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# Eloge of the *Avantgarde*

Gunnar Hindrichs

**Abstract:** The avantgarde in the arts has been integrated into present society at the price of ignoring its intimate conceptual connection with the political avantgarde. This political avantgarde was defined by Lenin. The article reconstructs its concept in modal terms, drawing on Lukács' idea that the communist party is the 'objective possibility of revolutionary praxis and emendating it by Bloch's concept of 'real possibility. On these lines, a metaphysical framework of the party model becomes explicit.

**Keywords:** Avantgarde, Vanguardism, Party, Possibility, Metaphysics, Lenin, Lukács, Bloch

## I.

Everyone loves the avantgarde. Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Lettrism, Situationism entice, and as much as they are committed to the fight against bourgeois society, bourgeois society is what their members have long since reconciled themselves to.

This reconciliation is primarily based on two attitudes. The first attitude is socially liberal and has sociologized the avantgarde. It understands it as a moment of a systemically differentiated society,<sup>1</sup> one of the social system that stands alongside other systems such as the economy, law or the state as well as alongside the life-world is art. The thesis here is that in the aestheticism of the late nineteenth century, this social system expressed its own stubbornness (*Eigensinn*) and as a result, art and life are supposed to have consciously separated. The avantgarde, on the other hand, is supposed to have radically bridged this gap. For by questioning basic aesthetic categories such as that of the work, of form, and of sense, and thereby unsettling the institution of art, it criticized the world proper to art (*Eigenwelt*) by means of aesthetic stubbornness (*Eigensinn*). Accordingly, the avantgarde aimed to unite art and life through artistic means. Thus runs this thesis, and continues: this unification has supposedly failed. Which is why since the seventies there has supposedly been a state of post-avantgarde art.

The second attitude is different. It is liberal-conservative and has traditionalized the avantgarde. In its view the avantgarde is a version of Mannerism.<sup>2</sup> The idea is: Mannerism holds a recurrent position in European intellectual history – the position that opposes that other major position, the classical. The classical position aims at normality, but it therefore risks turning from an ideal classicism (*Idealklassik*) into a normal classicism (*Normalklassik*); artistic, clear, correct, but average. Which Mannerism supposedly opposes. It supposedly breaks the petrification through its expression-compulsion, initially evocative, then deforming, surreal, and abstract.<sup>3</sup> According to this picture, the classical position and Mannerism need each other: the former in order to avoid petrification, the latter to avoid dissolving itself. The avantgarde, however, is supposedly

the Mannerism of modernity. Here the avantgarde turns out to be a moment of Western tradition and the novelty held in the promise of its name is, in effect, something old.

Both attitudes declare a general love of the avant-garde. This love is grounded, on the one hand, in the neutralizing spread (*Ausgriff... auf*) of art into the life-world and, on the other, in the experience of a traditional European position. Both defuse the avantgarde. The neutralized spread enables an experience of art as critique of the system without consequences; the experience of the Mannerist position enables the integration of the discontinuous into the continuum of the European spirit. The rupture, the alienation, the rebellion that the avant-garde contains in its products and programs can therefore be well endured: in aesthetic experience. Neither is wrong. They certainly mobilize facts of the artistic avantgarde, in particular the contradiction between radical aspiration and aesthetic self-integration.

But something is missing. Sociologization and traditionalization of the avantgarde are silent about its third side, a side formulated and hotly debated at the same time as the avantgardes of Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Lettrism and Situationism. This is to say what is missing is the self-understanding of the communist party as avantgarde of the proletariat. Which is less easily defused. And is hardly beloved by all. But without it, the appeal of the concept of the avantgarde can barely be understood. For even the artistic avantgardes wanted - and still want? - to participate in social progress. It is not least for this reason that they have repeatedly reexamined their proximity to and distance from the social movement.<sup>4</sup> Sociologization and traditionalization, however, depoliticize the avantgarde or claim its political nature supposedly lies in its purely aesthetic point of view. In this way the impact and terror of the avantgarde is lost.<sup>5</sup> Neither is articulated in the sociology of art nor in intellectual history.

One may therefore assume that only the concept of the party allows for an appropriate understanding of the avantgarde. This was formulated first and foremost by Lenin.<sup>6</sup> It seems to come with a militarization of the social movement. "Avantgarde", clearly, is a military term, it denotes the vanguard of a fighting unit. This militarization has been welcomed by some and condemned by others, until today. But in truth, the military analogy takes on new meaning in the social movement. For it remains bound to a modal context: rather than about friend or foe, it is first and foremost about the creation of liberating possibilities. And ultimately this also applies to the artistic avantgardes. Thus the party concept is the starting point.

## II

Let us look at Lenin's argument. His definition of the party was based on an assumption that was formulated by Karl Kautsky, the most important theoretician of the Second International.

Kautsky - as a good Marxist - conceived the proletariat as the class that would carry out the contradictions of bourgeois society and revolutionarily sublimate them into a classless society. Marx and Engels had devised the formulation “association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”<sup>7</sup> for this classless society. But it seemed clear to Kautsky that the step towards such an association of free individuals could not be taken by the proletariat so easily.<sup>8</sup> For the proletariat was bound up in a context of domination that not only denied it the practical and theoretical knowledge concerning the class society to be sublated, but also obstructed the concepts of “free association” and “free individuals”. Kautsky’s conclusion: in order to break through this context of domination, a separate formation was needed to provide the proletariat with the corresponding practical and theoretical knowledge. And this formation is the party. Involving non-proletarian forces that have the knowledge of social contexts, the party trains the proletariat practically and theoretically for the revolution of class society.

Lenin took up this assessment. At the same time, he radicalized it, and through this radicalization he exposed its core. His radicalization relied on the fact that things in Tsarist Russia were different from France or Germany. In Russia there was only a narrow bourgeois society, squeezed between tsarist rule and a large peasantry, whereas on the rest of the continent bourgeois revolutions of various kinds had taken place. There the new proletarian party, which strove to sublimate the contradictions of bourgeois society, was able to act within a bourgeois public sphere. It was certainly under threat of censorship, persecution and exclusion but it was still possible to assert human and civil rights against its supporting class (*Trägerklasse*) and thus carry out party work with public reach. After all, the bourgeoisie itself had had a revolutionary side, even so much as it sought, through authoritarianism and philistinism, to cut it off.

This was different in Russia. Here there was only a weak bourgeoisie, and political work remained the task of small groups that always trodden a fine line between persecution and invisibility. Accordingly, the Russian party had to bear a greater burden. It continued to be the socio-political body that was to train the proletariat for the revolution. But, to a greater extent than was the case in the developed bourgeois societies, it had to accomplish this on its own. For a public sphere, which was the medium of political parties, did not exist in Tsarist Russia. For this reason, the class-conscious proletariat saw itself obliged to expand the party cadre, which, independently and often without public discussion, had to prepare the necessity of a proletarian revolution.

Lenin’s concept of the “avantgarde of the proletariat” names this necessity. What Kautsky had noted is that knowledge about the existing class society and the future realm of freedom is often blocked from the proletariat and that a special party is therefore necessary. This is now even supplemented by a threat to the party itself. For this reason,

the military analogy can be deployed. It does not fall from the sky. The bourgeoisie itself once took to the field. How is it their main revolutionary song, the Marseillaise, goes, again? “Aux armes, citoyens, Formez vos bataillons! Marchons, marchons...” The proletariat continues this field campaign for liberty, equality and fraternity, in order to turn it against the contradictory institution of this trinity and thus to sublimate bourgeois society. But a campaign needs a vanguard that explores the difficult terrain into which it advances. And in a society that suppresses public criticism of its constitution, the proletarian campaign needs that vanguard all the more. Here the party had to transform itself from a mediator of knowledge into a spearhead. It therefore made sense to understand the party cadres as the *avantgarde* of the proletarian army.

The libertarian left liked to use this as an argument against the Leninist party model. It seemed too closely tied to the special situation of a bourgeois society without a developed public sphere; to the “semi-Asiatic” constitution of Russia, as they liked to say in a reference to a Marxian phrase.<sup>9</sup> And it harbored too much danger of authoritarianism. But in truth the model strikes at the heart of bourgeois society: in its extreme shape. This extreme shape is the pretense of its transcendence. For on the one hand, bourgeois society includes the option of its own surmounting because it unleashes the dispute of the parties over bourgeois society itself. On the other hand, however, for the sake of its self-preservation, it must contain this dispute within limits that exclude its surmounting. That is why it constantly approaches the threshold of radical immanence. This threshold is what the Leninist concept has in view. It sees that bourgeois society can suppress its public sphere in favor of its survival. In order to guarantee the reproduction of capital, it will then reduce to nothing the realm of freedom between state rule and economic coercion.

Lenin’s party model grasped precisely this. Which is why the model does not remain limited to the situation of tsarist Russia. Rather, it relates bourgeois society to its extreme principle. All dispute about the party as the *avantgarde* of the proletariat boils down to whether we dare to understand bourgeois society through this extreme principle or through merely derived forms.

### III

Let’s start from the extreme principle of bourgeois society. Out of this we must ask ourselves, what precisely is the “*avantgarde* of the proletariat.”

The standard answer is: small, trained groups that know how to recognize the situation and determine the enemy, that are consolidated through selection, discipline, and knowledge. And much of Leninism pushed in this direction. Thus arose the endless debates about spontaneity and organization, about workers’ power and party

dictatorship. However, they missed the root of the matter. For they adopted the military concept of an avantgarde without criticizing its limited horizon. It is limited because it reduces human action to the aspect of acting against. This is also what the avantgarde in war ultimately serves. "If the troops are on the march, a detachment of more or less strength forms its van or advanced guard," writes Clausewitz, and adds: "The services assigned to such vanguards range... from those of mere observation to an offer of opposition or resistance to the enemy, and this opposition may not only be to give the main body of the army the time which it requires to prepare for battle, but also to make the enemy develop his plans, and intentions, which consequently makes the observation far more important.." <sup>10</sup> Here, all actions are ultimately determined by what they act against: the actions of the enemy. This is the core of the military theory of action. <sup>11</sup> And if the party is understood to be the avantgarde, then it, too, seems to be determined by such counteraction.

But the party is not defined by its being-against. It lives from what it is for, namely from political acting together for communism. All of its counteraction is in the service of this acting together. Georg Lukács saw this and drew the consequences. His answer to the question of the avantgarde is therefore quite different. It is that the proletarian vanguard party is the objective possibility of proletarian action. <sup>12</sup> Let us follow this answer.

To speak of the possibility of proletarian action is to put its potential at the center. A potential, in turn, must be realized. Accordingly, it is first and foremost about the realization of proletarian ability (*Können*). The struggle against bourgeois rule results from this realization. This is ought not even to be belied by the dialectical determinateness (*Bestimmtheit*) of class struggle, which emphasizes the opposition between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

It is true that the proletariat gains its determinateness in this opposition. After all, it is determined as the social class whose labour power is exploited in the accumulation of capital, its struggle thus shaped by this very opposition. In this respect, proletarian action indeed always remains counteraction. But this is not where it finds its foundational determinateness. For its struggle against bourgeois law, bourgeois freedom, bourgeois equality, bourgeois fraternity is nothing other than the realization of bourgeois claims, claims that are undermined by bourgeois reality itself. Accordingly, bourgeois rule is not denied as such in the abstract. Rather, it is about the concrete realization of concrete contents and therefore about the revolution of its pseudo-realization. For this reason, all revolutionary counteraction takes place from a perspective of unrealized possibilities of social existence. It thus turns out to be a latter-day shape rather than a first figure. In other words: revolutionary counteraction derives from the realization of revolutionary action in view of its original claims.

However, the unrealized possibilities up to this point only concern the possibilities of bourgeois society and not the possibilities of proletarian action itself. The proletariat's reference to possibilities therefore does not yet include a reference to its own possibilities. To account for these, the party now comes into play. For what are the possibilities of proletarian action? Nothing other than the possibilities of this very action of realization. And these are not simply given. Only the possibilities towards which the action is directed are given. That is why the action of realization requires a particular formation of action that opens up its own possibilities.

This formation of action is – according to Lukács' insight – the party. In other words, the party as avantgarde is a modal institution. With this insight, the concept of "avantgarde" takes on a new meaning. Instead of the "vanguard" of counteraction, it now means the opening up of a space of possibility for the realization of the unredeemable claims of bourgeois freedom, equality, and fraternity. In this sense, the party as avantgarde forms the revolutionary potential of action of the proletariat and in this modality owns the determination of its claims.

The concept of possibility, however, is itself ambiguous. It ranges from freedom from contradiction, through technical options, to a situational spectrum of action. In order to clarify this ambiguity, Lukács uses the term "objective possibility". This has two implications. Firstly, the proletarian potential for action distinguishes itself from mere logical possibility. Logical possibility is the possibility of that which can be thought without contradiction. To mark a distinction from this therefore means that it is not about something that we can think, imagine, perhaps even feel, without becoming entangled in contradictions; it is not about sheer consistency. Rather, it is about a possibility that lies within objectivity itself and is activated there.

At the background of this concept is Max Weber. It is well known that Lukács was a regular visitor to the Max Weber circle during his time in Heidelberg. Weber, moreover, considered the concept of objective possibility to be a core concept of the method of cultural studies.<sup>13</sup> He understood objective possibility to be the answer to the question "What could have happened if a historical event had not taken place?" Which question is central to the significance of the historical event. What an event means can ultimately only be formulated in terms of what would have been different if it had not occurred.

Such a view is indispensable for the understanding of cultural studies. For without insight into the meaning of historical circumstances, a reasonable presentation of historical contexts would be impossible. Every presentation must indeed organize the historical processes on the basis of certain lines of flight and these lines of flight are linked to the significance of certain events that serve as their fixed points. Such significance elucidates the question of what might have happened had these events not taken place. Obviously, this is not only about consistent



counterfactuality. Rather, it is about possibilities that, in their abstraction from the historically given, indicate what can be expected of that historical situation; about where, according to our knowledge of general rules, a historical event “pressed towards,”<sup>14</sup>. These are objective possibilities. We must therefore grasp the pressing towards of historical processes under general rules in order to understand the meaning of an historical reality.

To make this a revolutionary position needs only a tiny shift. Which Lukács made. It is a change of perspective from the past to the present. It is now no longer a question of understanding a historical reality by making the objective possibilities of that time explicit. It is a matter of understanding the present reality by formulating what it is pressed towards. The party as avantgarde is nothing but this formulation. It makes the pressing towards of historical processes explicit, in view of proletarian action. That is its objective possibility. Therein, the core of Lukács’ position. It marks the exit from the military realm and the entry into the modal.

#### IV

The concept of objective possibility liberates the party concept from warcraft. But this is not enough. For although it makes the meaning of all historical actuality dependent on the construction of a historical tendency, it overplays the juxtaposition of actuality and possibility. For Weber, this construction is a method of historical science. It separates historical actuality from the objective possibilities of an historical process in order to understand the significance of the latter by differentiating them from the former. However, when it comes to the party as avantgarde, this separation does not suffice. Now it is not about the past but about the future. Accordingly, the possible must be inscribed in the present actuality itself: not only as a foil in order to grasp its meaning, but as its inherent determination. This is to say we need not only a methodology of historical science, we need metaphysics – a theory of possibility itself.

Ernst Bloch outlines this metaphysics. He distinguishes the logically possible from the objectively possible and both from the real possible. We have already encountered the logically possible and the objectively possible. They play their role within the framework of the subject-object relationship of scientific cognition. The real possible, on the other hand, belongs in the things themselves. Their being then proves to be infused with possibilities. The real possible therefore relates to possibility in its fullest sense and means that being in general (*das Seiende überhaupt*) is a stratification of possibilities with tendency.

The springboard for this metaphysics is a reinterpretation of Aristotelian thought. Aristotle primarily distinguished between two concepts of possibility: being-according-to-possibility and being-in-possibility.<sup>15</sup> The former concerns conditions of possibility in the being, the latter concerns latencies and tendencies in the being. Thus, a seedling

can grow into a tree but cannot become an animal: this determines its being-according-to-possibility. And so, the seedling can wither or flourish: both are part of its being-in-possibility. For Aristotle, these two sides of possibility, its conditionality and its striving forward, are part of the overall context of a world whose movement of change is directed towards an ultimate goal. In Aristotelian terms, change means movement in a comprehensive sense, not only in terms of location, but also with regard to any determination. In this sense, a withering plant moves just as much as a running animal. Yes, the world moves as a whole: it is indeed constantly undergoing new processes of determination.

The being-in-possibility of beings belongs within this comprehensive world movement. What provides its starting point is that every change is the movement of a being-in-possibility to a being-in-actuality. Here it becomes clear that the possible is the beginning and the actual is the goal of this movement. And for the world as a whole, this also means that its movement as a whole aims towards an actuality. All transformation of the world therefore depends on an ultimate goal. Such an ultimate goal can no longer change itself. It would then no longer be the ultimate goal of all change. Therefore, the ultimate goal is an actuality that no longer moves. And accordingly, it is the in itself unmoved mover of the world, as completed actuality. Aristotle calls this unmoved mover "God".<sup>16</sup> Thus all being-in-possibility, all latencies, ultimately depend on God.

Taking this up, Christian Aristotelianism brought the unmoved mover closer to the Christian Creator God. Even in modern times, pious people spoke of an Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Bloch, on the other hand, was interested in something else. Alongside the Christian tradition, he saw a current at work in the history of Aristotelianism that understood the being-in-possibility itself as a tendency toward realization. This has far-reaching consequences. Whoever believes that the movement from the being-in-possibility to actuality depends on the ultimate actuality of the unmoved mover, assumes that the latter is ultimately complete. Upon which depends the movement of the being-in-possibility. Whoever believes, on the other hand, that the movement from the being-in-possibility to actuality results from a tendency of the being-in-possibility always understands all actuality as incomplete. Ultimately, what is at stake is the alternative between a metaphysics of the complete world and a metaphysics of the incomplete world. Bloch read the Persian-Arabic reception of Aristotle in such a way that it pushed in the second direction.

Out of its consequences, Bloch read Aristotle even further against the grain, by locating the urge for actualization in the possible itself. And this led to a further step, a new concept of materialism. For Aristotle, the being-in-possibility constitutes the matter of a being, whilst its form signifies its realization. But if actuality can be understood out of the tendency of the being-in-possibility, then the material being must be understood from its latencies and tendencies and, vice versa, the

latencies and tendencies from matter itself. On this basis, a materialism of possibility can be conceived. Thus from Aristotle set on his feet a materialistic metaphysics of the unfinished world emerges.

Whether Bloch's interpretation is justified textually is of no interest to us. What is important is what he did with it. For Bloch now spoke of an Aristotelian right and left in analogy to the Hegelian right and left.<sup>18</sup> The former turned its gaze away from the being-in-possibility of matter in order to direct it towards the complete, fully realized God; the latter, on the other hand, thinks the incomplete world of a material being-in-possibility. And just as Marxism inherits the Hegelian left, so, too, should Marxism remember the Aristotelian left, in order to gain a materialism that thinks metaphysically rather than positivistically. Lenin spoke of three sources and three component parts of Marxism: English political economy, French materialism, German dialectics.<sup>19</sup> Bloch spun this scheme around. For a Marxism that focuses on the being-in-possibility of the material tendency, for Bloch, the source is not the mechanical materialism of the Enlightenment period, but the materialism of possibility of the Aristotelian left.

Bloch's *magnus opus*, *The Principle of Hope*, then elaborates the metaphysical foundations of this Marxism<sup>20</sup>, in the concepts of *novum*, *ultimum*, *front* and, indeed, the being-in-possibility with its latency and tendency. *Ultimum*: the total content of the aim towards which the being-in-possibility tends; the final thought of all real possibilities. *Novum*: what is actually possible in the present. It can be recognized from the tendencies of being that are visible today, in the mode of the concrete utopia. Utopia is the *novum* because it does not yet have a place in the real, and is concrete because it does not conceive of something logically or objectively possible, rather it pursues the tendencies of a being in the context of that final thought. The *novum* thus gains its determinateness, on the one hand, in the overall metaphysical context of the *ultimum* and, on the other hand, in the concrete-utopian application to the being-in-possibility. The historico-philosophical place of this application is designated by the final term, the *front*. The *front* consists of the historical situation in face of the *novum* in the overall context of the *ultimum*. In this situation, what does not yet exist must be won over against the resistance of what actually exists. And this brings us back to the topic of the "party as *avantgarde*".

For, obviously, the *front* of the historical process demands an advance into that which does not yet exist. This advance is the task of an *avantgarde*. It has to pursue the tendency of beings with a view to the being-in-possibility, which reaches out for the *novum* within the horizon of the ultimate. In this way the *avantgarde* has in fact only secondarily a military function. First and foremost, it means exploring the being-in-possibility and from there leading the struggle for the new. This *avantgarde* is therefore a party in a double sense. On the one hand, it is

partisan (*nimmt sie Partei*) for what is possible in the tendency towards a human homeland; on the other hand, it is formed as a party that drives this tendency forward.

In this way, the avantgarde party constitutes the real possibility of revolutionary action. Using Bloch's terminology, we can say that revolutionary action moves on the front towards the novum in order to realize it. Accordingly, it grasps what is in-possibility and transforms it into actuality. But - as Lukács, in turn, argued - this realization must itself first be made possible. For him, the possibilization of this realization was the party. Lukács' thought can now be formulated with Bloch, which allows us to say: the party is not the objective possibility of revolutionary action. Rather, it is its real possibility. For it gives form to the latency and tendency at the front. Real possibility at the front toward the novum. But this is nothing other than the concrete utopia. In terms of the real possibility of action, this means that the party as avantgarde is itself the concrete utopia of revolutionary action.

As such a concrete utopia, the avantgarde party made the being-in-possibility of revolution explicit. Its shape kept in our sights the complex of tendency, front and novum. Only for this reason could it assume the role that it did in the social movement. And only for this reason could it also become a dystopia. The petrification and brutalization of the communist party was incomparable to the decline of other parties. It cannot simply be reduced to the denominator of oligarchy and apparatus, which, at the same time as Max Weber's studies on bureaucratic rule, Robert Michels had already asserted for all party systems, perhaps with the addition of terror, brutality, and totalitarianism.<sup>21</sup> Rather, it meant the reversal of concrete utopia into concrete dystopia. In it, the non-place indicated by the being-in-possibility of the front in the horizon of the ultimum became the non-place in which the being-in-possibility sought to ram its unreality into actuality.

Nevertheless, the party remains a problem. After all, there is a need for the real possibility of revolutionary action in the midst of the being-in-possibility. The party as avantgarde would offer it.

## V

Everyone loves the avantgarde. But only a few love the party as avantgarde. Yet it is only the party that makes the thrust of all the avantgarde comprehensible. According to what has been said, this force consists in making the new really possible at the historical front: in the horizon of sublated alienation. The communist party had embodied this thrust. Without its avantgarde function, the artistic avantgarde would be irrelevant. It would be as pleasant as its social-liberal and liberal-conservative interpretations persuade us of and the exhibitions show us.

Now, there is no avant-garde party today. Its concrete dystopia in the twentieth century has swallowed up its concrete utopia. And what has taken the place of that avantgarde has not been able to open up the real possibility of the new in any different way. That is why Lenin's party concept is a thing of the past. What is oriented by it resembles the undead or masquerades. It is no wonder that most people simply distance themselves from it. However, this is one of the main blockages of the social movement. For the social movement continues to take place in the thickets of the being-in-possibility without finding a form that would know how to return to the historical front. So it really always walks "one step forward, two steps back."<sup>22</sup> For a quarter of a century, the social movement has glorified the militancy of its scurrying forward and backward by claiming that it would set the joy of being against the misery of power as a constitutive counter-power in a world that no longer knows an outside.<sup>23</sup> This is precisely how it betrays its distortion. It puts the joyful being of immanence in the place of the being-in-possibility, which always aims at a transcendence that wants to be realized. Accordingly, the post-avantgarde movement, with its militant joy of being, includes itself in the existing state of things.

However, even if there is no political avantgarde, there are still artistic avantgardes. They are also concrete utopias: real possibilities to realize the new. Often this fails, but sometimes it succeeds. Perhaps therefore the relationship can be reversed. Today, it is not the party as avantgarde whose horizon underpins the thrust of the art movements. Today, conversely, it is the movements of the artistic avantgarde that remind us with their products that it is still about the being-in-possibility of novum. From here, it would not be such a big step to the concept of the ultimum, in whose overall context all being-in-possibility can only uncover its latency and tendency. And once this step suggests itself, then the realm of art would be transcended. Accordingly, art's withdrawal from the existing state of things - which must not be confused with it being oriented by political patterns - would also direct political action towards the new. Its repeated reflections would then stand the test of practice.

There is therefore no reason to regard the problem of the avantgarde as resolved. Rather, it lurks at the bottom of the being-in-possibility that pervades beings as such. This is how aesthetics and politics are knotted together in the metaphysical complex.

Translated by Frank Ruda / Heather H. Yeung

- 1 The basic text until today: Bürger (1984).
- 2 The idea originates from Curtius (1992), pp. 247ff. Its elaboration was undertaken by the Curtius-pupil Hocke (1957) and Hocke (1959)
- 3 This line in Hocke (1957), p. 11ff. Hocke speaks of an “ancestry of revolutionaries.”
- 4 For the concept of social movement – in the singular, thus no pluralism of “social movements” and certainly no umbrella term for all possible social currents – cf. Hoffmann (1962).
- 5 To claim both is the moment of truth of the swithering presentation of Emmanuely (2015, 2017). Karl Heinz Bohrer (1970) took seriously the political side of the avantgarde – only to see it lead to a spiritless acclamation of the spectacle of the revolution.
- 6 Lenin (1977), esp. pp. 421f
- 7 Marx / Engels (1970) p. 59.
- 8 Kautsky (1902), p.79 f.
- 9 For example Dutschke (1984), esp. p. 100f. Also Marx (1970), p. 54 speaks of “Asiatic depotism.” The context are political forms of immediacy, which display a “substantial unity, abiding in itself” that thus have not yet undergone a differentiation. Its examples are the Greek polis and even Asiatic despotism. In the former private liberty stands under the political, in the latter the political under the private liberty of the ruler. Both know no mediation of the poles. Here “Asiatic despotism” means ancient Persia in contrast to the republics of Greece: an old topos of the thought of freedom. Later Marx will later speak of an „Asiatic mode of production.” With this concept he denotes an economic system that does neither correspond to the Graeco-Roman slaveholder society nor to feudalism nor to capitalism (Marx (1993), esp. pp. 471f.). Here we are dealing with forms of production and not of politics. –Dutschke’s formula of “semi-Asiatic Road to socialism” is different again. It wants to build on Marx in order to overcome Leninism. To do so, it works with a link between the Asiatic mode of production and Asiatic despotism, which had supposedly helped shape Tsarist Russia. Leninism, which fought against it, was therefore nevertheless itself infected with semi-Asiatic despotism. A liberated left must supposedly heal itself of this complex. Here Russia was removed from the context of European powers, in which it had participated on an equal footing from Ranke to Bismarck: into the “semi-Asiatic”. And even the social movement had to purge itself of everything Russian. - Dutschke’s text, which is hardly read any more, contains the principal concept of the New Left in Germany. Everything that followed from it can be understood from it, for better or for worse.
- 10 Von Clausewitz (2007), p. 130.
- 11 Counteraction as key concept of the military is enlightened (even though there with an affirmative intention) by: Vollrath (1984).
- 12 Lukács (1968), p. 327.
- 13 Weber (1949).
- 14 Ibid., p. 187.
- 15 Aristotle (1999) V, 12, 1019 b 34 f.; IX, 6, 1048 a 25 ff.
- 16 Aristotle (1999) XII, 7, 1072 a 23 ff.
- 17 An important work of this direction is the still important: O.S.B. Gredt (1959).
- 18 Bloch (1972), pp. 479-546. This book is, by the by, dedicated to the “youthful friend Georg Lukács.”
- 19 Lenin (1977a).
- 20 loch (1995), pp. 262ff.
- 21 Michels (2004 / 1911).
- 22 Lenin (1964)
- 23 Hardt / Negri (2000), p. 413.

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