14–17, 24, 210, 217, 218
  state and, 11–13, 17–18, 22–24, 67, 215, 219
  workers and, 1, 2–3, 12, 17–21, 27–28, 93, 215, 216, 218, 219–20, 229–30, 238, 241
  see also atheism; Christian communism; Christianity; Orthodox Church; theology
Renovationists, 130, 183, 214
revolution
  Bolsheviks and, 123–24, 143–44, 148, 151, 158
  bourgeois, 18, 43, 76, 116–17, 123–24, 158, 260, 263
  Christian communism and, 70–71, 80–82
  counterrevolution and, 41, 46, 48, 66, 80, 82, 94, 114, 116–18, 131, 162, 182, 255, 258, 266
  dialectic and, 4, 85–86, 89, 105–8, 116–18, 120–23, 209, 243
  military and, 4, 146–47, 150, 254
  as miracle, 4, 135–40, 210–11, 252–56
  old and new in, 85–86, 122, 173–74
  parables and, 3, 49–53
  reform and, 4, 159–60, 247, 260
  romanticism of, 209
  stages theory of, 76, 107, 121, 123–24, 148
  strike and, 4, 34, 116–17, 119, 135, 138, 141–42, 146–47, 168, 219–20, 248, 256
  subjective intervention, 103, 105–7, 115–16, 123–24, 244–45
  tension between spontaneity and organization, 4, 135, 141–50, 251–56
  see also Christian communism; miracle; Russian Revolution
Russian Revolution
  Contemporary writings about, 5–6
  February 1917, 35, 38, 42, 107, 123, 135, 138–39, 143, 158, 169, 209, 214, 250, 258
  January 1905, 25, 35, 47, 61, 64, 66, 81–82, 94, 114–15, 116, 119, 123, 135–36, 139, 148, 152, 161, 191, 229, 234, 248, 254, 256
  October 1917, 4, 12, 29, 37, 38, 55–56, 57, 62, 82, 86–87, 96, 104, 120, 124, 128–31, 139, 140, 144, 148, 153, 158, 180, 181, 182, 185, 189, 196, 200, 208–10, 214, 220, 221, 231, 243, 252, 254
  as success, 8
  see also revolution
Russian Social–Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP)
  atheism and, 9, 18–20, 24, 219
  Bund and, 3, 9, 26–29, 221–23
  democracy and, 262
  Duma and, 17, 25, 27, 37, 94, 161–63, 219, 232
  fifth congress of, 2, 29
  first congress of, 29
  fourth congress of, 29, 38, 56, 161, 253, 258
  freedom of conscience and, 3, 9, 17–21, 24–27, 218
  martyrdom and, 180–83
  religious members of, 2–3, 9, 12, 17–18, 20–21, 93
  party schools of, 94–95, 220

second congress, 38, 55–57, 131, 186, 222–23, 228, 245, 253
struggle as source of strength, 39, 57
third congress of, 62, 233, 253
workers and, 33, 34–35, 38, 54, 57, 144, 147, 162, 171, 223, 224, 225–27, 246, 247, 252, 259–60, 261–62, 264
see also Bolsheviks; God–building; organization

saint
campaign against, 138
martyrdom and, 180, 241
miracles and, 136–38, 177–78, 194
Orthodox Church and, 4, 177, 250, 264
peasants and, 54, 198, 216
religious saint, 4, 177–78, 264
see also veneration
Saltykov–Shchedrin, Mikhail, 45, 53–54
Schmitt, Carl, 258
Second International
collapse of, 121–22
dialectic and, 76, 98, 103, 104–5, 111, 113, 118–19, 127, 238–39, 245
Engels and, 76, 100, 103, 105, 111, 124–25
First World War and, 4, 104–5, 121, 220–21
Hegel and, 4, 104–5, 111, 113
Lenin and, 4, 104–5
Plekhanov, 100, 103–5, 118–19
sectarianism, 3, 38, 39–40, 55–57, 232
see also ecumenism
Shchusev, Aleksei, 195
Shushenskoe (Siberia), ix, 63, 105, 110, 114, 184, 188, 264
Siberia, *see* Shushenskoe
socialism, *see* communism
Socialist–Revolutionaries (SRs), 6, 35, 38–39, 42, 46, 55, 56, 62, 131, 143, 190, 191, 197, 208, 226–27, 248, 261
see also Narodism; tares
soviets, 26, 38, 42, 173, 208, 254, 262
state and, 122–23, 140, 145, 169, 172–73, 178, 201–2, 250–1, 260, 262, 268
spiritual booze
ambivalence of metaphor, 3, 14–17
religion as, 3, 10, 14–17, 24, 210, 217, 218
Russia and, 16
spontaneity
conspiracy and, 143
definition of, 141–43
military and, 4, 135, 141, 144–47, 150, 210, 255
miracle and, 4, 135, 141–49, 251–56
organization and, 4, 135, 141–50, 251–56
strike and, 4, 40, 135, 138, 141, 143, 144, 146–48, 210, 252
see also *stikhiinyi*
SRs, *see* Socialist–Revolutionaries
Stalin, Josef
Brezhnev, Leonid, and, 205
compulsion and, 203–5
Khrushchev, Nikita, and, 205
Krupskaya, Nadezhda, and, x
"Last Testament" and, x
Lenin and, x, 163, 204–5, 208, 227
Lenin's Collected Works and, x
Trotsky and, x, 209, 227, 268
veneration and, 175, 201, 203–5
Stalin's Moustache (blog), 5
state
bourgeois, 121, 126, 166–67, 170, 172–73, 260, 265, 268
national question and, 3, 9, 24–29, 221–22
religion and, 11–13, 17–18, 22–24, 67, 215, 219
Soviet, 122–23, 140, 145, 169, 172–73, 178, 201–2, 250–1, 260, 262, 268
The State and Revolution, 126, 169, 173, 184, 217, 218, 243, 260, 268
withering away of, 121, 169–70, 260
stikhiinyi, 141–43, 251
see also spontaneity
strike
kairós and, 151–52
miracle and, 4, 147–48, 252, 255, 256
revolution and, 4, 34, 116–17, 119, 135, 138, 141–42, 146–47, 168, 219–20, 248, 256
tensions between spontaneity and organization and, 4, 40, 135, 138, 141, 143, 144, 146–48, 210, 252
Sukhanov, Nikolai Nikolayevich, 6, 7, 55, 82, 214, 240

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Sverdlov, Yakov, 5, 181–82, 248, 263–64
swimming, 4, 176, 184, 189, 192, 243, 264
 nudism and, 4, 176, 183–84, 264
 see also exercise (physical)

tares
 Bund and, 39, 55
 metaphorical (opponents as), 3, 33, 37–40, 225–28, 232
 parable of tares and wheat, 3, 31–37, 224–25
 see also parables
theology
 Bloch, Ernst, and, 88, 91
 Christ in, 15
 countertraditions of, 176
 definition of, 90
 evil and, 91–92, 174
 freedom and, 164
 Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 75, 77, 79, 81–83, 90–91, 196, 217
 peasants and, 72–73
 relativizing theological claims, 4, 91, 135, 174, 204–5, 210–11
 veneration and, 177–83
 see also Bible; Christ; Christian communism; Christianity; clergy; God; *kairós*; Orthodox Church; religion; translation
theosis, 15, 87, 164
Tolstoy, Leo
 capitalism and, 3, 64–67
 Christ and, 65–66
 Christian communism and, 3, 63, 68–69, 73, 210, 235
 dialectic and, 60, 63–72
 Lenin's interpretation of, 3, 63–71, 233, 235
 peasants and, 65–67, 72–73
 Plekhanov and, 63–64, 233–34
translation
 between miracle and revolution, 4, 141, 149, 174, 210–11
 relativizing absolute claims, 4, 91, 135, 174, 204–5, 210–11
 semantic clusters and, 141, 149, 210
 between theology and politics, 4, 174, 210–11
 veneration and, 176, 178–83, 204–5
Trotsky, Leon
 capitalism and, 3, 64–67
 church and, 1
 conciliators and, 33, 37–38, 39, 55, 226–27
 God–building and, 73
 Lenin and, x, 1, 7, 45, 55, 57, 123, 165, 184, 214, 232, 251, 259
 Stalin and, x, 209, 227, 268
 veneration and, 202
Trudoviks, 22–23, 56, 72–73
Tumarkin, Nina, 178, 180, 183, 184, 192, 194–97, 198–99, 200, 201–2, 205, 263, 264, 265–66, 267

ultimatumists, 33, 37, 94, 161, 190
utopian socialism, 33, 37, 75, 226

Valentinov, Nikolai, 7, 55, 184, 264
veneration
 Abrikosov, Alexei, and, 193
 abscesses and, 4–5, 176, 190, 265
 Agitprop and, 5, 176–77, 197, 200–202
 collective and, 178–79, 181, 192, 196–98, 202, 267
 compulsion and, 5, 176–77, 183
 creativity of, 198–200
 decay and, 4–5, 176, 183, 190–92, 265
 disease and, 4, 176, 189–91, 265
 embalming and, 175, 177–78, 183, 192–96, 198, 201–2, 266
 exercise (physical) and, 4, 176, 183–89, 264–65
 folk tales and, 198–200
 Krasin, Leonid, and, 5, 176, 192–97
 Lunacharsky, Anatoly, and, 5, 176, 193–97
 martyr and, 4, 176, 180–83, 264
 mausoleum and, 5, 176, 192–95, 266
 official, 5, 176, 197–202, 267
 popular, 5, 176, 197–200, 266–67
 prophet and, 4, 176, 178–79, 263
 resurrection and, 191–92
 saint and, 4, 176–78, 264
 Shchusev, Aleksei, and, 195
 Stalin, Iosef, and, 203–5, 267–68
 tension between physical exercise and diseased bodies in, 4–5, 176, 183, 192, 265

"Wily Lenin" (story), 199–200
see also abscess; compulsion; decay; disease; embalming; exercise (physical); mausoleum
vodka
Lenin on, 16, 217
priests and, 23, 230
religion and, 14–15, 17, 217
Russia and, 16
see also opium; spiritual booze
Vvedensky, Aleksandr, (Metropolitan of Moscow)
Lunacharsky and, 79, 86, 130, 217, 229–30, 238, 240
opium and, 14, 16
Renovationists and, 183

Walling, William English, 5, 147, 177, 207, 217, 221, 232, 240, 251–52, 263
wheat
comrades as, 3, 34
parable of tares and wheat, 3, 31–38, 224–25
see also parables
"Wily Lenin," 199–200
WITBD (What Is to Be Done?), see Lenin
working class
danger of being split, 2, 19–20, 25, 28, 34, 45, 104, 117, 121, 160, 166, 219–20, 223
dictatorship of, 13, 74, 121, 165, 171, 208, 260
peasants and, 2, 12, 43, 45, 47, 51, 61, 63, 87, 115, 132, 137, 140, 143, 148, 151, 160, 162, 166, 169, 179, 196, 197, 199, 204, 228, 255
"purposive workers," 34, 51, 246
religion and, 1, 2–3, 12, 17–21, 27–28, 93, 215, 216, 218, 219–20, 229–30, 238, 241
RSDLP and, 33, 34–35, 38, 54, 57, 144, 147, 162, 171, 223, 224, 225–27, 246, 247, 252, 259–60, 261–62, 264
see also Bund; Russian Social–Democratic Labor Party

Zinoviev, Grigorii, 5, 6, 7, 34, 197, 201, 255
Zionism, 28–29, 222
Žižek, Slavoj, 152, 153–54, 155–56, 213, 257–58
see also *kairós*
Zubatov unions, 33–34, 35, 36, 37, 61, 223, 225