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Article

Is Oscar Del Barco a perverse man?

Oscar Ariel Cabezas 

Associate Professor, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile; oac2020@uc.cl

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Abstract

This article seeks to contextualise the 'Heideggerian' or destructive critique against Lenin in the 1980s. The hypothesis I develop is based on Oscar Del Barco's critique against Leninism and on the theoretical moments in which this critique has been resisted by other Latin American thinkers. Del Barco is one of the leading philosophers in Latin America. His extraordinary effectiveness reconstructs the history and thought of the Bolshevik leader in order to abandon the leader's enlightened programme. I argue that the demonisation of Lenin and the complex relationship with a demand for the authenticity of the Bolsheviks' original project leads the philosopher to omit the birth or the genealogy of extreme liberalism or neoliberalism. The demonisation of Lenin and the omission of the historical context in which he writes makes Del Barco's philosophy a propitious place for the neutralisation of the relationship between politics and emancipatory programmes. This hypothesis is confronted with the resistance of authors such as Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, García Linera, Bolívar Echeverría, Dominico Losurdo, Marta Harnecker and Tomás Moulian, among others. The article concludes by affirming that the Leninism reloaded by these authors constitutes a 'toolbox' for thinking the conflictive and never-finished relationship between politics and emancipation.

Keywords Del Barco; socialism; dinomarxism; destructive critique; politics

Perhaps the adventure of every text is the desire to flee from the institutions that hold it in place.

Horacio González¹

Introduction

Oscar Del Barco's essay '¿Era Lenin un perverso?' [Was Lenin a perverse man?] (1980), published by the magazine *El Machete*, edited by Roger Bartra, is as scandalous a text as any Latin American philosopher could dare to publish against the *pater* of the tradition of Marxism. This magazine emerged from the depths of the left's crisis in the 1980s and the essay against Lenin revels, unabashedly, in the theoretical devastation of the communist parties and Marxism more broadly. In a superb new edition of the historic magazine, published by Fondo de Cultura Económica–México, Bartra himself remarks: '*El Machete* was the reflection of a transition of the communist left to new forms of political action; it was also the fruit of an old radical tradition that had, by then, already expired.'² It remains to be seen whether the declarative force with which Bartra condemns the old radical tradition to destruction and irrelevance is part of what will drive Del Barco to pen the essay, which deconstructs Lenin's epistemological, political and philosophical presuppositions. What is certain is that *El Machete* takes the form of a communist magazine more faithful to criticism and thought than to the dogmas integral to Marxism's political-theological indoctrination. This atmosphere allows the Argentine philosopher to submit the theoretical and practical thought of the October Revolution hero to a theoretical examination concerning the certitude of which we cannot yet decide. The openness to debating Lenin's thought and actions, without either canonising or beatifying them, is not a uniquely Latin American tendency. In European circles, such as the journal *Socialisme ou barbarie*, directed by renowned intellectuals such as Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis, there was often talk of Marxism's de-fossilisation or, openly, of its destabilisation. But in these processes of epistemological and philosophical de-fossilisation, the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution seemed untouchable.

Georg Lukács' early book *Lenin: A study on the unity of his thought* (1924), Antonio Gramsci's analysis in the *Quarderni del carcere* (1975) wherein he proposes Lenin, alongside Machiavelli, as the main theoretician of the modern state, or even the, one might say obligatory, reference to Louis Althusser's *Lenin and Philosophy* (1968), configure a succinct theoretical-cognitive map in which the figure of Lenin as a theoretician of political praxis is indisputable. However, it is no coincidence that one of the most important philosophers among Southern Cone intellectuals exiled in Mexico wrote what is perhaps the most effective criticism of the hero of the Revolution. In the 1980s, criticism of Lenin and the totalitarian drifts of the Russian Revolution did not constitute a transgression or novel opposition to an unstable and fragile Stalinism. Veronica Gago's book, *Controversia: una lengua del exilio* [Controversy: An exiled language] (2012), devoted to describing and analysing the polemics of the so-called crisis of Marxism between 1979 and 1981, offers an account of this. *El Machete* brought together intellectuals belonging to different approaches and theoretical frameworks, and one of its driving editorial motivations was the discussion of the Argentine left's political defeat. Although our focus is on the magazine *El Machete* and Oscar Del Barco's critique of Leninism, Gago's description of the Argentine philosopher is of interest, as well: 'Del Barco defines Marxism as "(theoretical) forms of being of the classes and sectors of the exploited classes, thus displacing the problem of the status and origin of theory."³ Gago's book analyses the two-year-long history of the magazine *Controversia* (Argentina) and the way in which she manages to confirm Del Barco's obsession by showing the origin of theories is useful to us. In this context, what is interesting is not the fact of a criticism of the father of the Revolution by a Third World philosopher, but rather how his critical mode is rigorously and philosophically grounded in the epistemological status of theory and criticism as enunciative locations capable of demonstrating the reason for their defeat and, above all, the reason for the so-called crisis of Marxism.

Del Barco elaborates a kind of obsession with what we will call *destructive criticism* of the founding *pater* of the Bolshevik Revolution. A destructive critique implies destroying the metaphysical sources from which Marxist praxis supposedly originates. These sources will be what Del Barco reconstructs, in what is possibly the most important of the destructive critiques of Lenin as the main figure responsible

for the catastrophe of really existing socialisms and, indeed, of one of the most faithful principles of modernity's articulation and its emancipatory correlates. Del Barco's critique is among the most erudite and devastating of the 1980s, but it is also the critique that offers the fewest possibilities for developing alternatives to the bankrupt hegemony of the socialist imaginary. Criticising Lenin, and moreover the mess that Stalin made of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was, at the time, the undertaking of more or less the entire intellectual left. The singular history of the magazine that hosts Del Barco's text and the richness of its contributions is part of the same drive that will encourage Roger Bartra, as its director, to destabilise a theoretical-political grammar based on the master signifier of the Leninist revolution. The valuable epistemological efforts of Latin American intellectuals will ultimately reveal the theoretical fragility of textbook Marxism, which resulted in Marxism as thought being converted into the official doctrine of the Latin American communist parties.

The 1980s was a complex decade for the modern institution of the Latin American state. A process of decomposition was beginning within its institutional folds, one that would have profound effects on the social sphere, until the neglected 'social question', that of social welfare, came to resent its weakening and paved the way for the neoliberal turn that had its peak in those years. What Jürgen Habermas will call the crisis of state legitimacy for Europe, the cultural and political magazine *El Machete* will read as an exhaustion of the programme and project of Marxism-Leninism's modern and avant-garde language.⁴ In fact, one of the most interesting articles published in the magazine's second issue is written by Christine Buci-Glucksmann, a prestigious Gramscian voice of the previous decade. She wrote *Gramsci y el Estado. Hacia una teoría marxista de la filosofía* [Gramsci and the state: Towards a Marxist theory of philosophy] in 1975, dedicating it to the Chilean resistance of the 1970s. In her article for *El Machete*, entitled 'Acerca de la crisis del Estado. ¿Atrapados sin salida?' [On the crisis of the state: Caught with no way out?] (1980), Buci-Glucksmann writes the following:

The delegitimization of the main states of developed capitalism and the aggravation of a structural crisis that has put the world distribution of power and the whole Keynesian mode of production, have produced in Marxist theory important debates about the crisis of the state and the morphology of politics, its practices and its effects on the class struggle.⁵

For Buci-Glucksmann, the delegitimation of the state expresses the fact that Keynesianism's decomposition is underway, and that the crisis of statehood under that productive model is a crisis in the international division of capitalist labour. In the register of what is perhaps the most faithful of Gramscian languages, she signals that the crisis of legitimisation engages the failure of Leninist politics and its effects on the construction of socialism. 'Camarada Lenin, queda usted despedido'⁶ [Comrade Lenin, you are fired] is one of her article's subtitles. The development of a relentless argument that foresees the entry into the long cycle of passive neoliberal revolution, which Gramsci had linked to the hegemony of Taylorist-Fordist Americanism, is crucial for understanding this moment's critique of Leninism.⁷ Lenin's dismissal will be the 'part-time' contract that Gramsci receives. This 'new contract' is not so much one of substituting one doctrine for another, but rather an opening to heterodoxies within the language of Marxism. This opportunity to redefine a non-Leninist struggle for the state occurs just as the rise of the extreme liberalism's hegemony reaches its apogee and completes its accumulation of forces.

In Buci-Glucksmann's Gramscian language, Lenin's dismissal is a farewell to those who saw in the leader of the October Revolution an intense state-olatry. This passion for state power identified politics, as did the second and third communist internationals, with a state bureaucracy that served the reproduction of power. Leninism in the 1980s would enter a deep crisis; the theoretical programmes based on its analyses would gradually weaken, as would the welfare state. 'Faced with Lenin, it seems to us that the real alternative is a new development of Marxism based on a reformulation of his political theory.'⁸ A kind of post-Leninism appears in this moment, distanced from the *vulgata* of the communist party Marxism. Buci-Glucksmann's premonitory analysis, declaredly open to thinking the conceptual plasticity of Gramsci's proposals, clamours to escape the state language with which Lenin is identified, as a theoretician of the statist politics that allowed or made viable a profound crisis of the Marxist-Leninist political paradigm which called for the destruction of the bourgeois state and its substitution by a proletarian state.

Dinomarxism, misogyny and homophobia

In the current context of what could be called a civilisational defeat of the developmentalist presuppositions of state modernity, the radical critique of the failed experiment of the real socialisms is yet another symptom of what intellectuals are undergoing in both Latin America and Europe. *El Machete* will mobilise the need for a change of language; that is, a change of the dominant grammar of the relationship between state and revolution. The critical abandonment of the *vulgata* of Leninism is the abandonment of the theoretical model of one state's substitution by another: the substitution of the apparatus of bourgeois domination by the apparatus of proletarian domination. The removal of this model coincides with the perception that a '*machismo*-Leninism' fails to perceive how the 1980s is the decade not only of the crisis of state legitimisation, but also of the crisis of the subject, or of a politics of the subject that gave theoretical primacy to the working class as the agent of revolution. The philosophy of progress and productivism – whose epistemological matrix is found in the Marxist idea that society's development is positively given by the contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the social relations of production – begins to suffer a deterioration, or a first crisis of theoretical legitimacy.

In effect, it is a dual crisis: that of the state and that of the working class as revolutionary subject. Therefore, it is impossible not to mention how the turn Roger Bartra gives to *El Machete* serves as an opening to new subjectivities and identities that are no longer intertwined with the political privilege of the predominantly male working-class subject. The working class which, as the main agent of revolutionary unfolding, had found its particular theoretical privilege in the philosophical and political presuppositions of Marxism's modernity, enters into a generalised decline. That is, a moment of desperation, which results in its decadence and removal from emancipatory grammars. An interview with Carlos Monsiváis, impossible to leave unmentioned, verifies the opening of or departure from the language of Marxism-Leninism. An ironic commentary by Roger Bartra reveals that in the 1980s a 'linguistic turn' in political theory is underway, which implies the removal of doctrinal Marxism. This turn, or 'lexical change', appears in conjunction with the collapse of the industrial paradigm of Marxist thought and the emergence of a sensibility in which disenchantment with the working class as an agent of social change coincides, internally and structurally, with the beginning of the crisis of the factory as the fundamental axis of the world economy. This crisis is also that of the pact necessary for the reproduction of the order that state and workers' institutions were to maintain.

Thus, the linguistic turn and, indeed, the inclusion of new elements of politics will be marked by the emergence of new collective identities. Given this, the interview with Carlos Monsiváis is a marvel, as it contains all the points of a language in the process of change and announces the emergence of a new sensibility. For the same reason, the interview by José Ramón Enríquez, 'Monsiváis: Feminism and homosexuality', has the virtue of being a sample of the openings that produced both the change in sensibility and the crisis of politics' industrial paradigm. It is important to note that the layout of the page with the Monsiváis interview includes a box with a quote from Lenin stating the following: 'The Soviet government has not left in place a single one of the laws that kept women in a state of abject subjection ... we have done everything necessary for women to be equal to men, and we have the right to be proud of it.'⁹ As the magazine itself tries to show, this box exposes what, according to Monsiváis, will be a substantive difference between the early years of the Russian Revolution and the later Stalinist regime. Feminism and, more precisely, women's rights, are deployed in Monsiváis's interview as what was obscured by the Stalinisation of socialism, along with homosexuality and sexual dissidence. The effects of this concealment will lead to the destabilisation of state-ified language's *machismo*-Leninism by the intense political sensibilities of the feminist left and sexual dissidences. An opening to the language of men and women's social rights was made possible by the cathartic threshold produced by the duality of power between the tsarist regime and the power of the Soviets, despite its being quickly closed with the Stalinisation of the Soviet Republics.

In the early 1980s Monsiváis's acute sensitivity towards sexual differences and their political developments has in mind Lenin's writing 'Soviet power and the status of the women', published for the first time on 6 November 1919. The insertion of Lenin's positions on women in Monsiváis's interview is inscribed – beyond the differences that the leader of the Russian Revolution may have had with Rosa Luxemburg – in the event of an emancipatory sensibility. This sensibility meant a profound expansion of civil rights during the first years of the formation of the USSR. The distinction and distance from the

juridical nature and simulacra of the bourgeois republics is empirically outstanding and allows Lenin to write the following:

In no bourgeois republic (i.e. where there is private ownership of the land, factories, works, shares, etc.), be it even the most democratic republic, nowhere in the world, not even in the most advanced country, have women gained a position of complete equality. And this, notwithstanding the fact that more than one and a quarter centuries have elapsed since the Great French (bourgeois-democratic) Revolution. In words, bourgeois democracy promises equality and liberty. In fact, not a single bourgeois republic, not even the most advanced one, has given the feminine half of the human race either full legal equality with men or freedom from the guardianship and oppression of men. Bourgeois democracy is democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, exuberant promises and the high-sounding slogans of freedom and equality. But, in fact, it screens the non-freedom and inferiority of women, the non-freedom and inferiority of the toilers and exploited.¹⁰

Lenin's critique of grandiloquent slogans is the base for his critique of bourgeois democracy's extension of rights to women – he denounces the simulacral character of republican democracy, whose matrix is inscribed in and intertwined with the ideology of capital. The Lenin of 1919 is a theoretician who resists the tendencies of modernity's liberalism – in a non-modern or anti-modern way – without necessarily breaking the virtuous cycle of the best of modernity and its civilising project. For Lenin, the republic that broadens the liberal horizons of the 'position of women' is nonetheless the topology of an insufficient emancipation. In the framework of the law and legality of bourgeois modernity, freedom is only a word or a promise in which the mysteries of servitude are hidden. That is, in the mysteries of a mirror logic, the image of democracy conceals the exploitation of capitalism. Thus, again, bourgeois modernity and political liberalism are expressions of an incomplete emancipation. However, this non-*machista* Lenin, who is also the Lenin of a fidelity to the republic of the Soviet councils and to a civilising project of modernisation that resists the abandonment of freedom, is in Del Barco's reconstruction the same Lenin who will bring about the Stalinisation of the USSR. Indeed, against *machismo*-Leninism, Monsiváis most accurately and intensely perceives the urgency of restoring freedom for emancipatory thought; freedom for subjects – men and women – to express their desires and wills insofar as they do not harm the physical integrity of others.

What Monsiváis knows – and this knowledge is also that of the Revolution's early years – is that the truth of democracy and institutions, emancipated from logics of repressed desire and its effects on sexuality, cannot be regulated by state repression. Monsiváis's hypothesis is that freedom is that of the desire for freedom. This desire is opposed to the ideologies of bourgeois democracy and the totalitarian consummation of the state. Here, Monsiváis's Leninism is alien to the language of liberalism and the totalitarian state, precisely because he is thinking of the Soviet laws that belong to and are inscribed within the horizon of a Lenin who radicalises the threshold produced in the breakdown of demo-bourgeois hegemony during the first years of the Soviet experience. That is why, amid Leninism's crisis of legitimacy, Monsiváis does not hesitate to propose the following:

At first the Soviet legislature declares 'the absolute non-interference of the state and society in sexual affairs provided that no person is harmed and no one's interests are harmed'. In 1933 the Stalinists claim 'proletarian decency', and define homosexuality as 'a product of the decadence of bourgeois sectors' and 'fascist perversion'. In January 1934 there are mass arrests in Moscow, Leningrad, and Kharkov, Odessa. Those arrested (actors, writers and musicians among them) are accused of participating in homosexual orgies and sentenced to several years of hard labour in Siberia. In 1934, through Stalin's personal intervention, a law was introduced that punished homosexual acts with five years of prison (if they were 'consensual') or eight years if force was used or the seduction was conducted publicly and with declared intent.¹¹

This is how feminism and homosexuality become part of the excluded or dissident Lenin's libertarian imaginary, which defended a real opening toward freedom. This freedom should not be captured by the simulacrum of bourgeois demo-republicanism and even less by the totalitarianism of the state's closure and its *inquisitions* as power over bodies. Once the libertarian-Lenin – to which Monsiváis appeals against the language of *machismo*-Leninism – is removed, feminism and homosexuality are

relegated to dissident places in Marxism's lexicon. This removal even goes so far as to disclose that, for *machismo*-Leninism, sexual dissidence or the emancipation of women were considered as less even than alienated metaphors for politics. Thus, the desire for freedom is swept away or displaced from the communist parties as subordinated to the ideology of the totalitarian state of real socialisms. The metaphors of a politics that openly entered into relation with the phenomena of sexual dissidence and the destabilisation of the historical privilege of the worker-man as central to politics, are thus weakened. Within today's emancipatory horizons, these openings constitute an important part of common sense. But in the 1980s they are barely emerging as symptoms of a radical crisis. The appearance of the magazine *El Machete* opens polemics and mangles the sanctity of Marxism-Leninism as canonical state doctrine.

In an ironic commentary in the section 'Ropas sucias' [Dirty clothes], from the third issue, entitled 'Contest for Solemn Dinosaurs', Roger Bartra himself calls for a contest to publish the best insult against the magazine. Bartra's criticism of the dinosaurs of the left, trained in 'orthodox manuals of Marxist-Leninism', is devastatingly sarcastic. From the tribune of 'Dirty clothes', Bartra passes judgement on these dinosaurs, telling these dinomarxists: '*El Machete* has seemed to them more like a magazine of ideological diversionism that reveals an absolute loss of identity, where banality, equivocation and relaxation replace Marxism-Leninism. It would be, according to the critics, an impostor Machete, a stick, an apocryphal and tragicomic Machete that pretends to homosexualise politics.'¹² The criticism of dinomarxism, or dinosaur Marxism, intensifies and makes the magazine a privileged place to observe the symptoms of a break in the theoretical or pseudo-theoretical hegemonies of Marxism-Leninism.

Del Barco in the land of the Soviets

Regarding a deconstruction of the politics and political philosophy associated with Lenin, Roger Bartra – possibly one of the greatest living Latin American essayists – manages to prepare and clear the way for Del Barco's deep thrust into the sectarian rituals of dinomarxism. But at the same time, the Latin American philosopher's critique prepares the definitive narrative for the philosophical and political endgame. Lenin is guilty of being the embodiment of the catastrophes of the twentieth century and, according to Del Barco's reading – as we shall see – he seems to enjoy no possible absolution. The epistemological purge and the severe philosophical charge against the Revolution's leader will be the crowning accusation opposed to Lenin's political metaphysics. The honed scalpel with which Del Barco dissects Lenin is so extraordinary, one cannot but see it as staging a philosophical purge in which the accused is beyond guilty. The curious aspect of this guilt is that, unlike the religious guilt that strengthens the belief in truth, this critique will profane the truth of Marxism-Leninism, destroying any possible narrative that might be coupled with the truths produced by libertarian or emancipatory modernity.

In the 1980s, neither the magazine directed by the heterodox and exceptional intellectual, Bartra (a member of the Mexican Communist Party), nor the honed knives of Del Barco's critical-destructive genius, could have stopped the deep nihilism into which the critique of emancipatory narratives will fall. On the one hand, this nihilism is the black hole in which Marxist orthodoxy is deployed as intonation and emphasis of a political theology recognisable in the state doctrine of Marxism-Leninism. That is, when there is only the state there are no more truths, only dogmas sustained by the theological-political. The revolution is a deity, not an emancipating truth. The party is thus representative of the deity, not the plebeian bodies that make up the matter of all profane politics. On the other hand, the black hole of nihilism is also an effect of the destruction of orthodoxy and the blind spot of the self-referentiality of destructive criticism. All the solemnity of the book of Marxist saints was nothing but secularised theology, according to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) criteria of state sanctification.

The publication of *El Machete* can be interpreted in terms of a profane process, a profanation of the political theology that constituted the real socialisms and, above all, the Latin American communist parties as subordinated to the doctrine of the church of the CPSU. While intellectuals prepare or radicalise the crisis of really existing socialism's political theology, the genesis of neoliberal hegemony begins to take hold. The years during which Oscar Del Barco drafts what may be the best critique of Lenin's political thought coincide with the ascent, ideological establishment and political positioning in various states of a new functioning, one that intensifies this deep nihilism and unleashes the unopposed naturalisation of Integrated World Capitalism (IWC). According to Félix Guattari, the IWC 'no longer rests only on the mode of semiotization of financial and monetary capital, but fundamentally on a whole set of procedures

of technical-scientific, macro and micro-social, mass media, etc. servitude'.¹³ Amid the IWC's most intense naturalisation, what Latin American thinkers were doing in the 1980s was deconstructing or, in the specific case of Del Barco, destroying Marxism-Leninism as the ideological basis of the political theology of the real socialisms.

This destructive critique coincided with the genealogy of neoliberal hegemony's rise; that is, both – Del Barco's critique and neoliberal hegemony – reached their peak intensity in the 1980s. Once the political theology of the real socialisms had been destroyed or had failed, the door was left open for intensifying the process of substitution for a hegemony that later becomes globally integrated. Socialism in the USSR emanated from a profound and irreversible duality of power and, although there were failed attempts at profane politics, it quickly became – via the phenomenon of conversion – a political theology, as José Luis Villacañas explains:

we can trace the epochs of political theology as those in which an attempt has been made to overcome the duality of political and religious powers introduced, and to propose a unitary regime capable of overcoming that division not only theoretically, but in practice, with bodies of magistrates unified under a single commanding head. In reality, no epoch since then has ultimately succeeded in suturing that duality.¹⁴

Dual power is the key to Leninist praxis, and this was, perhaps, the only moment in political modernity when there existed the real possibility for a threshold that would open onto another mode for an 'ontology of the present'. Of course, not threshold as in a will to unity through the power of the party-state nor, much less, as in a technical programme of economic modernisation, bureaucratised by a caste of leaders from different social sectors who ultimately kidnapped not only the power of the councils of Soviets but also the threshold opened in the duality of power.

In the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution, dual power appeared as the profane immanence of a plebeian movement strong enough to unseat the tsar. Indeed, the success of Lenin's political practice is found at the antipodes of the conversion of political physics into a political theology. The event that shakes the world in 1917 assumes an exceptional and widespread intensity in the composition of the stage on which the profane becoming of the plebeian might bring the world to a new threshold.¹⁵ The Lenin of dual powers is who grants agency to a non-theo-logical vanguard which, only later and already installed in power, will contain this threshold at the interior of a militancy in service to 'ideological state apparatuses'.¹⁶ This is not the theme that will animate Del Barco's 'machete'. However, dual power as an essential question for a profane politics will appear with particular intensity in Latin American thinkers such as René Zavaleta Mercado and Carlos Nelson Coutinho, neither of whom fall within Del Barco's critical-destructive horizon.¹⁷

In fact, one might say that the necessary and urgent destructive critique of Marxism as a political theology offered no alternative to the emergence of neoliberal hegemony. The destructive critique within Marxism ended up being the 'spiritual exercise' of intellectuals with a 'good conscience', who were nonetheless unable to perceive the substitution of one political theology for another. Del Barco's critical-destructive Heideggerianism did not pretend to offer a way out of the political theology in which Marxism becomes a teleology of history and doctrine of the state. Given the impossibility of exit or opening, the critical-destructive method, as we shall see below, is trapped by the reconstruction of the catastrophic becoming of Lenin and, above all, of the USSR as a historical event inscribed within capitalist modernity. Amid this lack of alternatives, the destructive critique failed to desecrate the theological composition of Marxist-Leninist politics and, therefore, we do not exactly witness a destruction of its presumptions sufficient for attesting to a definitive 'overcoming' of the destruction of Leninist metaphysics. Nor does this destruction provide the 'trail blazes' that might illuminate the thresholds at which an alternative world, radically different from social-capitalist modernity, may be possible. Although Del Barco fails to perceive that Marxism is a political theology, his critique does, in fact, understand that Leninism professes a faith in socialism as a 'community of salvation', and not a secular vocation for the 'good government' of new life-worlds.

The expansive and territorial impulse of the socialist bloc and its command of power in Moscow are sustained by a kind of evangelising Leninism. Along with the suspicion that the real socialisms would never constitute a 'community of salvation' and that the teleology of history towards which they were headed was but the gospel attendant to a powerful political theology, these real socialisms ended up embedded in the technological domain of integrated world capitalism. Concerning the enormous

technical development that had motivated the Cold War and the arms race, the truth unconcealed in the 1980s by twentieth-century history's own facticity was that the socialist bloc's aspirations to welfare, equality and freedom had failed. The enormous successes in scientific and technological development crumbled with war and the depredation of natural resources, together with the utopic vision of a community of salvation founded on the political theology of Marxism-Leninism. In the 1980s, the techno-political modernity of the USSR would completely collapse, without the possibility of recomposition. Like dominoes, the entire socialist bloc would fall as a consequence of the catastrophe of technical modernity and totalitarian state management.

The technification of the life-world

Indeed, there is no doubt that Heidegger's philosophy foresees this moment of catastrophe and downfall. The German philosopher is, undoubtedly, the a priori of the destructive criticism that Del Barco undertakes against Lenin. In his book *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), Heidegger wonders about the course of a 'development' distinct from the techno-productivist paradigm's modernity.¹⁸ The solution to this question could not be linked to the paradigm of industrial Americanism and even less to that of forced industrialisation offered by the five-year plans of the USSR. The techno-productivist paradigm is plainly responsible for the catastrophe into which the capitalist perversions of modernity have thrown us. Thus, for Heidegger, from a metaphysical point of view, both paradigms were anchored in the loss of the spirit of Being and, therefore, both are inscribed within the history of the metaphysics of the forgetting of Being. The loss of a kind of spiritual (Christian) sacredness that, in Europe, had evaporated in the processes of modern secularisation, allows Heidegger to opt for a third way of modernity. Today we know this third way ended in the Nazi concentration camps, as we also know that Heidegger distanced himself early on from the technological-military nihilism of Hitler's regime. If we approach it from our 'ontology of the present', Heidegger's reasoning holds true as regards the critique of the two great hegemon's technological and industrial productivism as they disputed the globe. Both emanated from the productivist perversions of the twentieth century and, for this reason, Heidegger will see no difference between the US's techno-productive model and the USSR's model of forced industrialisation. In Heidegger, the catastrophe is associated with the technological-nihilistic structure of militarised modernity. It could be said, then, that modernity's culmination is the current neoliberal productivism, or extreme liberalism, which Heidegger foresaw early on in the accelerationism of capitalist modernity and, above all, in the deterioration and bankruptcy of the spirit of Europe.

This Europe, in its unholy blindness always on the point of cutting its own throat, lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man. When the farthest corner of the globe has been conquered technologically and can be exploited economically; when any incident you like, in any place you like, at any time you like, becomes accessible as fast as you like, when you can simultaneously 'experience' an assassination attempt against a King in France and a symphony concert in Tokyo; when time is nothing but speed, instantaneity, and simultaneity, and time as history has vanished from all Dasein of all people; when a boxer counts as the great man of people; when the tallies of millions at mass meetings are a triumph; then, yes then, there still looms like a specter over all this uproar the question: what for? – where to? – and what then?¹⁹

There is no doubt that Heidegger saw the catastrophe coming, and it is probable that he showed the premonitory path of modernity's failure to Walter Benjamin and the main theoreticians of the Frankfurt School. In its wake, the Heideggerian imprint can be found in the critique of Marxism as a philosophy of progress, whose allegory is translated by Benjamin in Paul Klee's angel of history. The same holds true for the critique of the dialectic of enlightenment by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, whose mode of understanding commodity fetishism and the compulsion to work is allegorised by Sisyphus's mythic boulder and, above all, by the myth of the concept. The myth of the concept mobilises abstraction as a mechanism from which science rises to one of the legitimising powers of the technification of the life-world.²⁰

In heretical Marxism, the profane critique of capitalist modernity is deployed, of course, setting out from the premises of what Max Weber found in the 'disenchantment of the world' and in what he called

the rationalisation of life-worlds. The wake left by Heideggerian philosophy's destructive critique in the 1930s becomes a premonition not only of the century's techno-industrial catastrophes, but also of the way of seeing the history of techno-productive modernisation as the impossibility of an emancipatory escape from the presuppositions of the philosophy of progress that, hegemonically, marks modernity's destiny, barring a radically secular closure. In Heidegger, the fundamental suspicion of a 'de-spiritualised' Europe, which cuts its own throat in accord with the accelerationism of a life-world created and generated by techno-productivism, is coextensive with the destructive critical method taken up in Del Barco's writings against Lenin.

The Latin American Heideggerianisation of criticism as the destruction of enlightenment's metaphysical presuppositions will find its most distinguished agent in the Argentine philosopher. In addition to the famous 'Was Lenin a perverse man?', writings against Lenin from during his Mexican exile were anthologised by the National Library of Argentina under the title *Escrituras. Filosofía* [Writings: Philosophy] (2011), under the direction of Horacio González.²¹ In this book, there are two texts that openly follow the Heideggerian trace in the critique of modernity: 'Comentario a la nueva edición del ¿Qué hacer? de Lenin (ediciones Era)' [Commentary on the new edition of Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*] and 'Lenin y el problema de la técnica' [Lenin and the problem of technique]. In these texts, Del Barco states the main thesis of his critical-destructive programme: 'Lenin's theoreticism is not properly his own, but constitutes the essence of bourgeois thought, the essence of metaphysics.'²² What is this essence? Enlightened thought that has as its source the binary and, consequentially, the discarding of difference. The Leninist perversion in its entirety would be that of the thought of the modern bourgeoisie. In the analysis he undertakes to explain the relationship between Lenin and technique Del Barco says:

Lenin, paradoxically, was the bearer of bourgeois ideology within the revolutionary process. Not only did he express his admiration for the functioning of the capitalist forms of the German state and of 'Taylorism' in American capitalism, but he maintained the thesis that the capitalist system in its monopolistic stage was ready to become the socialist system, if only its class content were changed. The greatest revolutionary in history thus forgot the danger inherent in the capitalist structure; he ignored what Nietzsche, it must be said, had denounced *ad nauseam*: that it is always about power, from language to the strongest forms of social materiality, and that objectivity and neutrality are its most underhand and dangerous forms ... Lenin's techno-productivist project was the support from which the defeated capitalists by the revolutionary movement took over the latter, reconvertng it and creating a new class society.²³

All the progress of modernity that Heidegger links to metaphysics as the impossibility of promising an experience other than the technical modernisation of the world (science, speed and industrialism) will be, for Del Barco, the truth of Lenin's revolution. Thus, the indistinction between Lenin's thought and bourgeois ideology will place the Bolsheviks' achievements alongside the industrial production of the corpse. The statisation of the emancipatory imaginary and its reduction in the philosophy of bourgeois progress, reproduces the accumulation of corpses, in turn reproducing class society. As Benjamin or Schmitt think of it, capitalist modernity cannot avoid this 'pile of corpses', nor can it avoid the speed that makes of these 'motorised corpses' a sign of progress. The corpses produced by modernity is immanent to American industrial hegemony, and yet this is Lenin's model. From a metaphysical point of view, the techno-productivist paradigm of Americanism is identical to the industrialised totalitarianism of the USSR's Marxism-Leninism. Of course, it is also, and above all, identical to the failure of the National Socialist programme of Hitlerism, which Heidegger supported in its early years, and there is no doubt that its philosophy is contradictory or at least obscure regarding its responsibility for the concentration camps. What cannot be said is that the analysis he makes of the will to power and the becoming 'empire of the technological subject' will be one of the unavoidable problems for any thought with emancipatory pretensions.

Diego Tatián signals the following: 'The principle of "teleocracy" and the consolidation of humanism that unfolds in the sense of achieving the complete submission of the earth, institutes the central character of the technological triumph whose form is the metaphysics of the will to power.'²⁴ The autonomy of science and technology as an articulatory principle of power knows no politics beyond the removal or withdrawal of the latter (politics). This would have produced in Lenin's thought the mimesis that Del Barco sees between the Leninist enlightenment and bourgeois ideology. Indeed, the

Heideggerian 'altermodernity', or third way to capitalist modernity, ended in the industrial and militarised programme of National Socialism. National Socialism is the programme of anti- or counter-modernity that most intensely condenses the productivist logic, translating it into the extermination camps. Although in the Nazi experiment we find the truth of techno-industrial nihilism and the cruellest necropolitical agency produced by twentieth-century history, Del Barco does not assume the study of Nazism as subject of his destructive critique.²⁵ For this reason, Heidegger's questions, 'what for? – where to? – and what then?', are unavoidably topical. At the same time, they are the questions that resonate in the techno-industrial experiment of Soviet socialism as a political and economic experience in which the internal logic of the corpse is tied to the project of a capitalist modernity including forced industrialisation. Precisely this unavoidable experience of techno-industrial success and death is what gives rise to Del Barco's passion for destroying the figure of the Bolshevik leader. The suspicion that the catastrophe and production of death reside in Lenin's perverse mind reaches so far as to include everything from the massacres of peasants in pursuit of the countryside's forced collectivisation, to the collapse of the nuclear industry leading to the Chernobyl disaster (1986). Del Barco's thesis is that Lenin is guilty, perversely guilty, because his genealogy is yet another effect of bourgeois ideology.

The *Black Notebooks*, written by Heidegger between 1939 and 1941, include a reflection on Lenin, the Bolsheviks and socialism. The German philosopher points out how, without the romantic ideal and without the aesthetic abstractions of emancipatory utopia, we would lack a techno-productivist definition of the imaginary, which engineers what Del Barco calls Lenin's bourgeois ideology. According to Heidegger,

the definition of socialism in Lenin's words [is]: 'Socialism is the power of the soviets plus electrification'. These words require careful interpretation. In the first place, here we are not talking about 'community' or 'welfare' or 'equalisation' of all comrades, but of socialism as 'power': giving free rein to a despotism that imposes and steadfastly maintains a proletarianization of all people.²⁶

The famous slogan guiding Russia's modernisation during the Revolution's early years is perceived by Heidegger as a problem of calculative reason. The emblematic slogan of 'more electrification' transforms the life-world through a Leninism whose calculating reason technifies the life of communities using the power of the Soviets. In this way, socialism is a despotism wherein the adverb 'more' enables the technification of the life-world. This calculative reason within Lenin's political intelligence is the essence of twentieth-century socialism. Heidegger attributes it to the

'empirical criticism' of the late nineteenth century, which would have Lenin marked, metaphysically, by 'German philosophy'. Something is added to power, but not as a mere supplement. The problem of that supplement, that addition, is that it ended with the collapse of the civilising project of the real socialisms. The addition 'more electrification' is only the expression of the calculative version of the 'essence of socialism'.²⁷

Once modernity and socialism are pronounced the essence of calculative reason, all emancipatory pretensions of the Bolshevik Boss's collapse. Within this Heideggerian framework, Del Barco will write the best and most rigorously documented destructive criticism of Lenin.

The dance in the snow or the betrayal of the 'original'

In his book *Esbozo de una crítica a la teoría y práctica leninista* [Outline of a critique of Leninist theory and practice] (1980), first published by the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla and prior to his polemic article '¿Era Lenin un perverso?', Del Barco declares the failure of the Russian Revolution. He raises the hypothesis that this failure is to be found in Lenin's political thought.²⁸ The philosopher's critical-destructive hypothesis could be further specified: the failure is lodged in the bourgeois unconscious of the Bolshevik 'chief'. From the opportune Heideggerian reading and in a context of a structural weakening of Marxism-Leninism, he sees the failure of Leninist politics from the perspective of the consummated catastrophe. But what this act of seeing passes over is the fact that a powerful theology of global substitution, unprecedented in the history of politics, emerged within the crisis of Marxism-Leninism. The hegemony of neoliberalism as a programme of global domination is the ground of Del Barco's destructive critique.

It is true, on the other hand, that we can only speak of the defeat of the Russian Revolution in relation to the original project. This project was enunciated not only by the main Marxist theoreticians but fundamentally by the workers' leaders whenever the masses burst onto the revolutionary scene. The principles, which are not 'utopian' principles since they found the possibility of socialism as such, of self-liberation, self-management, democracy and absolute freedom of the exploited classes within the process of transition to socialism, were set aside and supplanted by a despotic organisation of society. Without exaggeration we can say that this failure of the socialist project in its libertarian and self-liberatory substance, was always known; even before the revolution there were those who warned, like Rosa Luxemburg, that from the theoretical premises with which the Russian revolutionary organisation was being built it would necessarily lead to a dictatorship; and certainly not a dictatorship of the exploited over the exploiters, but of the leaders of the revolutionary organisation and of this same organisation over the popular masses.²⁹

The Latin American philosopher sees what Heidegger would see, were he a Marxist; that is, he sees that Leninist politics betrayed the original project. The construction of socialism would have buried the real democracy of the Soviets and the truth of the emancipation of the exploited, thus hiding the essential truth of socialism. Reading from within the Heideggerian wake, Del Barco finds that real socialism is pure metaphysics and cannot be radically distinguished from the presuppositions leading the despotic project to stagnate in the compulsion to technify the life-world, completely forgetting the leading place of the peasant classes in Russia. Thus, socialism did not constitute a difference in the relationship between technology and the social world. But what Del Barco does not see is the 'ontological difference' between the modernity of the parliamentary and developmentalist bourgeoisie and an 'event', let us say, of a profane and plebeian theoretical order that continues to this day, in every emancipatory burst, without access to the original programme of the Russian Revolution.

We do not know if fidelity to the event of the Russian Revolution's original programme would have had the power to change the course of the inter-national system of capitalist states. All we can deduce is that every original or eventual moment has and makes an incalculable becoming. The states of real socialism existed and arose from precisely the original's becoming, in confrontation with relations of force and 'historical determinations'. It is in that confrontation or interregnum where one finds integrated world modern socialist states. Real socialism ended up being a singular type of state capitalism inscribed in the world economy of twentieth-century capitalism. In this sense, the USSR was an empire of despotic control over the international socialist division of labour that consisted in the less-developed states contributing to the greatness of the USSR. Therefore, it is no surprise that Del Barco considers the outcome of the Russian Revolution a failure and a defeat. The responsibility lies with the leader's (bourgeois) ideology and he must be found guilty of animating the catastrophe:

it could be argued that Lenin was not aware that he was mortgaging the future of the revolution. However, he should have known it since he was the highest communist leader, and if he did not know it was because of his profound revision of Marxism, because of his theorist and scientific conception of Marxism ... For Lenin the centralised direction of the economy was something obvious.³⁰

In other words, the Bolsheviks failed because of the impossibility of a decentralised hegemonic policy and the lack, or impossibility, of a theoretical event capable of opposing the 'despotic machine' of the USSR.

In terms of political experience, the impossibility of Leninist fidelity to the original project is the impossibility of sustaining the processes of *viva voce*, which produced the democratising experience of the public or republican voice of the plebeian classes within the councils. On the other hand, failure is interpreted as the imposition of the enlightened despotism of calculative reason. The rationality of pragmatism and the instrument of calculation (calculative reason) that served the ruling class during the 'assault on power', quickly became the dense bureaucracy of ruling-class despotism. In this point, Del Barco follows Rosa Luxemburg's prescient vision; that is, he follows the hypothesis that the theoretical positions of the main Bolshevik leader would affect the life-world's configuration. Luxemburg's suspicion is that the revolutionary class would be replaced by a ruling class, and that this will bureaucratise the entire process of the transformation of capitalism.³¹ Del Barco's interpretation, adjacent to Luxemburg's, finds in the premonition of the failure and defeat of the original project the most intense, and undoubtedly

necessary, destructive criticism of the ruling class. This caste of leaders would have come to power – reproducing the ideological order without an emancipatory event – through the destruction of the councils of the Soviets.

In the genealogy of the Marxist-Leninist enlightened-moral, we find all the evils precipitating the most important event of the twentieth century, the defeat of the original project. Was that project the successful prolongation of the paradigm of the Paris Commune? Was the original project a novel form of participation for the socialist republic? In his 'State or commune: Viewing the October Revolution from the land of Zapata', Bruno Bosteels reminds us of 'the heroic example of the 1871 Paris Commune, famously celebrated and extended by Lenin, who is said to have danced in the snow when the power of the Soviets in 1917 lasted a day longer than their French predecessor'.³² Would that day be, precisely, the day when the original project of the October Revolution was screwed in the snow? Surely, in Del Barco's Heideggerian hermeneutics, the day when Lenin danced in the snow is the day when the programme of the councils of the Soviets, based on the experience of the 1871 Paris Commune's exemplary failure, amputates the original project. Del Barco's entire hermeneutics would reduce the dance in the snow to the primordial political experience of the first day of the original project's defeat.

The assumption that Lenin is a thinker of metaphysics and, therefore, of mere calculative reason, makes one think that politics and its cunning – those of the difficult decisions that make a revolutionary programme endure or die – are trifles of the will to power. This idea seems to suggest that the power of despotism, which arrived and was intensified with Lenin's death, could have been avoided if Lenin had but conceived of evicting the will to power from the emancipatory programme. That is, power should have been handed over to the masses to 'save' the original project. Infidelity to the plebeian revolution and to the councils of the Soviets would have been betrayed by the technics and ideology that empower bureaucrats and specialists masquerading as revolutionaries. Thus, the inheritance of the 'greatness of Lenin' is not a trace folded into the history of the Commune's, or the Russian agrarian communes', defeat at the hands of the Revolution itself. On the other hand, if one considers that the pattern of socialist accumulation substitutes private property for state property, the Russian Revolution is nothing more than a variation within capitalist modernity.

State socialism is undoubtedly a phenomenon of modernity and an incredibly efficient version of accelerated and intense modernisation that found its closest ally in the despotism of the state. The centralisation of the state was of crucial importance for development; the bureaucratic modes of state organisation were developmentalist, extractivist and centralist. State organisation ended up suffocating the originality of the republic of councils and the multiplicity of subjective worlds that emerged with the revolts of society. From this point of view, Lenin is the conductor who, using calculative reason, succeeds in consolidating a successful revolution that will persist throughout most of twentieth century. In his obsession with destroying Lenin's legacy, Del Barco does not say that the destructive critique of calculative rationality and state capitalism – which produced the ruling class despotism of the USSR – is a 'general' critique of the philosophical discourse of modernity. This would require that the political, technological and economic effects generated by its imaginaries – more precisely, by what Cornelius Castoriadis called 'imaginary institutions' – be considered within the framework of modernisation produced by capitalist modernity's civilising project, and not so much as the perverse consequence of the solitary mind of the Bolshevik leader. Emancipation, for Castoriadis, would rather be linked to what he defines as 'in each case the institution of a magma of social imaginary significations, which we can and must call a world of significations'.³³

While the emancipatory programmes of modernity and its imaginary institutions fall and collapse, Del Barco writes:

surely no one desired, among the Bolshevik leaders, the failure of the revolution; but that is not the problem. The problem is to inquire why the measures that were taken inevitably led to failure and which ideas theoretically founded those measures; that is to say, to express ourselves in a paradoxical way, what theory founded the failure of socialism.³⁴

At first glance, the philosopher's question is not political, but theoretical; or, to say it in a modern register, it falls within the domain of an epistemological thesis. But this thesis supposes irrefutable hypotheses, because they are already corroborated by the historical evidence of the original project's failure. Del Barco hypothesises that there are metaphysical a priori hiding in the head of the Bolshevik 'Chief'. These a priori would then be what truncated the original revolutionary project. Defeat is given in the paradox

of triumph. The Bolsheviks triumphed because they opened the way for techno-productive progress and intensified what Max Weber called 'means-end rationality'.³⁵ But the triumph of socialist modernity is the defeat of the original project, which is displaced by an industrialist and techno-bureaucratic compulsion. The hypothesis of triumph as defeat is that of fidelity to the whole tradition of the day before Lenin danced in the snow. In other words, as a figure of epistemological and political lament for the paradigm of the Commune, lost object of desire, which meant passing from the insurrection to the construction of socialism's modernity, Lenin's dance is important because, once past the days of the Paris Commune's resistance to the military invasion that defeated it, the Bolshevik Revolution would have displaced as its content the 'substance' of the cognitive and originary nucleus of the 'true' project of emancipation. Therefore, following Del Barco, the victory is the defeat of the rural communes and of the peasants that state socialism will assassinate, displace and dispossess of their lands.

The philosopher's conjecture is based on the paradigm of an aesthetic theory of defeat. That is, the cognitive nucleus of the defeated left would be inescapably linked to the melancholy of a lost object (the Paris Commune) or to that of an ideal object (Communism of the *Aufhebung*) that the left never possessed. We can interpret victory, for Del Barco, as the word of the oppressors, of the genocidaires, and it is of no importance whether these oppressors claim to be heirs of a defeated emancipatory tradition. An oppressor can never, so to speak, redeem the history of the oppressed. So, the course of the October Revolution (1917) is the course of distorted emancipation, the course or historical trajectory of the wickedness of a man who deviated or perverted himself as regards the original project. This explains how, based on verifiable historical and empirical documentation, Del Barco's texts do not hesitate to decry *all* Leninist politics as an evil encountered in the cognitive and theoretical wellsprings of the Leninist tradition; the enlightened perversion of a means-end rationality, thus a topology of the deviations that reproduced bureaucratic power by displacing the original programme of the revolution. The consequences of this displacement, or defeat, translate the Bolsheviks' emancipatory violence into the structural and structuring violence of Soviet power; a translation hiding in the mind of the 'Boss'.

The emancipatory paradigm's defeat paved the way for the socialist modernity of the state and ultimately converted the plebeian revolution of the people's councils into a criminal revolution, another agent of the capitalist project of modernisation in its state-totalitarian form. Del Barco is right because no matter how Leninist one is, one cannot deny or occlude the historical 'genocide of the peasantry, the concentration camps, the murder of millions of "opponents" of the official political line, the absolute lack of liberties, terror in all its forms'.³⁶ This historical reconstruction of a state of terror, prolonged as a consequence of the original project's oblivion, does not allow us to distinguish violence from what, in theoretical terms, we might enunciate as the predominance of capitalist modernity's techno-productivist ontology. Socialism and capitalism would be but two sides of the same coin, despite their differences. At the heart of this techno-productivist ontology resounds Heidegger's hypothesis that, metaphysically, the USSR and the US are identical. This problematisation is lacking in Del Barco's destructive critique, as a critique of what Fredric Jameson calls 'singular modernity',³⁷ as regards the liberal idea of diverse modernities – Latin American modernity, Indian modernity, African modernity, Asian modernity. Modernity's singularity is given by the capacity of the capitalist market to globally colonise life-worlds and to control the international division of labour via the free market. Throughout the Cold War period, this control was articulated by the totalitarian and expansionist state of the USSR and, of course, by the power exercised by the US over practically the entire globe. Indeed, the critique of the productivist ontology extends to the concentration camps produced by Soviet power for the disciplining of the peasant labour force and should be further understood as a general critique of the imperial political economy of the superpowers that divided up the world, and thus the potential for extracting surplus value from the most vulnerable modern nations. Again, from this point of view, real socialism and American liberalism are equivalent. Insofar as both constitute the uniqueness of capitalist modernity, they manifest no difference and are thus both perverse adherents to the modes of capital accumulation, exploitation and environmental devastation that have brought modernity to catastrophe. Indeed, one must suppose that Del Barco knows the undifferentiation of the metaphysical project of techno-productivist ontology well, as he articulates his destructive critique.³⁸

Evil as calculative reason

In other words, inhabiting the philosophical discourse of modernity and the singular way in which it translates its civilising project into industrialisation and compulsive technification of life-worlds, Del Barco's critique seems to be a kind of methodological resource from within ethical difference. It is this difference that makes it possible to destroy Lenin and the Leninist, modernising perversions derived from the mind of the Bolshevik leader. Ethics must subtract itself from the intentionality of instrumental rationality 'whatever its source' and, above all, it must subtract itself from the betrayal of the original programme. That is, however necessary the revolutionary project may be, the ethical relationship cannot be absent from the politics and institutions that result from the revolution. But, in Del Barco's Heideggerian wake, it can be said that the revolution is not a difference of 'altermodernity', but a mere variation in the global pattern of accumulation of capitalist modernity.

But, to bring out the ethical difference as a topology of a Marxism that must subtract itself from identification with the ideology and perverse effects of modernity, Del Barco goes still further. The ethical question for the philosopher in exile is:

Can Marxists be forced to carry out anti-Marxist acts such as torture and mass murders, racial persecutions, the suppression of public liberties, the dictatorship of the new ruling elites? Is there a revolutionary ethic or must everything be submerged in the factual determinations which, with an iron logic, turn the revolution into a counter-revolution?³⁹

Without the ethical difference, revolution is counter-revolution. Therefore, in the context of dramatic processes and social rifts that are, of course, not entirely calculable, the destructive critique that moves Del Barco's writing presupposes an ethics that contains or restrains the calculative reason at the heart of modernity. The question of a revolutionary ethics is, without a doubt, undeniable. Del Barco introduces the sovereignty of the hermeneut who ethically judges an already consummated process. His destructive critique is rather a reconstruction within the enlightenment and philosophy's very frameworks of understanding, as an exercise in dismantling an epoch's epistemic presuppositions. That is why he sees what the politics inherent to the Bolshevik Revolution's set of decisions fail to see: that the original perversion and deviation was contained by the mind and the pragmatic, calculating rationality of the revolution's 'chief'. What Del Barco offers, as we shall see, is a reconstruction and an ethical judgement in which the destructive critique loses its force as soon as it aestheticises the critique by setting out from an intellectual demonisation of Lenin. The devil has already settled in, and the task of the hermeneut is merely to corroborate that that devil is Lenin.

The capacity for philosophical vision is measured by the 'Heideggerian' a priori of any counter-theory deployed by Del Barco's ethical sensibility. In the philosophical hermeneutic's act of seeing, his reconstruction uncovers the a priori of the consummated catastrophe. This is how he discovers that there is something intrinsic to the perversion of Lenin's enlightened and modern mind: namely, the calculus of bourgeois ideology. From this a priori of Del Barco's ethical philosophy, Leninism is elaborated as an epistemology and a theory that translate the achievements of the 1917 event into the failure and catastrophe of the original project. The self-defeat of the originary project is tied to the desire for the plebeian and democratic experience of the councils that were destroyed, according to the Argentine philosopher's hypothesis, by the rationality of Leninism. The original will have been displaced from the orbit of Leninist decisions, as the leader's calculations and pragmatism conform calculative reason's betrayal and abandonment of the democratic experiences that occurred within the collective echo chamber of the workers' and peasants' plebeian councils. The organisation of the councils of Soviets will destroy the modern and liberal horizon of bourgeois democracy.

It is obvious that the decade in which Del Barco writes his strongest anti-Leninist pages is not the decade of revolutionary desire, and even less of the desire to think the plebeian experience of the councils as that which must be repeated, rethought, relaunched as an inalienable place of emancipatory logic. On the contrary, the desire for revolution had been withdrawn and distorted to the point of asphyxiation by the frenzy of extreme liberalism that dominates the 1980s and will make Latin American modernity one of the most intense topologies of capitalist catastrophe. In terms of the intellectual and philosophical work to be done, the 'hermeneutic circle' of the 1980s is loaded with hatred for the socialist revolution. The Thatcher-Reagan-style anti-communism is irrational and mobilises terror, cruelty, massacres and dictatorships throughout the Latin American region. Within philosophy, this

hatred is uncontained, as the moment's philosophical work finds more fertile grounds in the catastrophic withdrawal caused by the socialist camp's shocking crisis and in the critique of the defeat of the hegemonic bloc that led to the collapse of the socialist bloc. In philosophical terms, the Revolution is exhausted in this failure and philosophy, taking Del Barco as paradigmatic, is incapable of thinking the defeat of the defeat and, therefore, the destruction remains incomplete and, again, purely reconstructive.

Destructive criticism radicalises nihilism and mobilises apathy and disenchantment with emancipatory programmes, not out of any ill intent, but because it does not destroy the principle of cruelty emanating from the same logic that emerges from the reconstruction of the critique of Lenin. Critical philosophy wishes to displace failure and catastrophe in order to distance itself from, or 'wash its hands' of, the responsibility (or lack thereof) for the defeat of the real socialisms' original programme of modernity as articulated in the USSR and socialist bloc. Thus, the splendid writings against Lenin prepare a change of imaginary, a Copernican about-face, which goes from the signifier revolution to the signifier liberal-parliamentary democracy. Throughout the socialist bloc, this turn is expressed by the reality of the project of socialist civilisation's catastrophe, whose matrix, for Del Barco, is enlightened modernity and faith in the rationality of the sciences. The critique of Marxism as a science is radicalised exactly in the decade when Marxism is almost entirely reduced to a doctrine of the totalitarian state. Thus, in the field of the incipient neoliberal and post-Marxist theories that arise from the failure of what would become a self-defeat, beginning and ending with the collapse of Leninism, this radical change of imaginary is also a vacating of the possibilities of state socialisms, which had been successful in nationalising social property and converting the state's institutions into guarantors of minimal rights and citizen welfare. The critique of Lenin is the critique of the modern state and, above all, of the totalitarian state that neutralised politics' interregnum, producing the self-defeat of the emancipatory programme of the early, triumphant years of the workers' and peasants' councils. The 1980s produced the material conditions for the self-defeat of the real socialisms. It can be said that the transition from the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster (1986) to the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) condenses the defeat and the visible consummation of the disaster that had been ongoing since the original project's diversion towards the fortification of the state and the displacement of the possibility of plebeian empowerment.

The collapse of the bloc of state socialisms prepares the incipient world hegemony of neoliberalism and the complete destruction of modern, emancipatory social programmes. As we said above, this destruction is captured by Roger Bartra, director of *El Machete*. We refer to an opening to theoretical sensibility, which Del Barco's article '¿Era Lenin un perverso?' comprehends as a radical point of nihilism and disenchantment with the Bolshevik 'Chief'. The excess and philosophical adeptness with which Del Barco destroys Leninist theories acquires an extraordinary theoretical value because it allows us to understand how Marxism, state-ified by real socialisms, functioned as a powerful political theology. The 'science' of Marxism-Leninism was nothing other than the topoi from which the state arranged the fetishisation and construction of the patron saints of a doctrine sustained by military power and control over the international division of socialist labour, wherein the countries of the bloc functioned as satellites of an imperial power. The imperialism of the USSR did, of course, favour processes of liberation and socialist solidarity on an international scale, in which the so-called underdeveloped economies of the Third World could be sustained. In geopolitically contextualising Del Barco's criticism, it should be said that between US imperialism and that of the USSR there are substantive differences. The USSR is not responsible for the genocide that the US produced in Latin America through dictatorships and military intervention. From the military coup in Chile in 1973 to the genocide committed in the 1980s and 1990s in Central America, the US has been involved in all the exercise of terror and violence against Latin American populations.

Progress in Latin America has been framed by the translation of imperialism into unlimited human catastrophe. But unlike other regions, the catastrophe occurred without science, technology or industrial development. In this sense, Leninism – assuming there has been such a thing among the region's political forms – has been no more than a set of implausible slogans with which the destructive criticism of the Bolshevik leader resonates even more strongly. However, Leninist or not, the truths of the Enlightenment's programmatic political modernity and their intricate intertwining with the 'progress of technology' allowed utopias to have material effects on populations' configuration. In Latin America, these effects do not enjoy a central place in greater technical and scientific development. On the contrary, compared to Europe or the US, the Latin American region evidently did not present great technological or scientific developments. Technical developments have always anticipated the development of culture, and while there is no reason to measure the development of a civilisation

by its technological achievements, those contributions cannot be underestimated, either. In other words, Latin America and its states failed to invest more in science and technology. In fact, in the time when the term 'underdevelopment' still enjoyed a certain relevance, the impossibility of bettering Latin American life-worlds was partly due to their lack of development. To demonise technology, based on the fundamentalism that today's anti-modern or counter-modern philosophies can produce, implies failing to recognise the role of science in sending rockets to the moon, in the 'flu vaccine, or in heart transplants, among other achievements.

Leninism and technique as ideology

However, it would be an exaggeration to interpret Del Barco's destructive criticism as though he romanticised the origins of science and technology as apart from life-worlds. Much as Habermas did, in a 1968 text dedicated to Herbert Marcuse on his 70th birthday, entitled 'Technology and science as "ideology"', Del Barco interprets Lenin as continuing the distortion of technology insofar as it is internal to capitalist ideology.⁴⁰ In a short text from 1983, 'Lenin y el problema de la técnica' [Lenin and the problem of technique], Del Barco denounces the link between the 'Boss' and technological capitalism's modes of articulation and reproduction.⁴¹ According to the philosopher, Lenin is a masked 'operator' of capitalist modernity and undoubtedly guilty of an unbridled passion for the technical:

Lenin, paradoxically, was the spokesman for the bourgeois technical ideology within the revolutionary process. Not only did he express his admiration for the functioning of the capitalist forms of the German state and of 'Taylorism' in American capitalism, he maintained the thesis that the capitalist system in a monopolistic stage was ready to become a socialist system, if only its class content were changed. The 'greatest of history's revolutionaries' thus ignored the danger inherent in capitalist structures; that it is always about power, from language to the strongest forms of social materiality, and that objectivity and neutrality are its most underhanded and dangerous forms.⁴²

Del Barco's Heideggerian critique is not only an attempt to destroy Lenin's techno-productivist ontology, but the whole enterprise of the real socialisms' modernity. The technical mode of being and the production of real socialisms constitute symptoms of something beyond even Lenin himself. The technical cannot be done away with unless we erase, in one broad stroke, all human history and its orthopaedics, found in the fragility and intelligence in the objects of civilisation. Thus, the critique of techno-productivist rationality is a critique of industrial modernity and in turn, this is a critique of the political economy of actually existing state capitalisms or socialisms. Obviously, neither science nor technology are elements that constitute an outside of capitalist modernity. On the contrary, science and technology are essential elements of capitalist domination. It is thus possible to assume that, once again, Del Barco is correct concerning how technical rationality mobilises the ideology of modernity. But what seems to pervert his whole argument – which, by the way, never ceases to develop wholly in thrall to an ethics and, thus, assuming a methodological tone – is the fact that, ideologically, the transformation of technology and science when appropriated by a subaltern emancipatory project is not the same as its transformation in agreement with capital's accumulative logic. To demolish the theoretical composite found in the mind of the 'greatest revolutionary in history' is also to demolish or destroy the entirety of Marxist 'metaphysics', including those of both Marx and of Marcuse, who saw the relation between the possibilities of technological development and class struggle as an un-renounceable political and ideological interregnum.

Yet the obsession with reconstructing Lenin as the principal spokesman for bourgeois ideology is not convincing in Del Barco's philosophically perverse operation. The argument that the entire failure of the original project resided in the theoretical operations of a single individual's mind fails to convince. The individual, in this case an exemplary political and theoretical leader, is nonetheless the effect of an epoch's constellations of thought. Therefore, in order to destroy an epochal passion, it does not suffice to reconstruct the history of a process that ended in defeat, or even self-defeat. If the destructive critique which consists in identifying the theoretical component of Lenin's thought (his passion for techno-scientific rationality), finds that it is exactly the same as that of bourgeois capitalism, the destruction remains incomplete and undifferentiated. In Del Barco's immoderate and, at the same time, brilliant critique of Lenin, it is not a matter of burning a few of the Bolshevik 'Chief's' texts, but

of burning Lenin and destroying his entire reasoning. But the destruction of the 'Chief's' 'revolutionary metaphysics' does not go beyond discovering a problem without solution or, we might say, without political theory. Is Oscar Del Barco a perverse man? We cannot be sure, but we can deduce from his reasoning that he undoubtedly discovers, or uncovers, the *jouissance* of a writing that purports to destroy Leninist metaphysics.

The destruction of these metaphysics condenses the critique of the imaginaries of modern progress. This is precisely what is plausible in the hypothesis of Lenin as an underhanded theorist of techno-productivist ideology. It is this bourgeois ideology that would have informed his epistemological approaches from beginning to end, producing the civilisational catastrophe to which globalised capitalism has brought the life-worlds. However, Del Barco's plausibility should not be sought in the caricature that Marxism-Leninism made of its supposed neutrality and scientific objectivity, but in its adaptation of the scientific and techno-productive rationality of a wild and intensely irrational capitalism. Marcuse's essay 'Industrialization and capitalism in the world of Max Weber' (1968) specifies that the rationality of capitalism is its irrationality in the order of the technical domain of production.

In the unfolding of capitalist rationality, irrationality becomes reason: reason as frantic development of productivity, conquest of nature, enlargement of the mass of goods (and their accessibility for broad strata of the population); irrational because higher productivity, domination of nature, and social wealth become destructive forces. This destruction is not only figurative, as in the betrayal of so-called higher cultural values, but literal: the struggle for existence intensifies both within national states and internationally, and pent-up aggression is discharged in the legitimation of medieval cruelty (torture) and in the scientifically organized destruction of men.⁴³

The destruction of the Bolshevik emancipatory project is to be sought in the substitution of the plebeian becoming of 1917 by a powerful ruling class of bureaucrats and modern enlightened thinkers who subordinated and neutralised the emancipatory politics within the new ruling class's techno-bureaucratic administrative ideology. A class composed by bureaucrats and the radicalisation of rationality that, from Weber to Marcuse, characterises capitalism as destruction occurring in the modern legitimisation of a techno-productive rationality and a principle of cruelty that underlies twentieth-century modernity.

Inquisitorial autophagy and cult of personality

The cruelty of the bureaucratic class consisted in the fact that it began to consume its young, intensifying this practice in the Thermidor of Stalinism. But this tendency is also found in the Leninist moment, prior to Stalinisation. In Del Barco's reading, the CPSU was nourished on crime and murders driven by a cruel autophagy and an unbridled saturnine compulsion. The cannibalism and persecution of political leaders who fought alongside Lenin is consummated in the horrendous crimes committed after Lenin's death. The self-defeat is thus a politicophagy; that is, a self-devouring in which the inquisitorial reason of party logic promotes the torture and devaluation of its own leaders. The result of this autophagy was that, under Stalin's leadership, almost the entire Central Committee, composed of those who fought alongside Lenin, was annihilated, and even those who supported the 'man of steel' were assassinated.

By referencing Isaac Deutscher's book *Trotsky, el profeta desterrado* [Trotsky, the prophet unarmed] (1969), Del Barco finds data to confirm the autophagous drive of the CPSU and – although rather arbitrarily – links Lenin's anti-democratic decisionism to a sort of prolongation of Leninist theory in the pathologies of bureaucracy and in Stalin's intelligence services. This self-destructive, self-annihilative or autophagous drive will have been due to the lack of democracy in Lenin's leadership of the October Revolution. But the relationship that Del Barco establishes between Lenin's 'anti-democratism' and Stalin's crimes is more precisely based on a reconstructive methodology, not so much on a destructive criticism in the wake of Heidegger. However, there is no doubt that the data in Deutscher's account confirm both Del Barco's reconstruction and an inescapable principle of the cruelty of the CPSU leadership:

In the same days of the second deportation of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Nadia Aliluyeva, Stalin's wife, committed suicide: she had suffered a moral collapse under the weight of remorse caused by the way her husband conducted the affairs of the Party and the State. Such, then,

were the circumstances in which Trotsky urged Stalin's collaborators to finally carry out Lenin's will, and to 'depose Stalin'. His call was not a mere impulsive reaction to the decree depriving him of his citizenship. He counted on the possibility that Stalin's autocratic ambition would order the execution of 98 of the 139 deputy members of the Central Committee (and of 1108 of the 1966 delegates to the 17th Party Congress), thus exterminating the majority of the Stalinist cadres, almost three quarters of his elite, it must be admitted that Trotsky, in addressing these cadres, had sufficient reason to invoke not only his own interests, those of the Opposition and those of the Party, but also the dictates of the instinct of self-preservation of such cadres. 'Save yourselves! This is the last chance left!', he was saying in effect to those Stalinists who would eventually become victims of Stalin's terror.⁴⁴

Once the Stalinist Thermidor has been set in motion, Marxism-Leninism's principle of cruelty could not but operate as the theological-political supplement through which it sought to cleanse and safeguard state socialism's techno-productivist rationality. The violence exercised by social state capitalism and its co-conspirators in the metaphysics of progress transcended the fields constituting the political and social life of real socialisms. In effect, this condemned to oblivion any alternative life-world opposed to the techno-productive violence of capitalist modernity. Was there another possibility? Surely yes, but what is certain is that the tendency was to not tolerate dissidence in the face of the iron pact assumed by the party leadership. In fact, there is ample evidence that after the plebeian experience of the councils devolved into an apparatus for monitoring and repressing the party, the revolution became practically indistinguishable from the cruelty of its industrial and political consolidation process.

The cruelty of the new regime, which had supposedly used revolutionary violence to eradicate the structural violence of capitalist exploitation and abolish the institutions of subaltern dispossession and usury, produced the sinister truth of the revolutionary institutions. The Freudian *unheimlich*, that which being familiar becomes strange, is taken to its extreme by Stalinist terror.⁴⁵ The same process occurs with the extremist techno-productive rationality that consecrated Soviet industrialisation. We would not stray too far out of bounds if we were to say that the whole NEP (New Economic Policy) of the five-year plans for forced industrialisation and the inquisitorial criteria in no way strove to destroy the police forms which stifled liberties and subordinated bodies to an industrial and techno-productive regime under modern bourgeois rule. Police techniques assumed their maximum expression in the Cheka intelligence agency. Formed in 1920 with the Bolshevik 'Boss's' approval, this intelligence body restored the inquisitorial form of the old institutions of modernity. This form is fundamental for capitalism's subordination to modern expansionism of the discipline and control of the body of proletarianised labour. The police organ takes the form of the modern institution and is empowered to wound any singular body interpellated by suspicion. In its genealogy, this power to wound anybody is at the base of the inquisitorial form and will be perfected by Soviet bureaucracy. By believing in the possibility of a body ideologically poisoned by an internal enemy, the Cheka prolongs the old forms of inquisitorial power over the modern, singular bodies using the inquisition's own operational methodologies. But with a novel complexity: that of the modern bureaucracy, that organ without sensing bodies, of the great institution that is the modern state.

Institutional modernity is the secular metamorphosis of the inquisitorial apparatuses. These function as a matrix for the purging of subaltern or plebeianised body by the juridical police. Del Barco's reference to this phenomenon is imprecise, because his obsession with locating Lenin as the foundation of a revolutionary process truncated by instrumentality, calculation and the annulment of politics within power's bureaucratic institutions, prevents him from seeing the genealogical ground from which the modern inquisitorial police emerge. That is why Del Barco writes and recalls Lenin's testamentary agony, distancing himself from any and all decisions of the revolution's dying *pater*. The post-mortem move in the Testament of the Bolshevik 'chief' was to denounce the bureaucratic and theoretical turn typical of the inquisitorial mechanisms of the ruling class. The agony of the 'guide of the world proletariat' and his testamentary function is read by Del Barco as yet another error. The great error of the Testament, Del Barco tells us, 'was to have included everyone in his criticism, Stalin as well as Trotsky, Bukharin as well as Kamenev and Zinoviev, so that they all colluded against Lenin'.⁴⁶ This confabulation is a dynamic with obscure antecedents within inquisitorial power; that is, the power to judge and purge whatever might threaten from within the concentrated power of state institutions. The modern institutions hegemonic throughout the long cycle of republics contains *within itself* the inquisitorial. That which is *most in itself* is, in fact, the purge, the doctrinal exclusion. Thus, Del Barco cannot err when he writes:

At the end of his life, Lenin only trusted the circle of the 'old guard'; so that when the latter bared its despotism and lust for power, Lenin was left with nothing and no one: without State (it was, as he said, the old Tsarist State painted red); without Soviets (at the Congress of 1919 it had been resolved that 'The Communist Party must win for itself the complete political domination in the Soviets and the practical control of all its action'); without the Party (as demonstrated by the purges ordered by Lenin himself); and without the 'old guard' (as demonstrated in the Testament). Only the hungry masses were left for the crows of the infinite 'apparatuses' to circle, and atop these, the Bolshevik leaders ready to devour the still fresh corpse of Lenin. But the truth is that despite his anguish and the merciless denunciation he made of his faithful comrades, he, Lenin, had been the impetus of the revolutionary degeneration.⁴⁷

There is, here, a profound epistemological purge, a philosophical purge of the 'Boss', whom Del Barco undoubtedly admires and studies closely. The Argentine philosopher's hermeneutic exercise is a sort of epistemology of the nostalgia for the unfulfilled promise of 'novelty' held by the Russian Revolution's original programme. An epistemological nostalgia, perhaps, informed by his strident Heideggerianism, which leads him to write the most astute diagnosis of a radical and profound crisis of the modern left. However, Del Barco's destructive critique of Leninism fails to break the sacred circle of Marxist sanctity; his historical analysis and philosophical depth are so perfectly articulated that they open themselves to the imperfection of a Leninist cult of personality. Although, to be sure, an inverted cult, one mutated into a will to 'epistemic hatred' and philosophical impotence with respect to the tradition of enlightened thought. In the wake of profane thought, the greatest danger contained in the party's political theology not exactly the radical enlightenment within which Lenin situates himself as a thinker of politics, but the attempt to erase or annul the possibility of politics that favour the revolution's original, shall we say, intemperance.

The 'diabolical mill'

The original politics, when transfigured and translated (betrayed) into theology, cannot avoid the 'banality of evil'. On the contrary, it sets it in motion. This comprehensibility attends to the irruption of the language that composes the base of a new order's thresholds, and that language was undoubtedly erased or neutralised in the bureaucratisation of the socialist state.⁴⁸ Del Barco is precise in indicating that Lenin is principally responsible for the utter lack of fidelity to the Revolutionary good news and its conversion into a programme for the technification of Marxism's professed novelty. He does not see in Lenin – as Gramsci did – any possibility of linking the Bolshevik 'chief' with the foundation of a new beginning for political thought. On the contrary, Lenin is responsible for the original programme's degeneration and, therefore, for foreclosing on the new beginning opened by the democratic experience of the councils of Soviets and the worker-peasant alliance. The Brazilian intellectual Michael Lowy, analysing Lenin's text *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (1905) explains it as follows.

Lenin opens a window to the unknown landscape of the socialist revolution but does so in order to immediately close it and return to the closed space, circumscribed by the limits of orthodoxy. We find these limits in the numerous formulas of *Two Tactics* where Lenin categorically reaffirms the bourgeois character of the Russian revolution and condemns 'as reactionary' the idea of 'seeking the salvation of the working class in something other than the further development of capitalism'.⁴⁹

The closure of the revolutionary threshold is the closure of democracy. A threshold closed in its democratic intensity and experience has nothing to universalise except unhappiness, defeat, a return to the old bourgeois or totalitarian normative order.

The revolutionary opening is one that remains for the imagination of institutions whose experience stems from attempts at revolutionary revolts. When his theoretical formulas sterilise or restrain the creative imagination, Lenin becomes the Moses of the Commandments by closing the threshold at the table of power. But he is also Machiavelli, who opens the threshold when he makes of political intuition an agent of the tectonic creative power of the new meanings lodged in the social imagination. The

CPSU emerged from the heads of enlightened intellectuals and leaders. As a state machine, it was the most powerful political party of the twentieth century and, at the same time, the most efficient at helping close modernity's emancipatory thresholds. As a vanguard party it was responsible for the success of the industrial and technological progress of the USSR, but also for the assembly-line production of corpses, sown by internal purges and forced industrialisation. The consequence of a thoroughly state-ified party, sustained by totalitarianism and inquisitorial militarisation, is worldwide discredit, which will be radicalised in the 1980s.

The discredit of the party of the modern revolution brings with it the ideological weakening of the Latin American communist parties. These tend to weaken due to the structural, economic and political deterioration of the USSR and the countries of the socialist bloc as a whole. And this weakening coincided with the emergence and triumph of the theories of extreme liberalism, or neoliberalism, that began at the historic meeting of the Mont Pèlerin Society convened by Friedrich Hayek in 1947. This meeting was attended by important intellectuals who subscribed to the extreme liberalism of individual freedom and the autonomy of markets; 36 'organic intellectuals' who would contribute to the birth of 'neoliberalism as a political theology'. This group included none other than prominent philosopher of science, Karl Popper, and Milton Friedman, the latter of whom received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1976. These were the intellectuals who thought that socialism was as abominable as the welfare state. The fact that the author of *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) found the Keynesian state – and thus, even more so, the socialist state – as totalitarian as Hitler's or Roosevelt's constitutes the most important ideological nucleus of what will become a hegemony in service of the regulatory destruction of states oriented toward assuring their citizens' *buen vivir*. Villacañas explains the birth of hegemony as follows.

Hayek did not have to hide his anti-democratic premises from the beginning. Hitler and Roosevelt were for him equally totalitarian and detestable. Democracy was not a decisive criterion for the ideal autonomy of the economy because in itself, and on that reading, it was not an anti-totalitarian guarantee. In fact, anything that affected the sovereign autonomy of the economic sphere was now totalitarian. If this had been but a thought, it would not have had much relevance. But it was more than a theory. It was already a diabolical mill that was being imposed from the world's leading authorities, from financial bodies, rating agencies, international courts. And all this was happening at a time when the USSR had dissolved, the classical left was not persuasive and identity politics were fragmenting the demands of the citizenry.⁵⁰

Once consummated, the paradigmatic military coups in Chile (1973) and Argentina (1976), and their blatant alliance with the cruelty of the neoliberal programmes, this diabolical mill effects, with the force of a perpetual tsunami, the expansive violence of the capitalist market. Thus, Villacañas's diagnosis is as accurate for the European case as it is for Latin America. In terms of the victims of extreme liberalism, what will emerge with the 'anti-totalitarian' project will not end until the genocidal decade of freedom and democracy promoted by Ronald Reagan in Central America in the 1980s. The state as oriented towards the 'social question' will be violently defeated by the ruthlessness of the National Security Doctrine, which the US introduced throughout Latin America. In this context, the economic policy leadership of the Chicago Boys will find no power sufficient for stopping the military, political and ideological defeat of the modern left. Unfortunately, the Latin American Guevarist or Allendeist left is intellectually defeated, and its military and revolutionary drift physically annihilated, between 1970 and 1990. The 'diabolical mill' of extreme liberalism will also significantly weaken Marxism as an emancipatory narrative. The idea of the revolutionary vanguard party will decompose, and its place will be taken by the fragmentation of identities.

Early on, Agustín Cuevas – renowned Ecuadorian sociologist and literary critic – locates the diabolical mill in the emergence of extreme liberalism and conceptualises it as a 'conservative turn'.⁵¹ Within this conservative turn, destructive criticism falls into a kind of deep nihilism, and the modern left fails to see what Cuevas finds in all its splendour towards the end of the 1980s. They miss the withdrawal of politics, understood as untimely praxis and as the possibility of a life-world oriented to a 'left subjectivity'; that is, to processes of plebeian subjectivation. While the arsenal of the best Latin American philosophy skates on the thin ice of destructive criticism, the conservative turn freezes everything. The freezing of leftist politics and its emancipatory imaginaries becomes an ice of a rink on which skates no longer slide. Lenin does not dance in the snow again, and his withdrawal from the intemperate

and passionate politics of the modern left constitutes the preparatory moment for the rise of neofascist ideologies, nationalist fundamentalisms and the throwing open of the window to the diabolical mill's extreme liberalism, or neoliberalism.

The conservative turn occurs amid the catastrophic experience of the language of modern politics and the disarticulation of the emancipatory narratives that resided in Marxism's heterogeneous language. The destruction of the narratives that spoke emancipatory language reaches so low that all intemperate or eventful politics are withdrawn. This explains, on the one hand, Cuevas's diagnosis of the conservative turn and, on the other hand, the precision with which the Chilean-German sociologist Norbert Lechner indicates that, in intellectual debate, there has been a Copernican turn from thinking revolution to thinking democracy.⁵² The signifier 'revolution' and the image of the Guevarist utopia of the 'new man' that motivated intellectuals since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution (1959), and its close link with the timelessness of politics, will be abruptly replaced by a thought of democracy and the pluralism of cultural subjects (new collective identities) in politics. Lenin's dismissal is thus justified by the impossibility of, and lack of agency for, the modern revolutionary subject (the working class). A consensus agenda that privileges neoliberal policies is imposed in a naturalised way. In short, within the global conservative and globalising turn, the withdrawal of Lenin's political thought coincides with the impediment to the reactivation of programmes of social equality and emancipatory thought. The left is depressed, or simply accepts the new rules of the game that liberal extremism and the signifier 'democracy' impose throughout the 1980s, as the hegemonic narrative. The destructive critique of Leninism prepares the ground for a withdrawal of revolutionary metaphors. Without offering even a single possibility of proposing emancipatory politics, or even a theory that exceeds merely describing the depression or denunciation of dinomaxist orthodoxies, the *intelligentsia* will have to surrender to the diabolical mill or resist, through theoretical complexity, their incorporation to neoliberal democracies.

Once the signifier 'revolution' has been removed, the subordination of modern politics' untimeliness and thought to the ideology of parliamentary democracy will be one of the invariants whose force still resounds in Latin American intellectual life. The removal of the signifier 'revolution' prepares a new type of hatred towards subaltern classes, but now in the name of freedom and parliamentary democracy. The hatred of the plebeian is the hatred of the democratic experiences that act upon life-worlds to open the revolutionary threshold. Extreme liberalism intensifies this hatred by capitalising on the self-defeat of the modern left and neutralises the whole modern interregnum of conflict and struggle against capitalist modernity.

The sleep of reason produces monsters

Del Barco's philosophical lucidity is the corroboration that Marxism-Leninism was in a deep process of decomposition. Therefore, his critique works along the surface of the disintegration and verification of the symptoms in which the crisis of state-socialism can be read. Decomposition, nihilism, discouragement, impotence and disenchantment are the categories with which the critique of state-socialism resonates, but they are also the symptoms of a philosophical position. These are the philosophy and the affections of a modern left without the power to generate an alternative in the face of the emergence of (neo)liberal hegemony. It will take time to put a brake on this new hegemony's deployment and development as world-hegemony. Thus, the modern left experiences the disenchantment of the civilising project of state socialism from a complex, diffuse conservatism that is difficult to situate. In what sense conservative? Conservative should be understood as the acceptance of the 'state of things' that emerged as the hegemony of extreme and unbridled liberalism, capable of generalising the compulsive desire to privatise everything. It is the imaginary of the voracious modernisation of transnational capital on a planetary scale and, undoubtedly, of the liberal fold of modernity itself. The abandonment of radical bets against IWC's modernisation on an expanded scale will have devastating effects on traditional left parties' system of legitimation. At the same time, the work of 'critical theory' begins to plunge into an abyss of self-referentiality and feudalisation of intellectual gymnastics without outside or, more precisely speaking, without the desire to bring the philosophical imagination to the thresholds produced by the untimeliness of social insurgencies that destabilise the order of capitalist self-preservation. The disenchantment and abandonment of radical, transformational politics is crucial for understanding the conservative turn of the traditional left. But also, to understand that the stylistic self-referentiality of philosophy – although alien and sometimes critical

of the conservative turn – participated, due to impotence or sterility of imagination, in the same turn as the traditional left. There is in the conservative turn, also the perverse nucleus of the abandonment of the emancipatory principles of modernity, to which Marx, and above all Gramsci, belong, both of whom Del Barco seems to isolate from the contamination of calculation and enlightened rationality.⁵³

Del Barco's philosophical style makes Lenin's failure dwell in Goya's famous maxim, 'El sueño de la razón produce monstruos'⁵⁴ [The sleep of reason produces monsters]. But the monstrous, as is shown, lacks perversion. Certainly, the monstrous can be horrific in as much as it presents itself to sight as a dream deformed. Realising the dream may become a nightmare, but it does not necessarily presuppose evil. Instead, the perverse man is someone exceedingly wicked, someone who corrupts customs or the usual order or state of things. The perverse man is also he who, in doing evil, feels the pleasure of forgetting the other. Lenin's psychoanalyst would likely diagnose him as the 'perverse polymorph' of early twentieth-century revolutionary politics. But what is certain is that, beyond the question of Lenin's perversity, the whole monstrosity of the Bolshevik event – betrayed for readers like Del Barco – could never evade the historical truth that together with Lenin's party, the plebeian rebellion of 1917 produced a monstrosity of an event. This event signified the opening of a threshold of political modernity. The magnitude of this event not only had a political dimension; it also forced the division of the globe into the imperial powers that Carl Schmitt conceptualised in the early 1950s as 'the nomos of the Earth'.⁵⁵ The transformation of the USSR into a technological and military superpower using the horror of murderous state violence is what Del Barco reads in Lenin's perversion. This hypothesis is irrefutable because there exists a condemnable history, one which must, undoubtedly, be denounced and abandoned as a model of society to be emulated.

The writings of the perverse Lenin, if they were read today – and under the suspicion that the Leninist tradition is nothing more than a set of unopened books that still remain on the shelves of clueless Cold War militants or post-militants – do not demonstrate the perversion that Del Barco attributes to him. The question of Lenin's perversity encapsulates a paranoid reading machine that returns the dead body of the Russian revolutionary to the past of a perversion that seems destined to condemn and destroy modernity. Must we hunt down and demolish altogether the whole imaginary of modernity? Del Barco's understanding offers readers a guide, with his emphasis already added, and negates all other interpretations of the monstrous spawn produced by the sleep of Russian reason. Although this is a reading that allows us to speak to the socialist project's failure, it would be necessary to subtract the idea that Lenin is a dead dog to be forgotten as evil or perverse. It is in the question of his perversion, and not in the necessary and condemnable totalitarian and imperial deviation of the USSR, that we must locate the paralysis to which Del Barco's Heideggerianism condemns politics. One should also resist the Argentine philosopher's reading of Goya's judgement. Monsters are engendered, instead, when the conversion of 'plebeian reason' opens the way to politics' capture by a theology of sovereign power. The conversion of the plebeian, that magma of corporeal affections and profane intelligence, by enclosure in the state machine or party bureaucracy, kills the becoming that assures and affirms the democratic act as an act of creation.

In Del Barco's Heideggerianism, destroying an idol, destroying a religion simply to allow another to replace its lack of profane horizons and commitments to political thresholds, we find no footing. His destructive criticism gifts nothing to thought. It is pure stylistic violence, because it neither offers a solution nor risks commitment to the threshold of a 'new beginning'. Does Del Barco not forget something in his vehement destruction of 'everything' Lenin? While Del Barco sets in motion his paranoid reading machine in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan inaugurates in Central America one of the worst genocides to yet be justified by the assumption of the USSR as 'The Evil Empire' (1983). Communism is the total perversion that the *non-dark side* of the force must defeat by any means necessary, including the murder of indigenous communities. Probably due to its fascination with its object, the genocide of revolutionary groups and social movements in Central America and the plebeian triumph of the Sandinista Revolution (1979) is the context that the destructive criticism overlooks or forgets.⁵⁶ It cannot be denied that Del Barco is honest in his criticism and, above all, in the destructive and stylistic rigour with which he demythologises Lenin. What the philosopher deciphers for us is that, in the name of socialism, the theoretical abstractions of the Bolshevik leader produced the horrors of 'life as absolute' during more than half of the twentieth century.

However, in the name of life as such, of life itself, the demystifying principle overlooks the fact that the horror of the twentieth century was generated by the nuclear force of the USSR and the United States. As if forgetting that the murderous machinery also responded to the ruthless Cold War orchestrated by

the United States, any demystification fails when it leaves one of the poles of 'evil' still mystified by omission. For Del Barco, the scene of Lenin's militant vanguard and their effects on Leninism is marked by none other than the art of giving death, in the name of reason's evil and perverted sleep. This is what makes Del Barco's reading *perverse*, as he directs his critique against Lenin in accord with the voracity of 'critical reason', destroying with it the textual places of Leninism. The cult of personality's inversion is also an entry to its opposite: sacralisation of the leader. Lenin's cult – inverted or not – also leaves unthought any outside to the empirical truth that real socialisms were state capitalisms with very successful and, of course, very unsuccessful modernising projects.

In other words, Del Barco demonises Lenin such that there can be no return to the graphemes bequeathed by the Bolshevik leader, without reproducing in them the logic of death and catastrophe. In Del Barco's critique there is no return to the concepts of praxis because they are too committed to calculative reason, to instrumental rationality. What is the cost of this perversion which denies return? What does it deny a profane reading of Lenin? We do not dare say that Del Barco sides with Reagan's philosophy and his reading of the USSR as the 'Evil Empire', because that would be an unfair understanding of what destructive criticism proposes by reading Lenin's enlightened legacy. Nevertheless, it can be said that its radical attempt to destroy the figure and legacy of Leninism hypostatizes the enlightenment condition by casting it as 'radical evil'. In Del Barco's essay '¿Era Lenin un perverso?', Leninism's legacy is radically obliterated by a destructive critique of Lenin's Enlightenment theory and his conception of the party. The critical discourses against Marxism of the 1980s – among which Del Barco's is most remarkable of all, for its precision and effectiveness – do not oppose the conservative turn. Likely, many of these discourses do not even perceive the dimensions of the radical change implied by the decade's pact between Hayek's theory and the globalising Thatcher–Reagan collision. Nor do they criticise the political party system and the pacts with the oligarchy as power over the globe.

The left's skull is bare

This criticism's passion is doomed to become a corpse with no chance of overcoming its own self-defeat. This type of downfall manifested itself in the decomposition of the modern logic of the enlightened party and, usually, in the name of an abstract, anti-plebeian communism. Thus, on the exposed skull of Marxism-Leninism's political theology, the signs of disorientation, lack of enthusiasm and sensitivity towards the subjective world of the discontented, and theoretical criticism formed part of the same frigidity. Most critical discourses easily describe the theoretical and political poverty of Marxism-Leninism. Yet the limit of these descriptions is not only the obviousness of a state ideology's decomposition, but that destructive criticism fails to go beyond merely diagnosing socialism's decline and the paralysis of theoretical work as a political practice. We had to wait until the mid-1980s to glimpse an exit, or outside, for the modern left.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe will be the exception to conventional criticisms of Leninism as state doctrine. Openly recognising the heritage and legacy of Latin American political experiences and the tradition of Marxism, Laclau and Mouffe will produce the most extraordinary and complex discourse to offer a way past signs of the left's exhaustion. The publication of their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (1985), constituted the most serious attempt to emerge from the symptoms of 'loss' and the aestheticisation of critique. 'Post-Marxism without apologies', as Laclau and Mouffe will call it in a 1986 article, is presented as their neo-Gramscian renewal of the theory of hegemony.⁵⁷ Gramsci, not Lenin, would be the enduring theoretical event to be updated in order to 'radicalise socialist democracy'. Del Barco likely shares this hypothesis, but unlike Laclau and Mouffe, the destructive critique lacks a theory of democracy wherein politics and emancipation might plausibly be linked. Thus, we can say that the post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe is the closest thing to an experience of a critique 'without a deficit of theory'. As soon as theory decides to not only describe or reconstruct, but also guide the present's struggles, it avoids the poverty and deficiency of a critique that reconstructs, without being able to destroy, what it presents as 'unhappy consciousness', or catastrophe.⁵⁸

In the 1980s, post-Marxism is notorious for preparing a change of lexicon, which consisted in changing the language within the language of Marxism. Antonio Gramsci is the theoretical and epistemological catalyst fundamental to desecrating the language of Marxism. It is beginning from Gramsci that the creaturely life of language can break the theological-political circle of Marxism as a

science in service to despotic socialism.⁵⁹ This transformation consists precisely in profaning the doctrine; that is, deconstructing the cult and, above all, attempting to break out of the confinement of Marxism as a political theology implemented and articulated by the powerful Soviet state. A demonic Lenin becomes the condition of possibility for Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical innovation, to the point that the concept of hegemony – which, in Gramsci's genealogy, is an invention of Lenin – cannot be understood without deconstructing of the 'Boss' of the Russian Revolution. Regarding Gramsci and Lenin, and in terms of the critics' theoretical-philosophical work, Laclau and Mouffe allow us to understand not only the difference between deconstruction and destructive critique, but also the impossibility of abandoning Marxism as a 'toolkit'. They provide a language that disturbs the aporia concerning what is or is not to be inherited from any theory that has thought emancipation beyond a purely abstract and speculative event.

In a vein similar to Del Barco's – although without the obsessive interpretation of Lenin from an inverted cult of personality – Laclau and Mouffe's hypothesis against Leninist politics refers openly to the limits of enlightenment as a political instrument. There's is a question of radicalising the crisis of the philosophy of consciousness (of the subject) and of championing a theory of democracy articulated from a philosophy of discourse or language, understood as a social practice whose components are not necessarily enlightened. This explains why Laclau and Mouffe also reject the reduction of politics to the pedagogical function of the vanguard party. In one Leninist interpretation, it is not the proletarianised masses but the enlightened vanguard who know a priori the laws of history. This means that the vanguard party is not a true party of the masses. The epistemological privilege of the party has no outside and occupies all the positions of knowledge and power for directing socialism's consolidation. Laclau and Mouffe distance themselves from the modern party as conceived by Lenin because its principles of articulation are based on historical determinism, enlightenment propaedeutics and an epistemology that dissociates itself from plebeian knowledge. Plebeian knowledge remains outside and anonymous because it is considered illegitimate by the party authority. The party-state is not only the place of plebeian exclusion, but of monopoly over the domain of knowledge.

In Leninism as in Kautskyism, the constitutive character of the political moment does not entail that a major role is attributed to superstructures, because the privilege granted to the party is not 'topographical' but 'epistemological': it is founded not on the efficacy of the political level in constructing social relations, but on the scientific monopoly enjoyed by a given class perspective. This monopoly guaranteed, at a theoretical level, the overcoming of the split between the visible tendencies of capitalism and its underlying evolution.⁶⁰

Laclau and Mouffe's anti-Leninism is the result of an adjustment to the changing and extremely vertiginous temporality of the dispute over the interregnum of politics. In the 1980s the paradigm shift in theoretical research programmes is due to the radical suspicion that the vanguard party is as exhausted as the narrative of communism being inscribed in the morphological laws of history. The Leninist party is seen as leading to militarisation and authoritarianism, exercised by the state's appropriation of what was one of the main instruments of socialist emancipation. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is the book-event that manages to emerge from the aestheticised critique of the decrepit political theology elevated to scientific knowledge of the party-state. The book-event consists in a rich, coherent set of concepts that rupture the barrier of criticism as style or place of pure enjoyment, to assert one of the most interesting theoretical proposals concerning democracy. By incorporating such disparate thinkers as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Derrida, Lacan and, above all, Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe's Post-Marxism teases out the link between democracy and socialism from within the epistemological layering of the best of twentieth-century philosophy. However, we must first note that these 'theoretical novelties' accompany the exhaustion of the modern system of political interpretation. The astuteness of the new conception of democracy and socialism offered by neo-Gramscianism bases itself on recognising a new state of affairs in which the Marxist grammar is no longer functional to the 'superstructure' of social imperialism by the USSR and its potential Latin American 'satellites'. Laclau and Mouffe's book is not the result of theoretical quarrels, nor much less of contempt for the legacy of Marxism as manifest in some Latin American left parties. Further, is it not the purely erudite compulsion of university clans that come together to compete in Olympian intellectual gymnastics, without ever producing a theory in the 1980s comparable to Laclau and Mouffe's book-event. In the framework of a diminished, unsustainable Cold War, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* theorises the possibility of democracy from within the immanence of a new order of things. In other words, it thinks from within the changes incurred by the new pattern of capitalist accumulation on a planetary scale, whose stabilisation was no longer given by the

modern legitimising system of traditional left parties. The lack of a framework for the balance of world powers – or, in a Schmittean register, ‘nomic powers’ – affected the ideological matrix of the left and precipitated its defeat in a ‘war of positions’, a defeat so severe the left almost disappeared completely. The loss of the geopolitical balance produced by the nomic powers became increasingly transparent as Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev drew ever closer to breathing in the ‘new age’ of extreme liberalism’s consummation.

At a moment when the idea of a world based on universal equality has all its errors revealed by Del Barco and attributed to Lenin, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* was a book-event that strove to function as the post-Leninist theoretical composite through which to recover politics. While detailing of the theory of hegemony here is unnecessary, we should simply indicate that Laclau and Mouffe’s book is an event at the twilight of the decade of extreme liberalism’s, or neoliberalism’s, rise. Of course, this event is related to both authors’ daring conceptual novelty and philosophical crossbreeding; concepts such as ‘empty signifier’, ‘chain of equivalences’, ‘antagonism’, ‘discursive identities’, ‘the social as contingent and opposed to society as totality’ and so on, exhibit a deliberate attempt to escape from the mouldy Marxism of Leninist doctrine or, although ultimately the same, of Marxism as a political-theological programme. In fact, it can be said that there is no anti-Leninism in Laclau and Mouffe’s book, but rather a profane attempt to deconstruct the tradition of Leninism as political theology. The desire for post-Marxism is the theoretical and epistemological trace of a profane imprint. It is an escape from theology, from the sanctuaries of real socialisms and their bureaucracies that, eager to control insurgent plebeian knowledge and its democratic experiences, made of Leninism a totalitarian doctrine of the state.

There are undoubtedly always ‘good reasons’ to criticise a theory that participates in the urgent task of thinking its present. Laclau and Mouffe’s book offered more than an aestheticised critique and mere reconstruction of the catastrophe of Marxism as a theory of revolution, to press the conditions of possibility of politics and its present.⁶¹ One can disagree with the attempt to update Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, adducing even the same arguments that Del Barco wields against Lenin. In fact, there are very few thinkers who would be left out of the destructive criticism that Del Barco raises against Lenin’s enlightened and pragmatic thought. One must include Gramsci and Marx, as both are haunted by the ghosts of enlightenment and complicity with modernity’s emancipatory imaginary. Could Del Barco’s exercise be applied to Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxism? Yes, it would be enough to discover in the theory of hegemony a kind of epistemological progress or pretensions of superiority vis-à-vis the tradition of Marxist thought that the book excludes or does not ‘reconstruct’.⁶² What cannot be denied is that *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is one of the most important theoretical accomplishments and most significant attempts to break the enclosure within which Marxism as a political theology contained the plurality of life-worlds. Unlike Laclau and Mouffe, the destructive critique of Leninism lacks an outside; it lacks precisely the political material that forms the plurality of worlds. In the name of liberal progress’s rationality, the plurality of worlds has been co-opted, excluded, absorbed or repressed, according to the interests of small political or financial groups.

History, up to the present day, is the history of powerful oligarchies with an enormous capacity to militarily suppress democratic or socialist processes of social revolution.⁶³ The modern left, lover of abstractions sans plebeian bodies and intelligence purified of elements rooted in social matter, tends to participate in the speculative turns of hegemonies that function at a distance from processes that intermingle worlds and open anti-oligarchic thresholds. The entire enlightened left, which resolved its relationship by setting out from modernity’s abstract, speculative locations, ended up denying the plebeian processes of emancipation. The intellectual history has been none other than that of the ‘lettered city’. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the history of Latin American post-colonial processes has consistently been dialecticised by intellectuals who, starting from the abstract design of the (modern) polis, oppose the plebeian knowledge expressed by the plurality of life-worlds.⁶⁴ The philosophical destruction of modernity’s utopian and technological presuppositions finds its operative limit not so much in the destructive critique, but in living matter and its multiplicity of forms. The epistemological limit of both Del Barco and post-Marxism is the incalculable limit of the *matter* usually *outside* of modernity’s utopias. The programme of modernity presupposes specialists, technocrats, intellectuals and bureaucrats. In the name of the hypostasis of reason’s calculus, they gain their legitimacy and prestige at the cost of denying the democracy of bodies and subjectivities. Lenin chose the opposite path by understanding that what can be transformed is exactly that living matter composed of bodies and subjectivities. A relationship with matter destabilises the abstract world of ideological a priori and

forces the 'intellectual agent' to enter into a relation of political trembling that destroys calculation and opens a path towards the incalculable. If Lenin is perverse, it is because he enjoys the incalculability of matter, which in its world-like plurality and heterogeneity can change the meanings of history. On the other hand, the intellectual or the bureaucrat who administers the knowledge of modernity's laws lacks a relationship of enjoyment with matter, but rather has one of abstract distance. There can therefore be no revolutionary threshold without a relation of *jouissance* with the matter to which we belong. *Jouissance* is the exteriority of abstraction because it is recognised as a fold internal to the relation with matter. The destructive critique is realised within its own autonomy to such an extent that it becomes a philosophical style, or an aesthetic of writing's self-referential perversions. A navel-gazing pirouette that lacks any outside for philosophical writing's rationality.

The devil is not binary

The triumph of extreme liberalism in the 1980s removed class struggle as opposition to capital's structures of domination from the imaginary of plebeian struggles in the name of democracy and the catastrophic experience of real socialisms. In a completely distinct vein than Del Barco's, and that of Laclau and Mouffe, Domenico Losurdo's book *The Class Struggle: A Political and Philosophical History* (2013) can be interpreted as the most important attempt to bring the imaginaries of left thought back to the fundamental questions of Leninism.⁶⁵ These questions are those of the analysis of the correlation of national and international forces from within the Marxist concept of class struggle. The right to peoples' self-determination and the interweaving of classes as *interregnum* of the political are inescapable questions in any attempt to think the struggle beyond wage demands or the recognition of particular identities. Losurdo attempts to return the theory of class struggle to twenty-first-century emancipatory movements and, to this end, he shows that the strategist of the Russian Revolution is a thinker of national anti-colonial struggles and, simultaneously, a theoretician of working-class struggle.⁶⁶ The return of the theory of class struggle is, for Losurdo, a return of theories once at the base of twentieth-century emancipatory movements. But in the transition to the twenty-first century, the withdrawal of the theory of class struggle caused the modern left to side with an agreed-upon truce with extreme liberalism. Neoliberal hegemony, expressed in late capitalism's efficient mechanisms of ideological supplementation, left the social struggles of the present – and those to come – without the conceptual and political tools to reinvent worlds that could be alternatives to the exploitation of human by human. So far, in the twenty-first century, the theory of class struggle's withdrawal is the entry into the horizon of a cultural, or multicultural, liberalism that functions as the hegemony of a humanism of reconciliation with, and overcoming of, late capitalism's perversions via cultural simulacra. The reconciliatory simulacrum conceals profound problems, such as misogyny, racism, poverty and a lack of opportunities. But, above all, it has the capacity to neutralise the struggle and close the thresholds for the redefinition of the world hegemonised by the falsum of equality under of market laws.⁶⁷

Cultural liberalism promotes the neutrality of conflicts on the basis of a theory of recognition that revolves around promoting the narcissism of differences (gender, sexual, cultural, ethnic). Thus, it works by obliterating any 'substantive' or 'structural' difference with respect to the diversity managed by free-market society. Its cultural hegemony, coupled with planetary capitalism's structures of economic domination, leaves intact the juridical structuring of private property that sanctified bourgeois modernity. It is, of course, a liberal juridicity as flexible as capitalist reproduction requires. (Neo)liberalism is incompatible with hegemonies that derive their demand for justice from class struggle. But it cannot be said to be so with respect to expanding and producing subjects of rights that were previously unthinkable, as the expansion of liberal laws does not have important implications for the bourgeois conception of private property. This conception, strongly criticised by the young Marx, continues to translate the old modern and bourgeois (Roman) law into the expansionism of financial capitalism's transnational corporations.⁶⁸ The prolongation of what we know today as capitalism of flexible accumulation, post-work capitalism, post-Fordist capitalism, digital labour or – as Walter Benjamin indicated – pure cult, without dogma, dislodges or neutralises Marx and Engels' idea of class struggle as the engine of emancipatory history, because social struggles cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between two subjects in confrontation: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

However, Losurdo's hypothesis remains faithful to the Marxist tradition of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), but outside any binary hermeneutics or conceptual dichotomies. Losurdo's hypothesis does

not reduce the multiplicity through which the class struggle manifests itself to dialectical metaphor of a struggle between two subjects which, in the *Manifesto*, comes from the analogy to the Hegelian master–slave dialectic. In Losurdo, there is no naive or doctrinal return to Marxism; the arguments that traverse his book are an attempt to recover a non-binary theory of class struggle for the twenty-first century. In this demand of recovery, which cannot be reduced to the dialectic of two antagonistic classes, it is indicated that the great scapegoat of the twentieth century is, precisely, Lenin. Unlike Del Barco's destructive Heideggerian critique, for Losurdo, the Bolshevik leader is not a metaphysical thinker who brought catastrophe down upon the original programme of the councils, but one who makes possible an intriguing link between the anti-colonial 'national question' and the working class's struggle with the powerful national bourgeoisies. Lenin would not succumb to the dangers of national wars that swam along with the current set by a bourgeoisie that capitalised on independence struggles. The demonisation of Lenin by criticism's aesthetic compulsion was the prelude to the retreat from the theory of class struggle. This demonic figuration of Lenin as setting the twentieth century ablaze is enshrined by the conversion of the Bolshevik leader into the scapegoat of emancipatory thought. But what is a devil? The devil is far from being a movement of the profane. On the contrary, the devil personified in the figure of Lenin is the negative way in which critics ultimately sacralise a subject and, thus, elevate him to such excess that an entire epoch coincides in his intelligence or in his lack of cunning, or in the ingenuity of his 'evil genius'. The limit of this excess of Lenin's figure, or figuration, left unthought the empirical future of working-class struggle, to the point that they were almost completely displaced from emancipatory theories and the history of the Russian Revolution itself. In a sense opposed to Del Barco's exemplary theses against Lenin, Losurdo finds in this singular theoretician of political praxis a strategist of anti-colonial war and a prominent thinker of the breadth or multiplicity of social struggles. In philosophical terms, Losurdo sees in the demonisation of Lenin the symptom of the impossibility of an emancipatory thought that restores the dignity of struggle to the working classes. For this reason, Losurdo does not hesitate to write:

In a text from 24th June 1920, Lenin summarizes in this way the attitude that the revolutionary class struggle must assume: it has to be guided by the 'concrete analysis of the situation, which is the very essence, the soul of Marxism'. The break with the idea of the immediate evidence of oppression and exploitation could not be clearer! The awareness that a given historical situation is the result of a web of contradictions and class struggles on a national and international scale, different on each occasion, has swept away any vestige of immediacy. In light of all this, that 'the lasting theoretical effect of Leninism has been an appalling impoverishment of the field of Marxist diversity' (Laclau, Mouffe) is misguided, to say the least. It seems as if the flight from the great and terrible history of the twentieth century sought out a scapegoat. At least in the case of Lenin, his great theoretical merit is to have definitively overcome the binary reading of the class struggle.⁶⁹

Once the critique finds its scapegoat, the theory of class struggle is written off and neutralised by liberal politics. If what is displaced is the 'soul of Marxism', it is inevitable that the 'revolutionary class struggle' remains entirely trapped in a kind of powerless outside of extreme liberalism's hegemony. But, above all, it is left outside the political practice of the classical left. Following Losurdo's argument, the neutralisation of the theory of class struggle allows capital's order to reproduce itself without major conflicts, without a complex and structural conflict that truly puts it in crisis. The class struggle, understood as a multiplicity irreducible to the binarism of the model of simple contradiction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, would have been one of the great successes of political thought. This conception of class struggle makes it possible to think in favour of movements of plebeianisation carried out by a multiplicity of political actors no longer articulable within the modern imaginary of a vanguard party, which presumes binary struggle. In the Leninism that Losurdo analyses, what matters and transcends the sacralisation of the Bolshevik leader is the 'concrete analysis of the concrete situation'.⁷⁰ Thus, any political organisation willing to radicalise the multiplicity of class antagonisms can become the instrument of social transformation. Within the national sphere, this situates local struggles in a non-binary way, while still considering a correlation with forces that overdetermine struggle internationally. Without the analysis of the concrete situation that considers both the local specificity of struggles and the specificity of international powers, local struggles are destined to the immediacy of emergence and decline. In this sense, the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist insurgencies of the 1960s in Africa and Latin America belong to a class struggle that bears the theoretical imprint of Lenin's 1920s anti-binarism.

The major theorists who claim class struggle as the topology in which the interregnum of struggles for national emancipation develops, ignore the fact that Leninism struggled against the bourgeoisie's institutional power without neglecting the constellation of supranational forces destined to support the counter-revolution, ideologically and militarily. In post-colonial thinkers, such as Frantz Fanon and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, national independence includes political and military moments during which the locally situated struggle cannot, and should not, forget the international context. Reactive supranational forces will correlate with forces in the struggle for independence. Thus, the analysis is never binary, nor reducible to the theory of two antagonistic classes. Lenin's praxis, the mixture between recognition of contingencies and political leadership, has been indisputably present in movements of resistance to colonialism. Anti-colonialist and post-colonial struggles of a Marxist orientation are theoretically linked to fundamental elements of the Leninist tradition.⁷¹ This is why Losurdo breaks with the mythology of class struggle's binary reduction as attributable to Lenin and extends his political thought to the field of the working classes' anti-colonial struggles.

In Latin America, in a tradition akin to Losurdo's, Marta Harnecker – the author of *Los conceptos elementales del materialismo histórico* (1969), who influenced an important generation of Latin American intellectuals⁷² – interprets Lenin's political thought as generative of praxis, an instrument of political rationality that prevents Marxism from becoming the sacred doctrine of Latin American communist parties. In *La revolución social (Lenin y Latin America)* [Social revolution (Lenin and Latin America)] (1986) Harnecker emphasises how the book is deliberately anti-dogmatic and based on living thought. Harnecker is interested in demonstrating how Latin American revolutions could triumph because of the effects of such thought on concrete situations. Agreeing with the hypothesis that Lenin is the great scapegoat, she points out the following:

The anti-dogmatic and dialectical Lenin *par excellence* has been reduced to the category of dogma. Contradictions, changes, rectifications have been excluded from his thought. His work has been studied apart from concrete history and his political practice. Hence, quotations from the author serve to support both the most extreme right-wing and the most extreme left-wing expositions.⁷³

Harnecker's statement should not be read as rejecting Del Barco's reconstructions of Lenin's theoretical work. Rather, it is a specifically Latin American interpretation that seeks in Lenin's 'living thought' and the 'analysis of the concrete situation', the conditions of possibility for social revolution, which Harnecker finds in the processes of popular power's consolidation.

During the decade in which the engine of extreme liberal hegemony's 'conservative turn' is at full power, the social revolutions that Harnecker analyses are not yet foreclosed. In Central America, we find the last two revolutions to achieve enormous visibility: the triumph of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (FSLN) [Sandinista National Liberation Front] in Nicaragua in 1979, and the intensity of the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) [Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front], which in 1980 almost achieved victory in El Salvador. These were social revolutions that cannot be analysed in terms of a simple contradiction between two antagonistic classes, in an international or global context that could no longer count on the type of support that the USSR lent the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Harnecker specifies that: 'It is interesting to note that neither the July 26th Movement in Cuba nor the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua, elaborated a political programme in the integral sense proposed by Lenin.'⁷⁴ The singularity of the process of social revolution contains a plebeian character, which makes it impossible to think that the popular effervescence of a concrete situation could be illuminated by a vanguard. In this analysis, the July 26th Movement and the triumph of the FSLN could only consummate their victory because the consciousness or innovative political subjectivity of the plebeian classes – excluded from the distribution of wealth, exploited and humiliated – came together as matter to drag out and provoke rebellious developments among the well-to-do strata. The conditions for a social revolution become known as given when even the well-to-do social classes, which usually stabilise the order, rebel. When, in a concrete situation, even the middle class has rebelled, the vanguard is but one more group, and not the driving force behind a final, victorious outcome. Any anatomical metaphor that announces the vanguard as the head of the social revolution overlooks, ignores and displaces the social revolution's plebeian intelligence. In any social order, the limit is reached in a situation wherein the wealthier classes revolt and plebeian knowledges advance a step forward in the process of social revolution.

The success of the social revolution, of its constituent power and, therefore, of the passage to the truth of the formative institutions – in their betrayal or loyalty to the awakening of plebeian subjectivity – is not exempt from a correlation with international forces. From a militaristic perspective, the success of the 1959 Cuban Revolution would be impossible without the balance of international forces brought on by the USSR's influence over the globe. Situationist Leninism is thus also the opportune use or, if you prefer, the opportunism, of an analysis of the concrete situation that does not forget the international or globalised forces that the social revolution requires for victory. This does not mean that social struggles do not occur locally. On the contrary, they occur in territories and spaces in which the political interregnum is situated in a material and existential way. Every interregnum supposes the localisation of struggle and, at the same time, concretely supposes its inscription in the historicity of planetary capitalism. The success of the processes of constituent power that will come after the triumph of the plebeian social revolution in Nicaragua, at the end of the 1970s, will have to confront the structural imbalance of planetary capitalism.

In the decade that the USSR breaks apart, along with the other real socialisms, there is an imbalance in international forces. With a weak socialist bloc on the verge of extinction, the social revolution lost the solidarity and material support it enjoyed in the 1960s. However, for Harnecker, the decade of the 1990s and the fall of the socialist bloc do not weaken Lenin's political thought. The argument as to why 'Latin American Leninism' is not weakened is relatively obvious. But this obviousness requires that we do not overlook the difference between the reification, or embalming, of Lenin as a deity in the CPSU's pantheon, and the Leninism of political praxis's plasticity. The clandestinely circulated book, *Las condiciones de la revolución socialista en Bolivia. A propósito de obreros, Aymaras y Lenin* [The conditions for a socialist revolution in Bolivia: Regarding workers, Aymaras, and Lenin] (1988), written by the young theoretician Álvaro García Linera, member of the Revolutionary Liberation Movement Tupac Katari, under the pseudonym Qananchiri, describes Lenin's political thought as opposite of the deification of the 'red devil'. García Linera proposes an analysis of the composition of political subjects in Bolivia based on 'the most gigantically creative deeds of millions of workers, and their theoretical-practical richness'.⁷⁵ In his book's theoretical justification, Leninism is not a formula, but the expression of a way to think the heterogeneity of the diverse and, therefore, non-binary composition of revolutionary politics.

The multiplicity of differences, plebeian knowledges and what García Linera calls the 'gigantic creative facts', are in no case the a priori of enlightened knowledge, but rather the inherent composition of politics, with which the 'analyst of possible revolutions must enter into relation from the interiority of the experiences of struggle'. This is what allows him to affirm that 'what Leninism does, is provide the instruments ... to find the priority of some [experiences] and the secondary nature of others in certain historical circumstances and in the revolutionary experience of the workers' and peasants' struggles in each country and in the whole world'.⁷⁶ Thus, Lenin's legacy is the conceptualisation of political practice's situationism as a negation of aprioristic epistemologies; precisely the opposite idea of the modern left parties, which pretended to merely illuminate the consciousness of the workers exploited by the bourgeoisie using knowledge previously conceived doctrinally. In Harnecker, as in García Linera, the social revolution is Leninist insofar as it moves away from abstract intellections and class binarism, toward the capacity for inventing and imagining triumph beginning with material practices.

In both Harnecker and García Linera, Leninism appears as a theoretical praxis for political change. It may even be said that Harnecker's approach is dominated by a pedagogy of triumphant experiences as *evental experiences* opposed to the left's collapse or self-defeat. This is extremely important, because the years of the decline and decomposition of state socialism will be dominated by a defeatist philosophy and epistemologies of traumatic memory as an element capacitating the melodrama of a left suffering from self-victimisation.⁷⁷ Perhaps this explains why Harnecker makes no mention of Del Barco's work, or of philosophies not organised around questions that interrogate the practical experience of the triumphs of social revolutions. This does not mean that Harnecker does not analyse or is not interested in the ebbs and flows of popular revolution. Harnecker's Lenin is not only radically different from the reconstructive demolition of the perverse Leninism described by Del Barco; her Lenin is also more clearly linked to 'plebeian power'. This power is conveyed by plebeian becomings, which marked the processes of resistance and constructing alternatives to capitalist modernity.

In the same vein as García Linera or Losurdo, for Harnecker, the thought of materialist praxis is at the base of experience. This is what, at any given moment in history, makes the heterogeneous composition of the class struggle capable of favouring movements toward the plebeianisation of society. The politics

of the a priori political subject based in the binary theory of class struggle or in economic reductionisms, are alien to processes of social revolution. The revolutionary movements that successfully seized political power, including the government of Salvador Allende, did not respond to doctrinaire types of Leninism, such as those that dinomaxism still wishes to reference today. The emancipatory horizon is one of a Creole, or hybridised, modernity, for its Creole, Indigenous and mestizo populations. The Lenin that seems to linger in the emancipatory imaginaries of the twenty-first century is closer to what Harnecker offers in *The Social Revolution* than to Del Barco's destructive critique. In the movements that successfully took power, or came close, Lenin is a language to be translated and not a doctrine to be imposed. What it seems the Latin-Americanised Lenin continues to offer is the conviction that the analytical-situationist framework of struggle contributes to the development of something like a philosophy of the 'fortune' of emancipation movements. If understood as a theological doctrine, however, Lenin appears closer to the mummification of the militant and the mere theoretician of politics, than to his passion for the impossible.

Politics is a profane invention

In his book *Democracia y Socialismo en Chile* [Democracy and socialism in Chile] (1983), Tomás Moulian – who would probably subscribe not only to all of Del Barco's neat criticisms of Lenin, but also to the suspicion that the sanctification of Lenin is something the profane becoming of politics must resist and abandon – explains and criticises the myth of Lenin as the work of the Stalinisation of the Bolshevik party. While Del Barco holds that Lenin never ceased being a disciple of Karl Kautsky and enlightened violence, Moulian – as well as Buci-Glucksmann, Losurdo, García Linera and Harnecker – finds in Lenin a deviation from Kautskyan orthodoxies. Moulian's reading is closer to Gramsci's idea of Lenin as inventor of the singularity of political analysis and the concept of hegemony, rather than the demonic extremism of Del Barco. Moulian's philosophical and political sensibility, opposed to philosophical nihilism's form of disenchantment, produces a reading machine subordinated to Lenin's skills as a profane analyst of politics. He is interested in the Lenin who analyses the correlation of forces and the concrete situation; that is, he is interested in the 'situationist' capable of deciding on the incalculable dimension of political possibilities.

Once again, it is the conjuncture of a given situation, and not a doctrine's a priori law, that demands the courage of political deviation. Analytical passion is thus a heresy with respect to the reductionisms and determinisms that scientific theories encourage. Moulian is interested in something of Lenin's that no longer concerns Del Barco, because his destructive criticism has ceased to situate analysis as immanent to political conjunctures and possibilities. Moulian wants to repeat the gesture and the impulse of the political analyst in Lenin. Thus, he comes quite close to Slavoj Žižek's Kierkegaardian hypothesis of repeating Lenin. For both Moulian and Žižek, repeating is not synonymous with repeating the same thing; 'In Kierkegaard's terms, a revolutionary process is not a gradual progress, but a repetitive movement, a movement of repeating the beginning again and again.'⁷⁸ The logic of repeating the beginning is that of the impossible. But the impossible is not what is negated in utopia or in euchronia, as reality or time without existence. On the contrary, the impossible belongs to the very movement of repetition that makes the beginning impossible as it was. Repetition of the beginning is something impossible and, therefore, the beginning is only repeated as difference from the first beginning. In Moulian's interpretation, repeating Lenin's gesture means differing from orthodoxies via insubordination as regards the dictates of the written word of the Marxist Bible. The analyst of concrete situations reads the living signs of political matter. Therefore, repeating Lenin means reading him through an actional approach to politics that has its genealogy in Machiavelli.

Lenin carries out a type of approach whose closest predecessor was Machiavelli, an author who produced a rupture in the tradition of political science. He moved the gaze from the field of the rational foundation of authority and the State to the field of political action itself, action that is seen as a process of production-reproduction of power. Machiavelli redefined the role of political theory, concerned until then with the problems of the legitimacy of the different forms of government or the analysis of political institutions. His attempt was to carry out an actional analysis whose unit was the study of political acts, especially of the strategies that are developed to obtain-preserve power or of the 'combinations' that produce it, some of whose elements – such as fortune – are non-calculable.⁷⁹

Political thought, devoted to problems indecipherable for calculative reason's scientism, leaves room for fortune. In Moulian's hermeneutic work, there would be neither blind faith in political institutions nor, much less, empirical regularities aimed at consolidating power. The nature of politics is actional and thus, in this way, politics is alien to static or unchanging historical laws. For Moulian, history is diachronic and mutable, according to forces that are disputed in action, thresholds or possibilities of the birth of worlds. Politics is actional and has an indivisible link with fortune. Fortune is to politics what chance is to the game of dice, as Mallarmé's famous phrase assures us: '*Toute Pensée émet un Coup de Dés*' [All thought emits a throw of the dice].⁸⁰ Thus, Lenin's Machiavellianisation makes it possible to locate politics in the immanence of the conjuncture. That is, within the force fields that overdetermine the course of history. This localisation of politics is also a dislocation of the dominant order and, in turn, the possibility of a closure – or, better yet, of an opening to thresholds foreign to the domain of what is scientifically calculable. Moulian understands Lenin's greatness to be that of a political theorist who could not escape reason's monsters. At the same time, he understands that one must entrust all changes in actional politics to the interior of these monsters.

Lenin reinvented Machiavelli and read Marx and the Second International's theoreticians as a store of knowledge at hand gleaned from the pragmatic intensities of a politics of action. Actional politics are what could open the threshold of what once was the socialist experiment, and that threshold, in Moulian, is the negation of both dictatorship and authoritarian socialism through the conjunction of democracy and socialism. But there are no thresholds without political contingencies and without analysis of the processes that tend to democratise societies. Moulian's Lenin is heretical and heterodox, because he adapts himself to the contingent and, thus, to what cannot fall entirely within the order of the calculable. Therefore, the Bolshevik leader's inverted cult of personality prevents us from seeing that he was a remarkable analyst and that his Machiavellian, or actional, conception of politics allowed us to conceive active and reactive force fields within the conjunctures opened by fortune. From one perspective, similar to Gramsci, Moulian's Lenin continues the actional politics invented by Machiavelli. This latter thread represents the genealogy of politics' profane imagination, with Lenin as its continuation.

In Lenin, this conception of action is enriched. It develops as an analysis of conjunctures. This concept points towards three different meanings: totality, historicity, diachrony. Machiavelli's conception of action was still primitive, since his analytical unit was the political subjects, almost always taken as individuals; Cesar Borgia as the most relevant case. His actions were analysed as a combination of three resources of power: force, cunning, fortune. For Lenin, on the other hand, the analytical unit is a complex whole whose components (only conceptually distinguishable) are different interrelated actors, inserted in a given historical situation, which dynamically limits and redefines their possibilities. Each individual act is influenced by the relations of a subject with other political subjects (by their acts), by the spaces opened or closed by these interactions, that is, by the play of forces. This structuring means that the resources, possibilities and options of each actor are largely defined by the factual presence of limits. These limits are not only normative, but also produced by the active deployment of competing or adversarial actors. In short, this complex whole can be represented as a field of forces.⁸¹

Fortune – that 'Machiavellian' threshold capable of opening an epoch onto its novelty – and the virtues of an actional conception of class struggle distance it from nomothetic political science. The actional is precisely the opposite of a science of empirical regularities that can be 'subjected' to normative and institutional structures. The actional is a 'science of the conjuncture' and, therefore, a situationism of the forces that politically inhabit the contingencies unfolding within the interregnum of the struggle to define the threshold by seizing state power. Moulian succeeds in capturing what we might call the truth of Leninist perversion; that is, its agency in political movements and its potency to animate – as did the Bolsheviks – a new beginning.

Like Moulian, Javier Lieja's (Bolívar Echeverría) article 'Lenin o cómo recomenzar' [Lenin or how to restart] (1979), says that 'Lenin has nothing monolithic or sacred about him; on the contrary, he is the abstract and necessarily unfinished figure' to which the thought of politics must relate itself, and reinvent the possibility of a new life-world.⁸² Who is Bolívar Echeverría? He is a reader of Lenin, one of the most important Latin American philosophers, a translator of Walter Benjamin and a reader of Martin Heidegger, born in Ecuador. As a Latin American intellectual, Echeverría does not hesitate to work on

a new beginning; more precisely, what he calls 'restarting' from a figure he evokes in political praxis. Politics is not the figuration of a saint, but the disfigurement of all saintly order. Thus, for Lieja, as for Moulian, Leninism is not the textual topology from which to demonise the 'Evil Empire', but rather, the unfinished topoi of what political thought must invent. In fact, in a polemic discussion with René Zavaleta Mercado compiled in the anthology *América Latina 80: Democracia y movimiento popular* [Latin America 80: Democracy and popular movement] (1981), Moulian calls for the reinvention of Lenin according to national specificity and conjunctural singularity. Meanwhile, Zavaleta, suspicious of a unidirectional turn towards purely parliamentary and electoral struggle, throws in his face the possibility that the 'advent' of democracy may have its origin in civil war. Zavaleta strongly criticises Moulian's presentation of an over-imagined Lenin. Although Zavaleta's argument does not compare to Del Barco's destructive critique, it is interesting that he maintains that 'in Lenin we can find certain substantial errors, such as the idea that socialism comes to the proletariat from without'.⁸³ This thesis against Lenin permits Del Barco to demonise him but also allows both Zavaleta and Moulian to reinvent him. The criticisms of Moulian's presentation are harsh and, at the same time, arbitrary, in the sense that both thinkers discursively invent a Lenin that permits a 'new beginning'. Towards the end of the intervention, the Bolivian thinker remarks that 'civil war itself can also be a form of self-determination'.⁸⁴ In his reply, Moulian will not only insist, again, on the specificity of situational analysis, but will also say:

Zavaleta criticises me for an electoral conception of democracy. I believe that he does not take into account that I am referring to certain types of societies, among which I believe Chile is still to be counted, despite the dictatorship and its hegemonic project. In this type of 'complex' society and State, the only way to build socialism as a social alternative is through a reconstruction of democracy that allows us to reconstitute the popular movement as a political subject, as classes capable of posturing hegemonically ... I believe that in countries like Chile, with the characteristics adopted by culture, society and social relations, for socialism to become a historical possibility again, the space of bourgeois democracy is required.⁸⁵

Moulian is thinking of halting civil war. The Lenin he believes must be reinvented from within an actional politics with hegemonic aspirations, cannot be subtracted from the spaces opened by the protocols of bourgeois democracies. This hypothesis is thus expressed within the immanence of situations within which popular movements' struggle is possible – within the field of bourgeois domination. So, Lenin the analyst of politics, conjunctures and contingencies, is undoubtedly the analyst of impulses opposed to the tsar. But he is also the Lenin who discovers, in electoral struggle, a guerrilla war against bourgeois institutional capture. This is the Lenin of the 'new beginning' and of the actional politics that should, even today, offer the possibility of taking hold of the desires of social movements attempting to dismantle oedipal or anti-patriarchal institutions. This Lenin of the 'new beginning', of actional politics, is certainly not the Lenin that traverses Del Barco's Heideggerian sieve. In other words, he is not the Bolshevik of the original programme's betrayal, who surrendered to enlightenment metaphysics. He is not the Lenin criminalised and demonised, with horns, in the cover image of the issue of *El Machete* which includes '¿Era Lenin un perverso?'. Nor is he the Lenin accused of being responsible for the technification of the life-world. The profane language of the Bolshevik leader's actional politics – no matter its commitment to calculative reason or to politics' instrumental and pragmatic rationality – emanates from intemperance. It is the Machiavellianisation of Lenin and the Leninisation of Machiavelli, as a thinker immanent to the plastic intensity of an actional politics that can lend form to untimely materiality, to the revolts and uprisings rooted in the depths of plebeian becoming. It is the need to 'restart', despite the ever-present danger that the timelessness of political experience will be (re)captured by forms of bourgeois social order. Because all actional politics that press and strive for a life-world, otherwise than capitalist modernity, inhabit the aporia of access to the emancipatory threshold of plebeian becoming.

Notes on the contributor

Oscar Ariel Cabezas is Associate Professor and Head of Publications at Instituto de Estética of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Notes

- ¹González, 'Introducción', *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 2, my translation.
- ²Bartra, 'Ropas sucias', lxi, my translation.
- ³Gago, *Controversia*, 70, my translation.
- ⁴Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*.
- ⁵Buci-Glucksmann, 'Acerca de la crisis del Estado', 111.
- ⁶Buci-Glucksmann, 'Acerca de la crisis del Estado', 113.
- ⁷It will be precisely in the *Quaderni de carcere* that Gramsci will explain the need to study Americanism and Fordism. In this article it would be impossible to explain the importance today of Gramsci's hypothesis regarding the spiritual truth of the American and how he constructed a utilitarian morality in which 'God is nothing more than a Fordist worker, who mass-produces the virtues necessary for the capitalist regime'. This relationship is made explicit in one of the notes that Valentino Gerratana introduces in the *Quaderni* on André Philip's book *Le problème ouvrier aux États-Unis*. See Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, 2695.
- ⁸Buci-Glucksmann, 'Acerca de la crisis del Estado', 113.
- ⁹Monsiváis and Enríquez, 'Monsiváis: Feminism and homosexuality', 22, my translation.
- ¹⁰Lenin, 'Soviet power and the status of women'.
- ¹¹Monsiváis and Enríquez, 'Monsiváis: Feminism and homosexuality', 23, my translation.
- ¹²Bartra, 'Ropas sucias', 144, my translation.
- ¹³Guattari, *Las luchas del deseo*, 80, my translation.
- ¹⁴Villacañas, *Neoliberalismo como teología política*, 77–8, my translation.
- ¹⁵In a comparative analysis, the best interpretation that can be found of Lenin's political thought should be sought in the book that the Spanish philosopher Gabriel Albiac wrote about the Bolshevik leader with a rather humble title: *Léxico leninista o pequeño Lenin de bolsillo* (1991).
- ¹⁶See Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, for an understanding of Althusser's text.
- ¹⁷On the dual power in Lenin, see Cabezas, 'Poder dual'.
- ¹⁸The book is based on the lectures that Heidegger taught in the seminar of the summer of 1935. In these lectures he develops the hypothesis of the alternative modernity that the Nazi regime was to offer. This hypothesis is thought of as a third way, in which the question of Being should not be left to a mere empty word and even less to the future of a technified world dominated by industrial calculation.
- ¹⁹Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 40.
- ²⁰An important text for understanding why this phenomenon does not occur as a way out or suture of enlightenment can be found in Villacañas, *Dificultades con la Ilustración*. Regarding critical theory, the Spanish thinker's precision is interesting: 'the Enlightenment should be questioned on the basis of an objective, psychoanalytical, ideological critique, not by means of a radical critique; but in exchange, it should also behave as a self-controlled critical power in relation to its own present. Not to destroy it, but neither to turn it into a destructive agency', 25, my translation.
- ²¹All quotations from Del Barco come from the anthology of the National Library of Argentina. However, the essay '¿Era Lenin un perverso?' can be found in the edition of *El Machete*, 161–72. Because of the graphic beauty of the magazine and the image of Lenin with devil horns, it is quite a joy to read it in the aforementioned source.
- ²²Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 226, my translation.
- ²³Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 236–7, my translation.
- ²⁴Tatián, *Desde la línea*, 116, my translation. Tatián's book is far from being part of the fetishism that the German philosopher has provoked for being obscure and difficult, or even a mystical thinker, accessible only to selective and elitist academic groups that have been touched by the gift of supreme comprehensive intelligence. It is one of the most serious attempts to deconstructively think politics from the originary (*arché*), to move on to think the impolitical or bottomless political dimension, without recourse to the foundation of a metaphysics of origins (national or post-national), but rather in the wake of the impolitical in Nietzsche, Cacciari and, above all, in the investigations of Reiner Schurmann and the Heideggerian drift of a principle of anarchy (*anar-chia*). It would be impossible to discuss here what, in my opinion, is one of the most important books of Latin American thought. Here we are interested in nuancing a note that appears in the edition published by La Cebra (2019), in which Tatián explains the following: 'The reading of Heidegger that this study proposes derives from a research carried out in the 1990s under the direction of Oscar Del Barco. It had its origin and inspiration in the seminars, courses

and lectures that Del Barco gave at the Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities of Córdoba after his return from the Mexican exile and his reincorporation to the university Chair from which he had been stripped in 1975. It was originally published in 1997 by the publishing house Alción and hosted by philosophical discussions marked by friendship, which I remember with gratitude and not without a certain nostalgia' (9). My suspicion is that this is the most important book written by a Latin American thinker on Heidegger's anti-totalitarianism, but that, at the same time, the book differs from Del Barco's tendency to read from the destruction of metaphysics as the place from which one can get out of an onto-theo-logy. In the epilogue Del Barco writes to Tatián's essay, the former defines, and defines himself as, a thinker of destruction: 'The destruction of metaphysics, as knowledge, as technique, is not an inversion, since the inversion preserves the terms, but an abandonment without remainder: the framework or device (*Gestell*) of the metaphysical world, of metaphysics as world, is destroyed (this word seems more just than 'deconstructed' or 'overcome' in the dialectical sense of negation-conservation) in order to facilitate the free revelation as donation of Being, to open through *Ereignis* (which is co-belonging, mutual necessity of being and man) the dimension of the sacred, of divinity and the divine God, without enclosure, without name, without presence. Donation, in its turn, gathers itself as inseparable, erasing its own terms in something revealed: it donates, but it donates nothing, and it donates to no one. If we were to say otherwise, we would be reproducing the metaphysical onto-theoretical-logic', 298.

²⁵In other words, every concentration camp, totalitarian or pseudo-democratic, has as its destiny the industrial or post-industrial control of the population that implements the work. Of course, not because factories or telework depend indirectly or directly on the cruelty of the concentration camp, but because it is impossible that these mechanisms of population control are not related to the destinies and the implementation of the history of the political economy of modernity.

²⁶Heidegger, *Cuadernos negros*, 112, my translation.

²⁷Heidegger, *Cuadernos negros*, 113, my translation.

²⁸All references are to Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía. Esbozo de una crítica a la teoría y práctica leninista* can be found in Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 101–218.

²⁹Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 102, my translation.

³⁰Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 202, my translation.

³¹See Haug, *Rosa Luxemburgo y el arte de la política*, for an interesting feminist update of Luxemburg's thought and an excellent reconstruction of the theoretical aporias of the Polish thinker. See more particularly chapter 5, entitled 'The Luxemburg–Gramsci line', to find the relationship between Luxemburg's proximity to both violent revolution and Haug's suspicions with parliamentarism, which she considered the 'cenance for chitchat'; Haug, *Rosa Luxemburgo*, 176.

³²Bosteels, 'State or commune', 572.

³³Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 359. It would not be fair to elide the German thinker Jürgen Habermas's *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* and specifically, the fact that within the tradition of Marxism he had also developed the critique of the philosophies of progress. This is a well-known story and no doubt the enormous academic interest that Walter Benjamin enjoys today is related to that critique. What is interesting is that when Habermas received the Adorno Prize in 1980, the announced catastrophe of the constitutive principles of modernity was perhaps at its boiling point, and yet he wrote a speech entitled 'Modernity: An unfinished project'. The essay must be one of the most read and commented upon in the 1990s in Latin America, as part of a debate between modernity and postmodernity. But, in addition to Habermas's courageous title, it should be noted that his book contains an important passage in which the philosopher criticises the paradigm of production and the philosophy of praxis in favour of communication. What Habermas suspects is that praxis limits the possibilities of the ideal speech community and hinders the turn towards the paradigm of 'communicative action'. Of course, here I do not attempt to interpret Habermas's theoretical positions. I am simply interested in showing that Habermas is a philosopher who continues to think about the viability of the legacy of modernity. Whereas the critical-destructive desire is simply the fall into catastrophe as nihilism and fatality.

³⁴Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 103, my translation.

³⁵For a precise reference of this Weberian concept, see Weber, *Max Weber*, 3–57.

³⁶Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 103, my translation.

³⁷Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*.

³⁸I use the concept of techno-productivist ontology to distinguish techno-productivism from the philosophical concept of production. The former is a consequence of modernity and the latter the

ground from which the life of the human species emanates. An ontology of capitalist production is what several theorists of Marxism think may be found in Marx. However, this concept is not simply reducible to the realm of the economic, nor to the technical domain. Production also presupposes the realm of subjectivity and, above all, of its becomings. A science or an ontology of subjectivity is not possible if its production is mobilised by becomings, differentials and dissidences. In relation to what comes, becomes or differs, production is alien to ontology as philosophical speculation. In other words, what matters is not the question of Being but the subjective production of a plurality of life-worlds that inhabit and coexist according to modes of political and social organisation.

³⁹Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 111, my translation.

⁴⁰Of course, the differences with Habermas, and with Marcuse, are to be sought in the hypothesis that, unlike the German thinkers, the Argentine philosopher is radically against everything that the techno-industrial rationality of modernity has brought about. However, this extremely important and current debate goes beyond the limits of this article. See also Habermas, 'Technology and science as "ideology"'.

⁴¹According to the note in the edition of the Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires, the article was first published in *Revista Buelna*, No 3, Sinaloa, Mexico.

⁴²Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 237–8, my translation.

⁴³Marcuse, 'Industrialization and capitalism', 155.

⁴⁴Deutscher, *Trotsky, el profeta desterrado, 1929–1940*, 165–6, my translation.

⁴⁵One of the basic resources of the principle of cruelty is the Freudian *unheimlich*: strangeness as appropriation and exploitation of the other who, being entirely familiar to us, we see as strange. It is a characteristic of the logic of the closed or totalitarian political party, although it could be said that every modern party is forged in a partisan logic that forces it to close and compartmentalise itself. For there to be partisans there must be internal and external enemies. When the enemy is internal, it sets in motion a devouring among equals. Thus, CPSU history can be framed as one way that the *unheimlich* manifests within the party. The psychoanalytic explication of this term can be found in Freud's text of *The Uncanny*, 1919 (various editions).

⁴⁶Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 245, my translation.

⁴⁷Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 245, my translation.

⁴⁸The hypothesis of the threshold or thresholds opened by a plebeian event must be understood in the sense that Michel Foucault gives to this term if we are to understand the opening produced by modernity: 'What interests me is to understand what this threshold of modernity that we can observe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries consists of. From this threshold, the European discourse developed gigantic powers of universalisation ... Basically, I have only one object of historical study: the threshold of modernity. Who are we, we who speak a language that has powers that impose themselves on us in our society, and impose themselves on other societies? What is this language that can turn against us, that we can turn against ourselves? What is this formidable outburst of the passage to universality of Western discourse?', 98–9, my translation.

⁴⁹Lowy, *Dialéctica y revolución*, 121–2, my translation.

⁵⁰Villacañas, *Neoliberalismo como teología política*, 67–8, my translation.

⁵¹Agustín Cueva's diagnosis can be found in a lucid article entitled 'El viraje conservador: señas y contraseñas', in Cueva, *Tiempos conservadores*, 43–68.

⁵²See Lechner, *Los patios interiores de la democracia*, 21–44.

⁵³It is not our intention to analyse here the most celebrated of Del Barco's texts, *El otro Marx*. The reader interested in the relationship that Del Barco establishes between Marx and Heidegger can easily find several articles devoted to this text. In my opinion, one of the most interesting on this relationship is in Bosteels, *El pensamiento de Oscar del Barco*.

⁵⁴Del Barco, *Escrituras. Filosofía*, 89.

⁵⁵Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth*. See Part IV, 'The question of a new Nomos of the Earth'.

⁵⁶This passing by or forgetting is also the forgetting of the event of the Bolsheviks that transformed the history of a people destined to be the breadbasket of the world, into an imperial superpower. Undoubtedly, in the 1980s the common-sensical judgement is that the USSR is the model that must be abandoned; the original programme of the Bolsheviks must be dislodged and adapted to the new turn of the world-economy.

⁵⁷This article can be found in *New Left Review*: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/i166/articles/ernesto-laclau-chantal-mouffe-post-marxism-without-apologies>.

⁵⁸To evaluate whether the theory of hegemony is successful in its proposal to radicalise democracy in the name of a socialism philosophically sophisticated and complex in its possibilities, is not the goal of this article. What we are interested in is showing how Laclau and Mouffe are among the few theorists from the 1980s that succeeded in offering a political theory that attempted to curb the emergence of extreme liberalism.

⁵⁹For a demonstration of not only the urgency of updating Gramsci's thought, but also the non-negotiable fact that as long as the demand for justice is infinite, the language of Marxism must mutate into the immanence of the possibility for justice, Aragón Moreno, *Efecto Gramsci*. In other words, Aragón Moreno states that theoretical production today is similar to a chrysalis, and not so much to the work of the mole. That is, *metamorphosis* and not vulgarisation of the binary or simple contradictions attributed to the vulgarisation of dialectics. Aragón Moreno's text is today fundamental for attempts to think in and from the language of the chrysalis a programme of plebeian politics that aspires to the hegemony of a plurality of life-worlds.

⁶⁰Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 60.

⁶¹However, there are in Laclau and Mouffe important expulsions from the conceptual space of what would be the 'hard kernel' of Marxist hermeneutics; concepts such as class struggle, alienation, or the very concept of Althusserian totality that allows us to understand the social totality as a 'complex and structured whole', make the theory of hegemony a complicated place from which to escape the impasse of extreme liberalism.

⁶²Laclau and Mouffe consider the philosophies of the subject and the Marxist pretension of codifying history in morphological laws as overcome. But they also consider the whole tradition of Marxist Hegelianism, which both thinkers simply omit, as overcome. The omissions of thinkers such as Gyorgy Lukacs, Karl Korsh, Karel Kosík and Mihailo Markovic are inscribed in a strong demarcation between Hegelian Marxism and the 'theoretical progress' of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of hegemony. Hegemony not only eliminates or resignifies in favour of the linguistic turn, concepts such as totality, subject and alienation, but also one of the central concepts of Hegelian thought, mediation. Laclau and Mouffe eliminate mediation and replace it with the concept of articulation. See also, Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, chapter 3.

⁶³In a register not very different from what we propose here, Jacques Rancière has called the suppression of the plurality of life worlds 'hatred of democracy'. Democracy as excess is precisely what history confirms when situations of revolt or revolution emerge. See Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*.

⁶⁴The subject of intellectuals, impossible to deal with in this article, is the one that from Ángel Rama (*La ciudad letrada*) to Tomás Moulian ('El marxismo en Chile: producción y utilización') is crossed by the problem of position and, therefore, what Gramsci theorised in the difference between traditional and organic intellectuals.

⁶⁵See Losurdo, *La lucha de clases*.

⁶⁶The Latin Americanist and anti-colonial reading must be sought in the presence of the struggles for national emancipation and the participation that Latin America and especially the Cuban Revolution had in the processes of post-colonial emancipation in Africa. Two famous articles published by *Revista Casa de las Américas* 59 (March–April 1970) can be found in Ortega Reyna, 'Orbitas de un pensamiento'. These two articles were written prior to the illegitimacy into which socialism and Marxism fell as political ideologies of the USSR. However, both articles assume the hypothesis that Leninism is an anti-colonialism, an issue unmentioned in Del Barco's critical-destructive works. The articles mentioned by Ortega Reyna are Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, '*Lenin y la cuestión colonial*' [Lenin and the colonial question], Roberto Fernández Retamar, director of the historical Cuban magazine, '*Notas sobre Martí, Lenin y la revolución anticolonial*' [Notes on Martí, Lenin and the anti-colonial revolution].

⁶⁷The case of Chilean society as one of the most successful implementations of extreme liberalism or neoliberalism has been analysed in Moulian, *Chile Actual*. The comprehensive strength of Moulian's book is such that, to this day, no one has written a book that explains with such theoretical accuracy and historical complexity the actuality of neoliberal hegemony in Chile.

⁶⁸On Marx's position on law, see Marx, *Early Writings*.

⁶⁹Losurdo, *La lucha de clases*, 178.

⁷⁰See Lenin, *Collected Works*, 166.

⁷¹It is not by chance that Antonio Gramsci, the founding theoretician of hegemony, has linked the genealogy of this concept to that of Lenin's political praxis.

⁷²The book was published for the first time in Mexico to stellar sales, impossible to surpass for a market in which theory books did not perform well, especially those written by women, who tended to remain unrecognised among Marxist theorists. The book by Marta Harnecker, one of Althusser's best students, was one of the best sellers of the 1970s. Tomás Moulian, a close friend of the author, told me in a private conversation that the book sold more than 500,000 copies. An astounding figure for a small market.

⁷³Harnecker, *La revolución social*, 16, my translation.

⁷⁴Harnecker, *La revolución social*, 263, my translation.

⁷⁵García Linera, *Las condiciones de la revolución socialista en Bolivia*, 10, my translation.

⁷⁶García Linera, *Las condiciones de la revolución socialista en Bolivia*, 10, my translation.

⁷⁷The melodrama happens as a strategy of discursive mourning for a revolution never carried out, but which is evoked as a defeat through the reified tear. It is a tear that circulates as a plot of academic and political affairs, in which the self-victimisation of 'I was a fighter', 'I was tortured', 'I was a revolutionary', allows accommodations and rearrangements within institutions in which prevails the acceptance of ideas that 'were already defeated'.

⁷⁸Žižek, *Lenin 2017*, 22.

⁷⁹Moulian, *Democracia y socialismo en Chile*, 247, my translation.

⁸⁰Mallarmé, *Antología*, 242, my translation.

⁸¹Moulian, *Democracia y socialismo en Chile*, 254, my translation.

⁸²Echeverría, 'Lenin o cómo recomenzar', 188, my translation.

⁸³Moulian, 'Crítica a la crítica marxista de las democracias burguesas', 57, my translation.

⁸⁴Moulian, 'Crítica a la crítica marxista de las democracias burguesas', 59, my translation.

⁸⁵Moulian, 'Crítica a la crítica marxista de las democracias burguesas', 63, my translation.

Declarations and conflict of interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work.

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