

The Dialectic Whole Between Theory and Reality in Rosa Luxemburg

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Rosa Luxemburg, who is among the first generation of Marxists, is well-known for her actions in the revolutionary struggle and criticism of the rhetoric of reformists. Yet insistence on seeing her political side prevents us from seeing her authentic philosophical thought. For example, her idea of mass strike is known, but the idea that this will be achieved by a philosophy of praxis that is possible by a dialectic between one's free will, class consciousness and theory of revolution is not taken into account. In addition, she has not written any philosophical text and the intention to develop a theory cannot obviously be seen in her works, which obscures the thesis that she has a unique philosophical insight. If Luxemburg's view of philosophy cannot be seen, the question how she can stand consistently between concepts and the barricades cannot be answered. Luxemburg has embodied a philosophy of praxis as outlined by Marx in his Eleventh thesis. Subjective will, spontaneity of mass strike and theories on social revolution are the developmental steps of this philosophy. Although her philosophical side is related to Marx through Hegel and Enlightenment, she develops a philosophy of revolution that includes the new phenomena of that age into the philosophical debates. For example, Luxemburg reconsiders the right of nations for self-determination, new forms of capitalism, imperialism, war, parties and trade unions in the context of the philosophy of revolution. Luxemburg's amicable discussions with Lenin strengthen the contents of this philosophy. While she grounds the philosophy of revolution she has developed in the experience of the Russian revolution, at the same time she tries to prove that Marxist philosophy of history has been confirmed. Her dialectic that she has received from Marxist dialectics theory is the method of application of both the analysis of criticism and the philosophy of revolution. In this context seeing the dialectics that provides a union of Luxemburg's philosophical thought and her political struggle will also help comprehend how the theory of historical materialism is proven.

Keywords: Rosa Luxemburg; Dialectics; Praxis; Spontaneity; Mass Strike; Revolution

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Rosa Luxemburg's personal background clearly confirms that 'revolutionary politics' constitutes the main theme of her theoretical work and practice. Yet this 'clarity' causes the *philosophical* side of her thought to be veiled. The insistence on her political side¹ not only veils the philosophical foundations of her thought, but it also makes it impossible to explain how she was able to retain the consistency between theory and practice despite the tension of the conditions she experienced. Although her visible philosophical side is clearly rooted in Marx's philosophy, it has grounds in Hegel and the Enlightenment. However, she neither wrote a unique philosophical text, nor can one establish a philosophical theory in her works. Those who act on this reality assume that she has no philosophical side.² Their arguments should be studied so as to see what their idea of philosophizing is. Alternatively, a more specific question would be: what do they think of Marx's philosophizing in his *11th Thesis*?

Reading of Luxemburg's Thought as the Revolutionary Philosophy of Praxis

In the *11th Thesis*, the motto to 'change the world' which seems a given to philosophy is indeed a political command suggested for the revolutionary praxis appropriate for the programme of historical materialism. Luxemburg is one of the rare philosophers, who, with her works and activities, acts in connection with this political command. The identity she established between 'general strike' and 'class consciousness' also identifies proletarian enlightenment with the process of changing historical circumstances. The *philosophy of revolution* emerging from Luxemburg's analysis confirms this assumption: *subjective conscious*—'spontaneity'—in the practice of changing circumstances turns into *objective truth*—'general strike', 'revolution'—against power. Luxemburg's philosophy of praxis develops from this essence, that is, the political revolutionary quality of human actions. The way this latter term is interpreted has a link with the interpretation of Marx where he views the human as the creator and transformer of his own historical world. While praxis includes all the actions of the free and creative human in Marx's literature, it includes only the political but specifically *revolutionary political actions* in Luxemburg's.

Aristotle uses the term *praxis* for (a) the 'human actions' (*prakseis*) that do not form any other product or do not have any other goal apart from itself and for

¹ This identification must have started when Rosa was alive. According to one of Luxemburg's letters (22 April 1899, Berlin) Schölknecht (one of the most prominent social democrats and Publisher) said, 'He is our only Party Philosopher' during one of his interviews with Bebel. Thereupon Bebel gave a so-called approval.

² Admittedly, she did not write philosophical texts, and did not work out systematic theories; as Isabel Loureiro correctly observes, 'her ideas, dispersed in newspaper articles, pamphlets, speeches, letters ... are much more immediate answers to the conjuncture than a logical and internally coherent theorization'. 'They are the direct responses to conjuncture'. Michaël Löwy, 'The Spark Ignites in the Action—The Philosophy of Praxis in the Thought of Rosa Luxemburg', *International Viewpoint Online Magazine*, 162 (2 August 2011), p. 13, <http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2153> (accessed September 2013).

knowledge (b) that researches 'the action itself' (*praxis*) and 'knowing how to act'.³ In terms of knowledge, praxis is the 'ethical' and 'political' 'knowledge of activity' (*praktike*).⁴ With this quality, *praxis* is a counter knowledge against *theoria* and *poesis*. Aristotle's identification concerning this term was influential throughout the history of philosophy until the Enlightenment. Kant relies upon Aristotle's identification as he identifies the object of ethical metaphysics with his term 'practice'. While Aristotle applies praxis philosophy to find out the knowledge of how to act, Kant formulates criteria that provide what to do during an action. In particular, the identification of 'praxis as the application of the theory' (the application of the theory to the situations in experience)⁵ dictates to human mind the rules from outside.⁶ However, neither the consciousness of humanity nor humanity's social practice is a logical category. Despite its devotion to Kant, German Idealism takes the practice of thinking as a praxis with Fichte (*Science of Knowledge*, § 1):⁷ to think about self is the practice of putting oneself as the opposite of existence. Hegel deals with this opposition through 'becoming' (*Encyclopaedia*, §88)⁸ and develops a rational ontology by establishing the mind as the determinant in the programme of becoming. As Marcuse puts it (*Preface*, vii),⁹ 'subordinating reason to the authority of established fact constitutes the foundation of the philosophy of praxis'. Yet the reasoning applied to give absolute priority to mind's transformative power in the face of the present firmness of the existing one reduces the mind to the metaphysical principle and 'reality' becomes not a reality, turning into the spirit's plastic object. Hegel studies the dialectics of relationship of master-slave as a praxis in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*¹⁰—'Through this rediscovery of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own' (§196). Yet since this praxis brings not the freedom for the human but a freedom of the Spirit, Hegel sacrifices praxis for the 'trick of the mind'. However, history is not a transcendental mind's adventure but is an accumulation of the transformative effect of labour-nature

³ Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics', transl. W.D. Ross in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Jonathan Barnes (ed.) (London: Princeton University Press, 1995), 1140b 6. In this respect 'praxis' is not a 'poesis' (an activity that creates a work apart from itself); *praxis* represents the main activity which doesn't have a purpose except from the activity itself.

⁴ Aristotle, 'Nicomachean Ethics', op. cit., I, 1904a–b.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, 'Concerning the Common Saying: This May Be True In Theory But Does Not Apply To Practice' in *Basic Writings of Kant*, transl. Allen W. Wood (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p. 432.

⁶ Kant in his article 'That May Be True in Theory but Is of No Practical Use' interprets praxis in this manner. Although he supports practice in the context of distinction between knowing theoretically and knowing in practice in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, he practices the term 'practice' within the context of the opportunity for the ethic activity in *The Critique of Practical Reason*; 'moral law' is the ethic opportunity of activity.

⁷ Fichte, J.G., *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1922); transl. P. Heath and J. Lachs, *Science of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 93–102.

⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Philosophical Sciences (Part I Logic)*, transl. T.F. Greates and W.A. Suchting (Cambridge: Hackett, 1991).

⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (London: Routledge, 1955).

¹⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952) ; transl. A.V. Miller, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

opposition. The logic of this accumulation's development confirms praxis in the nature–labour–consciousness interaction. Thus, the importance of the philosophy of praxis is that it regards the action that transforms the existing one as the principle of thought. This interpretation of praxis can be observed in Marx and thoughts related to Marx.

In Marx's philosophy the term has a fairly different meaning. In *1844 Manuscripts*, praxis in opposition to 'alienated labour'¹¹ represents human's self-action. 'The objective development of human essence' occurs through 'the humanized nature';¹² that is, while transforming for himself, he transforms too. In *Theses on Feuerbach*¹³ this self-action is expressed as 'the changing of the world'. As Marx mentioned in the third Thesis,¹⁴ the overlapping of 'change of the circumstances' and 'change of the human' can only be grasped if 'revolutionist is understood in a practical way'. In Marxist context, within the concept of praxis, (a) 'to act to transform the earthly conditions' and (b) 'to transform oneself in the action' are found together and are identical.

As Engels reminded us, this 'new way of looking at the world' developed by Marx is the 'philosophy of Praxis'. After Marx, this reasoning was developed as the philosophy of the perception of reality and its transformation, especially by the first generation of Marxists. It is generally accepted that it was Antonio Gramsci who named Marxism as the 'philosophy of praxis' for the first time (*Prison Notebooks*). Today the widely accepted meaning of the term 'praxis' as the unity of theory and action stems mostly from Gramsci's comments. Although she did not focus on it as a term, the content of Luxemburg's thinking and action is a totally praxis philosophy. Her philosophy of praxis includes a link between thought and action as well, yet with a unique side: the dialectic pedagogy of the action, that is, realizing yourself through the experience of the struggle. 'The proletarian army is recruited and becomes aware of its objectives in the course of the struggle itself.'¹⁵ Thus, awareness stems from the action, not from the outside. It is the struggle that has the ability to teach, not the discourse of the organization. General strike and demonstrations comprise the school of socialist democracy that creates social awareness in the proletariat. There may not be absolute truth in the actions taken constantly. Luxemburg's pedagogy of struggle views misperceptions as didactic. Experience also involves misperceptions; yet these

¹¹ Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844* (Berlin, 1932); transl. M. Milligan, *Economic And Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: Prometheus Book, 1988), pp. 80–81.

¹² Ibid., pp. 108–109.

¹³ Karl Marx, *Thesen über Feuerbach* (Moscow: Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 1924); transl. C. Dutt, 'Theses on Feuerbach' in *Marx–Engels Collected Works*, Vol. V (New York: International, 1976).

¹⁴ 'The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*' (original version).

¹⁵ Rosa Luxemburg, 'Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy' in Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004); transl. T. Tayanç, 'Rus Sosyal Demokrasinin Örgütsel Sorunları', *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı* (İstanbul: Dipnot Press, 2010), p. 375. (Online Version: *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*, section I, transl. A. Lehrer and B. Baggins, Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive, 1999, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd/ch01.htm>.)

are didactic too.¹⁶ A revolutionary action is always an occurrence between notion and reality. Mostly, reality either resists the notion or its incoherence with the notion causes a tension. These tensions cause reason to spend more time in the action, as Luxemburg states, causing 'ebb and flow'.

Luxemburg does not view the 1905 experience as a 'defeat' by considering the desire to be free and mass power of the proletariat. She, with her metaphor of 'ebb and flow' and 'pedagogy of defeat', saves her philosophy of revolution from mechanical determinism. The proletarian revolution can reach full clarity and maturity only by stages, step by step, on the Golgotha-path of its own bitter experiences in struggle, through defeats and victories.¹⁷ By saying 'defeats are the guarantee of the future revolution', she deduces the revolution followed by socialism not from the determinism of the history but from the praxis of people who have class consciousness. However, this approach views the action as almost the only determinant in forming of the conscious, which poses a risk for the theoretical side of the revolution. Yet *pedagogy of defeat* is important in that it reminds Marxist theory that it is not a philosophical obligation to reconnect theory with reality, that is, transforming dialectical reasoning into the method of philosophy of politics, but rather a practical necessity.

From Luxemburg's analysis it can be deduced that all knowledge of experience turns into a foundation for the next decision. The subjective criticism that starts in the face of capitalism, the process that includes spontaneous action and general strike, is the dialectic of the one, whose material was given by the history itself, which transforms the history. We can add here that the relation between consciousness and its object is that of a praxis. Here the *praxis* symbolizes the consciousness as a new world experience that expands through theoretical knowledge that starts with the experience and goes back to the conditions that created it to change them. With this form, praxis itself is dialectic.

Dialectics as the Method of Thought of Action

Lenin, in 1914, in his argument regarding the 'national question' used the expression 'practical Rosa'¹⁸ for Luxemburg, who viewed Poland's independence as a utopia.¹⁹ Lenin does not clarify the word 'practical', yet it is obvious that it has a negative meaning.²⁰ In his unpublished 1904 text Lenin says that Luxemburg's words are²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 393.

¹⁷ Rosa Luxemburg, *Politische Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1966); 'What Does the Spartacus League Want?', transl. M. Nicolaus, in D. Howard (ed.) *Selected Political Writings, Rosa Luxemburg* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 376.

¹⁸ 'The Utopian Karl Marx and The Practical Rosa Luxemburg'.

¹⁹ V.I. Lenin, 'The Right of Nations to Self-Determination' in *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, transl. B. Isaacs (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 453.

²⁰ It is clear that Luxemburg's seeing the nation's right of determining their own fate as a problem that can be solved through socialism is the reason of philosophical tension between her and Lenin.

²¹ These are Luxemburg's words about 'ultra-centralism' which she addresses to Lenin.

'abstractly and theoretically (if one can speak here of theory at all) (it is) nothing but a vulgarization of Marxism, a perversion of true Marxian dialectics'.²² Is this criticism legitimate? This criticism is falsified by her statements concerning the dialectic method scattered around her texts.

Luxemburg does not create another argument concerning the method of thinking.²³ Yet she uses the dialectic as if it is a quality of her natural thinking without giving much thought to it. Her style of reasoning that proceeds with conceptual oppositions throughout her texts confirms that she uses dialectic as a method. Dialectic is not only a method of thinking, but it is also the method of her approach to the object of criticism, that is, political action that establishes the relation between the theory and the reality in the context of historical goal. This is especially true of the criticism of reality through conceptual oppositions such as 'bourgeois-proletariat', 'labour-capital', 'imperialism-anti-militarism', 'war-peace', 'struggle-terror' and 'violence-humanism' and her *ethical attitude* towards this reality; the criticism of reality through such conceptual oppositions as 'spontaneity-organization', 'revisionism-radicalism', 'reform-revolution' and philosophy of praxis which is its solution; the philosophy of history based on the conceptual opposition 'socialism-barbarism' and philosophy of revolution which is the proletariat's shaping of history; all of the above-mentioned are based on dialectic thinking.

Although she used dialectics effectively, the reason why she did not have a specific argument on the method may be that she found Marx's statements on the issue sufficient. She considers Marx's dialectics to be the true method of history and adopts it: 'Historical dialectics, the rock on which the whole teaching of Marxian socialism rests'.²⁴ This foundation is a method for the critical analysis of the social notion as well as being the *consciousness* of the proletariat that will change historical circumstances. 'Our dialectic system' is 'the specific mode of thought employed by the conscious proletariat'.²⁵ 'This way of thinking', the proletariat's *consciousness of themselves*, is the knowledge of their position against the bourgeoisie. Dialectic method provides the proletariat with a clear knowledge about history and their position. Dialectics 'is an attempt to shatter the intellectual arm with the aid of which the proletariat, though materially under the yoke of the bourgeoisie, is yet enabled to

²² V.I. Lenin, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back (Reply by N. Lenin to Rosa Luxemburg)', transl. A. Fineberg and N. Jochel, in *Collected Works* Vol. 7 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p. 482.

²³ As she informed in her letter (7 December 1899, Berlin), the intensity of the political events in which she takes part prevents her from thinking the most difficult method of philosophy such as dialectics in detail. Luxemburg responds to Leo Jogiches's critics about her article: '[you] hide yourself behind dialectics, and you say my articles are lack of both dialectics and innovative thoughts. This is a right statement; however, I should direct my time and attention to some other things such as the study of customs policy. Therefore I can not waste my all time by pondering the article, to the extend that the actuality and speed are important that is how it works. Under these circumstances neither dialectics nor deep thoughts can exist'. Rosa Luxemburg, *Political Letters: From Rosa to Jogiches; (Siyasi Mektuplar: Rosa'dan Leo Jogiches'e)*, transl. S.N.Kaya (Istanbul: Agora Books, 2012), p. 110.

²⁴ Rosa Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions' in Helen Scott (ed.) *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2008), p. 114.

²⁵ Rosa Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution' in *ibid.*, p. 99.

triumph over the bourgeoisie. For it is our dialectical system that shows to the working class the transitory character of this yoke'.²⁶ While illuminating the future, dialectics shows the proletariat that they can change now. Dialectics 'is an attempt to break the sword that has helped the proletariat to pierce the darkness of its future'.²⁷

Luxemburg trusts the power of dialectics in explaining social events. This explanatory power can be seen in various examples such as Kant's 'nature's secret plan' or Hegel's 'wisdom in history' concepts. As she states about the direction of the 1905 revolution, she views the social democrats' leading of the revolution as the role of the dialectics in history by saying 'Historical dialectics had again seized the occasion to play one of its malicious little pranks'.²⁸ Since Luxemburg accepted the explanatory nature of the dialectic and its being the determining method of history, she has a similar approach in explaining why Bernstein changed his philosophical and political ideas.²⁹ This approach may result in an interpretation that Luxemburg mechanized dialectics or transformed it into a principle that directs humans apart from their actions. Yet these examples should be taken as an irony. While she monitors the functioning of the phenomena to see whether history is heading towards a socialist society, she monitors the connection between the phenomena and the relationship of this connection with the concept through the dialectical method. While she analyses the development of capitalism in the *Accumulation of the Capital*, she takes a glance at the relationship between historical conditions and the awareness of capital. Lukács³⁰ points out that Luxemburg here uses the method Marx used in *The Poverty of Philosophy*.³¹ Marx studies the link between Ricardo's analysis of the economy and historical conditions. Luxemburg applies the same critical attitude that she showed in the analysis of Capitalism's field of operations to the practice and theory of socialist revolution. She uses the same method in critically evaluating the link between the Bolshevik revolution, in *Russian Revolution*,³² and the historical

²⁶ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 99.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

²⁸ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 124.

²⁹ In the last lines of 'Reform or Revolution' (if she did not write to make fun of Bernstein) Luxemburg explains how Bernstein throws away the history with an evaluation which reminds Hegel's 'The Phenomenology of Mind' frivolously. 'Thus saying good-bye to the mode of thought of the revolutionary proletariat, to dialectics, and to the materialist conception of history, Bernstein can thank them for the attenuating circumstances they provide for his conversion. For only dialectics and the materialist conception of history ... could make Bernstein appear as an unconscious predestined instrument, by means of which the rising working class expresses its momentary weakness, but which, upon closer inspection, it throws aside' (Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 104).

³⁰ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, transl. R. Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), p. 32.

³¹ 'The Accumulation of Capital takes up again the methods and questions posed by the young Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy*' (ibid., p. 32).

³² Rosa Luxemburg, *Die Revolution in Rußland* (Frankfurt: Archiv, 1928); 'The Russian Revolution' in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., Part III; transl. T. Tayanç, 'Rus Devrimi' in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı—Seçme Yazılar* (İstanbul: Dipnot Press, 2010). Online Version: *The Russian Revolution*, transl. B. Wolfe, Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive, 1999, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/index.htm>

conditions as well as the associations between their tactics of organizational struggle and their ideal of a socialist society.³³

Luxemburg takes the phenomenon into consideration at every opportunity; yet she is not devoted to the blunting effect of the phenomenon through using a positivist language, for her view of the phenomenon is not pure, but critical, trying to see its dialectical nature. She considers the principle that is the reason for the phenomenon's existence as a historical purpose in its relation to socialist theory. She analyses capitalism, imperialism and world war, which is the start and the opposition of the social democrats and the position of the proletariat with the same technique. She has dialectical thinking while she considers the experience of the 1905 Russian revolution as a process between the concept and the reality and learns lessons from this process for the German working class movement.³⁴ German unions see the increase in the number of members to be a condition for mass strike.³⁵ Unlike German Democrats, who think that revolution proceeds with 'the majority of the people' and 'its revolutionary tactic', as the Bolsheviks showed, 'the real dialectic of the revolutions' proceeds through the 'Revolutionary tactics that lead to majority'.³⁶ Luxemburg uses dialectics as a method that monitors the consistency of the relationship between barricade and concept; in this way, she gives Marxist dialectics another field of use.

She establishes a dialectical link between the concept and the action, and she does so because it proceeds on a materialistic ground. Materialism forms her ontological background, yet she addresses historical materialism as she only touches on the development of social existence. For her, 'dialectics and historical materialism' are the proletariat's way of thinking.³⁷ Her materialism is not a 'coarse' one. For example, 'the trade-union cash box and the Prussian bayonet are material and very historical phenomena'; yet these don't go beyond 'a policeman like materialism'. The thought has to rely on 'historical materialism in Marx's sense'.³⁸ To Luxemburg, as in the example of Bernstein, when reason leaves this materialistic ground, it turns into idealism.³⁹

While Kant establishes dialectical method as an illusion of the mind, he refers to antinomies. Luxemburg also thinks about the 'mass strike' applying antinomy: 'abstract logical analysis' may prove the thoughts that 'the mass strike is absolutely impossible and sure to be defeated' and 'it is possible and that its triumph cannot be

³³ 'It would be no less wrong to fear that a critical examination of the road so far taken by the Russian Revolution would serve to weaken the respect for and the attractive power of the example of the Russian Revolution' (Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', op. cit., p. 421).

³⁴ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., Chapter V: 'Lessons Of The Working Class Movement In Russia Applicable To Germany'.

³⁵ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., pp. 155–156.

³⁶ Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', op. cit., p. 429. (Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter I: 'Fundamental Significance of the Russian Revolution'.)

³⁷ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 104.

³⁸ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 116.

³⁹ 'He cannot give his program a materialist base, because he has already overthrown the aims and the means of the movement for socialism, and therefore its economic conditions' (Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 84).

questioned'. Hence, 'the value of the evidence led on each side is exactly the same-and that is nil'.⁴⁰ While German social democrats present reform as a solution for this Kantian antinomy, the Russians cut all the antinomies like Gordian knot. Because, logical dissection of the mass strike ... will not see the phenomenon in its living essence, but will kill it altogether.⁴¹ Nevertheless, an analysis regarding the mass strike can only be made in the action. While action makes it possible for the concept to become real in the empirical world, it also makes it possible for it to be confirmed or falsified. As Luxemburg was analysing the Moscow uprising, she sawits logical development and at the same time the future of the revolutionary movement'.⁴² The coherence of the concept's realization in the action confirms the dialectic and enables the dialectical concept to be applied. For this reason praxis shows that revolution goes beyond these reasonings and confirms dialectics in history. 'Revolution' like 'mass strike' signifies 'an external form of the class struggle' and confirms the dialectic of labour against capital in history. Luxemburg makes a critical analysis of the Russian revolution to determine the subject of the next task for the German proletariat and international working class,⁴³ extending the justification of the dialectic through history. The way she uses dialectics while evaluating social events for the preparation of a revolution is a step forward for the Marxist philosophy of revolution. Her book *Social Reform or Revolution* (1899) is in this respect, 'a dialectic masterpiece'.⁴⁴

In this respect, seeing Luxemburg's thinking and the dialectics behind her political struggle will also provide the conditions to understand how historical materialist philosophy is justified or can be justified. Her analyses aim to provide coherence and ground for the action (revolutionary proletarian attitude) that will pass through reality (capitalism's 'new' faces). Therefore, in her texts, an analysis based on the concepts (a) 'reality', as the field and the object of struggle (capitalism and new phenomena in it), (b) the 'criticism' of this reality ('critical reality in terms of philosophy, 'mass strikes' in political terms) and (c) the negation of this reality ('revolution' in terms of history) can make it possible to see the *dialectic whole* that is formed by her style of political struggle and thoughts as a *philosophy of praxis*.

New Reality or Transformation of Capitalism into Imperialism

According to historical materialism's dialectical development, 'reality' is the contradiction of labour-capital and the clash between the classes that is its social appearance; even if the form changes, the substance will not change. From the point of this historical philosophy, historical changes in form—changes in everything from production technologies to international policies—are in a dialectical connection with

⁴⁰ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 118.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 145.

⁴² Ibid., p. 139.

⁴³ Luxemburg, 'Rus Devrimi' in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı—Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 422; *The Russian Revolution, Online Version*, op. cit., Chapter I.

⁴⁴ Luxemburg, *Political Letters*, op. cit. (24 September 1898, to Leo Jogiches, Berlin).

the development of the relations of production. Behind Luxemburg's analysis of history lies this dialectical 'structure', within those boundaries.

Capitalist economy entered a highly complicated and rapid industrialization in the first quarter of the 20th century. The change was not obviously seen in the increase of production, but rather in new fields of production, for example, war technology, in new markets and new marketing techniques—and an imperialist economy. All of these can be seen as possible developments of capitalism; yet the trend of development of capital's state structure (for instance, the state as 'reformist' for the capital within the country, 'protector' outside the country—militarism) marked a change. The First World War confirms this unusual state. Production power had merged with political and military power turning into a *new reality* that had the power to legislate or make history.

Luxemburg, like other Marxist theoreticians such as Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci and Ernst Bloch, searched for ways to study this new *historical reality* with a critical attitude and go beyond it. Her object of criticism is mostly the economic–political developments in international areas that form this 'new historical reality'. As Hobsbawm put it,⁴⁵ 'the radical change' of the century is 'imperialism' and 'finance capitalism', which emerged towards the 'end of 19th century'. Those who realized this for the first time were referred to as 'marginals', like Hilferding, Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx made an analysis that establishes a dialectical whole between capital and international affairs. Luxemburg analysed new phenomena through a similar approach, too; yet this analysis was more suitable for the spirit of *Capital*.⁴⁶ This is particularly true of her 'crisis' analysis,⁴⁷ which is in accordance with the analyses made by Engels in *Anti-Dühring* and by Marx in *Capital I*. She takes the 'reproduction' model in *Capital II* as the starting point of her analysis of the accumulation of capital—although she says different things.⁴⁸

In *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*,⁴⁹ which is a contribution to the economic explanation of imperialism, Luxemburg takes a glance at the development of capitalism towards imperialism. According to her analysis, the capital that is stuck in the domestic market has to expand into the global market,⁵⁰ otherwise it will collapse. She regards international credits, commercial customs as the means of capital's development and expansion.⁵¹ Although big organizations like 'credit', 'customs' and 'cartel' and new 'means of communication'

⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: New Press, 1997); transl. O. Akinhay, *Tarih Üzerine* (Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat Press, 1999), p. 156.

⁴⁶ *Grundrisse* was not published until 1939; therefore Luxemburg did not read this article; Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁴⁷ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution' op. cit., p. 53.

⁴⁸ Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, transl. A. Schwarzschild (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 48. etc.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 426. etc.

⁵¹ Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, op. cit., pp. 397–433.

appear to be the ‘means of adaptation’ of the new economy,⁵² she, while criticizing Bernstein,⁵³ regards these as conditions that deepen capitalism’s contradictions, eventually bringing it to an end. Credit, for example, deepens the tension between production’s tendency to develop and consumption’s limited development.⁵⁴ ‘In short, credit reproduces all the fundamental antagonisms of the capitalist world’.⁵⁵ Therefore, ‘depression’ is not about the shrinking of capitalism but about its desire to expand.⁵⁶ Imperialism represents the tangibility of this contradiction.⁵⁷ Imperialism is the final stage in the historical course of capitalism,⁵⁸ ‘a political expression of the accumulation of capital in its competitive struggle’.⁵⁹ The proponents of ‘the revolutionary left’ like Lenin and Luxemburg regard imperialism as ‘the aggressive economic expansionism of the various “great powers”’.⁶⁰ Capitalism expands itself in geographic areas by means of a classical instrument that is militarism. Competition and the search for global markets bring militarism to the fore ‘as instruments of world politics’.⁶¹ Thus, the internationalization of capital is not a foreign market economy but rather it is ‘colonialism’ that is carried out through military and political means. Although Luxemburg assumes that she lives in an age where she did not witness the ‘collapse’ of capitalism,⁶² she sees this international development of capitalism putting itself in a dangerous position: this is international ‘war’. Yet an important analysis is that the reason for war does not come from a conflict between those who exploit and who are exploited, it rather stems from imperialism’s own conflicts, for example, the conflict between transnational capital through state instruments. Thus, while the ‘market’ transforms poor nations into objects of capitalism, accumulation of capital exploits other nations’ proletariats together with its own nation. Although it is the world policy—imperialism—that gives the state, which is the founding council of the new reality, its main function, there is also another phenomenon that enables it to establish its nature: ‘The Labour movement’.⁶³

In the classical reality, political conflict is the conflict of society and the constitution and bourgeois revolutions are the experience of overcoming these conflicts against the aristocracy. In the new reality, however, political conflict is that of labour and capital, where the bourgeoisie surrounds the proletariat in an economic

⁵² Luxemburg, ‘Social Reform or Revolution’, pp. 46–7.

⁵³ However Bernstein tried to prove that Marxism had aged by means of the concepts that he called ‘means of adaptation’. ‘The response that Rosa gives to Bernstein in *Social Reform or Revolution* (1899) has become one of the most creative responds given to the image that the apparent constancy of capitalism creates’ (Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., p. 12).

⁵⁴ Luxemburg, ‘Social Reform or Revolution’, p. 48.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁸ Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, op. cit., p. 398.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 426.

⁶⁰ Paul Le Blanc, ‘Ten Reasons For not Reading Lenin’, *Revolution, Democracy, Socialism—Selected Writings V.I. Lenin* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 12.

⁶¹ Luxemburg, ‘Social Reform or Revolution’, op. cit., p. 87.

⁶² Ibid., p. 53.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 87.

and political trap of exploitation, through the state. What is needed to overcome this conflict is the proletarian revolution. Just as the 19th century unfolds through the French bourgeois revolution, the 20th century unfolds through the Russian proletarian revolution. 'The very first experiment in proletarian dictatorship in world history' comes into being.⁶⁴

As Luxemburg thinks that 'development is on the contrary purely dialectical' in accordance with Marxist literature,⁶⁵ for her, development creates its own antagonism. Economy in this new reality creates its negation in the political field. The political labour movement grows out of proletarian consciousness and its organization. Gains in terms of 'wage' and 'work hours' confirm the existence of 'the new union struggle'⁶⁶ as a power against Capital. Unions are the proletarian consciousness that is organized as 'organized defence'⁶⁷ against capital. Unions are the consciousness of the proletariat.⁶⁸ The Russian revolution confirms that the power of this awareness, which has been created, is the 'truth that negates' the 'new reality'. The Russian revolution represents an example of 'the first experiment in proletarian dictatorship in world history',⁶⁹ the harshest phenomena of the new reality in the political universe.

As opposed to the proletariat's potential power of negation, capitalism's new face results in some fracturing in the views of the parties of Social Democracy that are opposed to capitalism. This is especially true in Germany, showing itself in the differences between 'revisionism' and 'radicalism'. The perception of the new phenomena of capitalism causes new developments in the opposition that takes a stand against it. Here the new reality has two different perceptions: (a) capitalism is evolving towards arrangements that will improve life; and (b) capitalism is evolving towards an economic system that exploits the proletariat of the world. The former is Bernstein's revisionism that claims that, owing to increasing wealth, the capitalist system will evolve into socialism through reforms. In this approach, whose source can go back as far as 'contract theory', there lies Kant's *Cosmopolitan*⁷⁰ or Hegel's optimism of 'everything will be better', which is appropriate for the History of The World. The latter is Luxemburg's radicalism, which claims that capitalism turned proletarian exploitation into an international one, reaching an imperialist form. Luxemburg struggles with two forms of reality: she resists (a) the state's imperialist programmes and (b) the revisionism of Social Democracy, which is capitalism's

⁶⁴ Luxemburg, 'The Russian Revolution', op. cit., p. 420 (*The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter I).

⁶⁵ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 54.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 57.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

⁶⁸ 'The trade-union movement' 'lives in the consciousness of the mass of proletarians who have been won for the class struggle' (Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 181). However in the practical struggle unions is not more than an organization of *defending* working class against the profit attack' (Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', p. 82).

⁶⁹ Luxemburg, 'Rus Devrimi' in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı—Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 420; Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter I.

⁷⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*.

Hegelian rationalism. Her theoretical analyses and political struggle dwell especially upon the criticism of these two issues.

Luxemburg's political struggle, before the war, develops around the proletariat's union against imperialism. She foresees the coming war (First World War). In the Second International's (7th congress) Stuttgart Congress (1907), Luxemburg maintains that 'the union of European working class' will prevent the war.⁷¹ She assumes that the proletariat will stop the world war through international mobilization.⁷² Yet when the age's new phenomenon 'nationalism' started the war process, social democrats joined this process in a very short time.⁷³

The passionate march of the states towards war and the ineffectiveness of a social opposition against it reveal another reality: the will of the state overwhelmed that of the society. Development of capitalism turned the state into a 'class state'.⁷⁴ The present state is, first of all, an organization of the ruling class⁷⁵; if there is a change in the state, it will be for the benefit of the dominant class,⁷⁶ which is confirmed by two phenomena, both of which turn the state and capitalism into an international power: (a) the policy of tariff barriers and (b) militarism.⁷⁷ Luxemburg analyses of militarism as the capital's 'accumulation field', which accompanied capital's history⁷⁸ and which is also the defence instrument of bourgeoisie against both international capitalist powers and the proletariat; this new militarism is a sickness of capitalism.⁷⁹ This new reality indicates that the state will not collapse by storming the Prison of Bastille. It is the state that rises like the Great Wall of China in front of the proletariat in its struggle with capitalism. As truth, the conflict with capital retreats into the underground, and the working class has to struggle with phenomena like, for example, the armed force of the state.

Old revolutions, as in the example of the 1789 French Revolution, have sufficient knowledge and experience as to the power of the state and how to deal with it. Therefore, it was possible to overcome the aristocracy and its state order. Yet the state structure of the 'new reality' depends on capitalism's transformations. Since capitalism brings economic and political power together, the bourgeoisie instrumentalizes the state for its economic practice, the reflection of which is stark for the working class.

⁷¹ In 1902 at European Socialist Congress, which she attends on behalf of German Socialists. French socialist Jean Jaurès and she had suggested that the German Labour Party resist when the war broke out. In her speech in 1913: 'If they think that we will carry murder weapons against our French and other fellows, we should shout: "We will not do this!"'.

⁷² German Social Democrat Party rejected this suggestion. This caused the gap between Luxemburg and Kautsky to widen.

⁷³ When the Balcan War broke out social democrats approved the war budget in the parliament. A similar process was experienced in France. The revisionism that Luxemburg had stood against since 1899 seems to have won.

⁷⁴ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., pp. 63–64.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

⁷⁸ Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, op. cit., p. 434.

⁷⁹ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 63.

The bourgeoisie dominates the working class politically (through the state) and economically (through exploitation) at the same time. The disguise of the bourgeoisie makes the struggle against it difficult. As a matter of fact, the parliamentary regime caused the proletariat to think that ‘the political and the economic struggle are separate and independent of each other’.⁸⁰

Luxemburg’s thought constitutes crucial progress for Marxist literature, for socialist struggle handled these two bases separately until that time. She develops the concept of ‘mass strike’ as the unity of these two battle fields. The necessity for ‘class struggle’ to rise using the unity of economic and political struggle is a reaction formed through an understanding of capitalism’s rearranging itself. In Luxemburg’s *The Mass Strike*, especially in Chapter IV, entitled ‘The Interaction of the Political and the Economic Struggle’, this is the main theme of the lessons learned for the German proletariat from the Russian revolution.

The Criticism of Reality or Class Consciousness

The object of Marxist criticism is not a finished relationship of abstract concepts that take their logical connection from themselves, but rather dynamic processes that occur in the concrete connection of their existence. The phenomena of this process are not autonomous singularities. They form the *dialectic whole* within a bond of interaction. The criticism that analyses this ontology is not Kantian ‘criticism’ that reduces ‘truth’ to ‘concept’ or Hegelian ‘logicism’. These not only absolutize *theoria* by giving priority to reason, but also arrange the whole reality of humanity according to the same *theoria*. Yet the view that extracts the concept from reality is a praxis since it contains both abstraction and negation—the attitude of both establishing consciousness and its destruction of itself—at the same time. The object of criticism is a *structure* that occurs in new forms through social relations and takes its existence from being embedded in history.

However, ‘penetrating and thoughtful criticism’ is capable of bringing out the value of ‘experiences’.⁸¹ Criticism evokes taking a fresh look at the experience and the awareness of responsibility. The criticism of the Russian revolution will evoke the awareness that ‘the responsibility of the international proletariat is itself for the fate of the Russian Revolution’. This awareness of responsibility will result in ‘overcoming the fatal inertia of the German masses’, evoking the capacity for critical judgment⁸² and mental freedom.

So the role of criticism is to see reality and awareness together with its logical conflicts. Luxemburg applies criticism in two fields. In the first, the criticism against the logic of capital, *The Accumulation of Capital*, is a clear example of its theoretical

⁸⁰ Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 169.

⁸¹ Luxemburg, ‘Rus Devrimi’ in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 420; Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter I.

⁸² Luxemburg, ‘Rus Devrimi’ in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 421; Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter I.

criticism. Yet it can be concluded from her assessment in *The Mass Strike* that social actions are *practical criticism*. The strikes are in question, which is *economic criticism*; economic criticism is *the natural attitude* of the proletariat. Strikes are criticisms that include the negation of the logic of the capital through proletariat's power of action—for example, wage policies, imperialism and war programmes. Mass strikes are the criticism of class, the political attitude aimed at revolution. In the second field, the criticism against the logic of social democracy, Luxemburg's *Social Reform or Revolution*, is a theoretical criticism that includes her analyses concerning social democracy's role in the revolution and what it is for the proletariat.

There are two realities in Luxemburg's criticisms. The first is bourgeois reality that contains the resources of capitalism: this reality contains the existing and reason-based phenomena that emerge according to the 'natural law' of capitalism. Bernstein's revisionist reality that proposes reforms instead of revolutions represents this perception of reality. This second is 'revolutionary reality' that emerges through the negation of capitalism's phenomena: this reality contains praxis which moves toward the ideal of a socialist society in terms of the conflicts of capitalism and overcoming them. Luxemburg's—or proletarian organizations'—'critical reality' represents this perception of the reality.⁸³

Doğan Göçmen,⁸⁴ referring to Luxemburg's *Political Situation and Social Democracy* (Die politische Lage und die Sozialdemokratie) article,⁸⁵ identifies the differences between her 'positivist realism and critical realism'. This difference is based on the difference between capitalism and the realist practical politician attitude that is its negation.⁸⁶ Göçmen even goes further, bringing to the fore her two forms of positive reality in her criticisms: (a) formal positivist realism; and (b) reformist positivist realism.⁸⁷

Luxemburg's critical realism is an analysis that applies a revolutionary philosophy having the aim of a socialist society or depending upon Marxist philosophy of history to the social present. This analysis grasps the partial within the universal; that is, it follows a dialectical development programme in which the action and consciousness of the partial is developed towards class consciousness and eventually it develops a political programme according to this. The development stages are: (a) 'social situation'—for example inequalities in a working situation; (b) 'spontaneity'—for example, 'strikes of protests', 'union struggle'; and (c) 'class consciousness'—for example 'mass strike' and 'revolution'. While Luxemburg sums up the struggle of the

⁸³ Marx's analysis in *Capital* forms the methodology of new reality's analysis. The reviews such as Lenin's *Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1900), Hilferding's *Finance Capital* (1910), Bukharin's *Imperialism and World Economy* (1915) and Luxemburg's *Accumulation of Capital* are the financial critics of new reality after Marx.

⁸⁴ Doğan Göçmen, 'Rosa Luxemburg's Critical Realism and International Foundations of Political Theory' [Rosa Luxemburg'un Eleştirel Gerçekçiliği ve Uluslararası Siyaset Kuramının Temelleri], *Praksis*, 11 (2004), pp. 49–82.

⁸⁵ And another study: Doğan Göçmen, 'Rosa Luxemburg, the Legacy of Classical German Philosophy and the Fundamental Methodological Questions of Social and Political Theory', *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, 35:3 (2007).

⁸⁶ Göçmen, 'Rosa Luxemburg's Critical Realism', op. cit., p. 64.

⁸⁷ See for the detailed analysis about Göçmen's critics for Luxemburg's positivist reality: Göçmen, 'Rosa Luxemburg's Critical Realism', op. cit., pp. 65–73.

Russian villagers in the second part of *Theory and Practice* (1910), she points out how a natural process that started with the demands to improve deteriorating living conditions gained another momentum in the revolutionary situation. ‘Not “organized” and hence “planless”, these economic, partial, and local conflicts continuously, “spontaneously” grew into general political and revolutionary mass strikes—from which, in turn, further local actions sprouted up thanks to the revolutionary situation and the potential energy of the masses’ class solidarity.’⁸⁸ The programme of this development is not an Aristotelian theory but rather a Marxist praxis; that is, it aims to know how to transform not to know for the sake of knowing. This consciousness emerges in the mass strike and matures in the revolution and ‘this class consciousness becomes *practical* and *active*’ in this process.⁸⁹ The consciousness here is that of overcoming the antagonism which is both the reason for its existence and which keeps it under pressure. This is the ‘class consciousness’, which Marx summed up as the subjective comprehension of the objective class conditions.

While Luxemburg links the idea of class consciousness with the experience of class struggle, Lukács and Lenin analyse it as an impact that determines actions externally; for Lenin it is a consciousness that is transferred to the Proletariat externally. ‘This consciousness is, therefore, neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the single individuals who make up the class. And yet the historically significant actions of the class as a whole are determined in the last resort by this consciousness and not by the thought of the individual—and these actions can be understood only by reference to this consciousness.’⁹⁰ In this Hegelian approach consciousness is regarded as complete. ‘Class consciousness in Marxist literature is also explained as a completed concept that contains proletariat’s categorical definition. Yet Luxemburg’s *pedagogy of struggle* shows that the individual acquires consciousness in the action and every experience enhances the content of his class consciousness. Actions ensure the intellectual and cultural growth of the proletariat.’⁹¹ From this perspective class consciousness is an ongoing process, not a completed one. This consciousness will only be completed when the proletariat negates the historical conditions that create it. Because this consciousness in theory is enlightenment for the proletariat about itself, in practice it is the consciousness aimed at destructing its own reality. Petersburg protests are outwardly ‘a political act of the revolutionary declaration of war’; yet inwardly it is ‘the first time of awakening of class feeling and class consciousness’. The proletariat that ‘becomes aware’ within the irresistibility of capitalism suddenly, ‘as if by an electric shock’, starts to jolt its chains.⁹² Awakened by the shock of political action, the worker immediately heads towards the nearest human who lives in an identical situation. Feeling the pressure of economic

⁸⁸ Rosa Luxemburg, ‘Theory & Practice’, in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit.; transl. Tayanç, ‘Teori ve Pratik’ in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı—Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 325. Online Version: *Theory & Practice*, transl. T. Crawford, Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive, 1980. Part II, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1910/theory-practice/ch02.htm>

⁸⁹ Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 160.

⁹⁰ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, op. cit., p. 51.

⁹¹ Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 135.

⁹² Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 129.

chains, the worker stands against slavery,⁹³ the criticism that started with ‘consciousness’ (concept/theory), ‘spontaneity’ and ‘class consciousness’ steers for revolution. Revolution requires self-consciousness, self-knowledge and the class consciousness not merely of the layer of the people, but also of the layers of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁴ However, they, during the revolutionary process, will learn this while fighting with the proletariat.⁹⁵

From an epistemological point of view, class consciousness is the knowledge of the historical context of the contradiction that determines the social existence of the single man. It starts with the experience of conditions and acquires a logical certainty through the knowledge of conflict. Transforming action provides logical certainty with context.

This approach confirms the existence of subjective criticism against collectivism. Subjective criticism forms the base of social action. An economically motivated union movement, civil disobedience against war or an individual’s struggle for his own rights can only start with an action the cause of which is *his own decision and his criticism of himself*, without having any base in a political theory or the guidance of a party. The 1905 Russian revolution showed that ‘mass strikes’ are not something ‘artificial’ or ‘decided’; on the contrary, they are a historical phenomenon arising from social relations.⁹⁶ Since revolution is a battle destroying social foundations, it is not a condition to have a mentor to start the battle; the Russian mass strike confirms the effect of ‘element of spontaneity’.⁹⁷ It is not the guidance of a theory or party that ignites the action of proletariat, but rather the desire of salvation and its own consciousness. What Luxemburg assumes is that we do not need to wait for a theory, a leader or party to act.⁹⁸ Yet this spontaneity should not be seen as Aristotle’s *prote kinon* ‘first move’⁹⁹ or as a metaphysical starting point like the ‘first move’ compulsory for political actions. The mind of a political person is not *tabula rasa*, for his mind is moulded by the political criticism regarding the conditions. The idea of revolution will not be reinvented,¹⁰⁰ so action cannot be totally spontaneous because of that. Once class consciousness is acquired, the content of the action cannot be formed by coincidence. ‘This is quite natural, for our “theory,” that is, the

⁹³ Ibid., p. 145.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 130.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 130.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 117.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 147–148.

⁹⁸ ‘Was Rosa Luxemburg therefore spontaneist? Not quite ... In the pamphlet *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906) she insisted, referring to Germany, that the role of “the most enlightened, most class-conscious vanguard” is not to wait “in a fatalist fashion”, until the spontaneous popular movement “falls from the clouds”. On the contrary, the function of this vanguard is precisely “hasten (vorseilen) the development of things and endeavour to accelerate events” (Löwy, ‘The Spark Ignites in the Action’, op. cit.).

⁹⁹ Aristotle, ‘Metaphysics’, in Jonathan Barnes (ed.) *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (London: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹⁰⁰ Luxemburg suggests that the German Proletariat should be enlightened on the development of the ‘Russian Revolution’ and the international significance of that revolution; informing them about ‘the sharpening of class antagonisms’ in Western Europe, the wider ‘political perspectives of the class struggle’ in Germany, and the role and the tasks of the masses in the coming struggles (‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 118), she thought, would contribute to the formation of class consciousness.

principles of scientific socialism, impose clearly marked limitations to practical activity—insofar as it concerns the aims of this activity, the means used in attaining these aims, and the method employed in this activity’.¹⁰¹

Yet whatever happens, negative thought regarding the world should be derived from the individual’s contradictory relation with it. Thus, ‘spontaneity’ is the *subjective principle* of political struggle, which includes an *ethical attitude* that protects another person’s life as well as his. This ethical attitude is *free* in that it includes standing against the reality. In the 1903 mass strike in Kiev, women sat on the railway and challenged the Tsarist soldiers to ‘Shoot!’¹⁰² them, which cannot be explained by another concept.

From this perspective ‘spontaneity’ is not a Cartesian ‘cogito’, The process of action brings about individual enlightenment about his position because a subjective encounter with reality relies more on the reasoning about its cause than the knowledge of ‘poverty’. Yet Luxemburg assumes that the attitudes of these subjective or small groups should move towards a higher level of consciousness—that is, class consciousness—and the stage of organizing—for example, mass strike—linked to that. For this reason, *spontaneity and dialectics of the organization* represent the main theme of Luxemburg’s political philosophy.¹⁰³

‘Organising’ that ‘belongs to the bourgeoisie initially’¹⁰⁴ is a ‘historical product’ of class struggle where social democracy has ‘political consciousness’.¹⁰⁵ The thought that consciousness has to be brought to the proletariat externally scorns the creativity of the mass. The struggle of the proletariat may be sacrificed to the petite-bourgeois opportunism of a party’s or union’s organization-bureaucracy;¹⁰⁶ however, ‘Quantity will do it’.¹⁰⁷ The success of ‘mass strike’ and ‘mass struggle’ is only possible through ‘public movement’, that is, the wide participation of the proletariat’. In this case, an organized small minority cannot be the determiner of a mass strike.¹⁰⁸ In *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy* (1904) Luxemburg criticizes Lenin’s strict centralist vanguard party concept¹⁰⁹ (it is an attempt to dominate the working class) in

¹⁰¹ Luxemburg, ‘Social Reform or Revolution’, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁰² Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁰³ Spontaneity is a style of entry into a party focused, class struggle organization as ‘grass roots’.

¹⁰⁴ Here Luxemburg refers to the *Communist Manifesto*. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’ in Robert C. Tucker (ed.) *The Marx–Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 480.

¹⁰⁵ Luxemburg, ‘Rus Sosyal Demokrasinin Örgütsel Sorunları’, transl. T. Tayanç, op. cit., p. 371; Online Version: *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁶ While Zygmunt Bauman, in his article entitled ‘A Requiem for Communism’ in *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*; (*Modernite, Kapitalizm, Sosyalizm*), transl. F.D. Ergun. (Istanbul: Say Pres, 2013), pp. 47–48) evaluates the results that Bolshevik organization achieved, starting with the necessity of ‘consciousness of historical necessity’ being brought from outside, he says, ‘even Rosa had not predicted the extent of the violence precisely’.

¹⁰⁷ Luxemburg, ‘Social Reform or Revolution’, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., pp. 157–159.

¹⁰⁹ Lenin (in his article ‘Step Forward, Two Steps Back’, op. cit., pp. 472–483) objects to Luxemburg’s critic about ‘intransigent centralism’ and tries to show that she has misunderstood it.

terms of ‘authoritarianism’ and ‘bureaucratization’¹¹⁰ concepts. While old kinds of organizations are local organizations that can govern themselves, ‘new’ organizations are ‘centralist’;¹¹¹ Lenin made this a principle.¹¹² Getting organized is not a mechanical thing and it is the struggle that creates the organization. Historically, the class emerges in its own struggle acquiring the ‘consciousness related to the aims of the struggle only in the struggle’.^{113, 114} Luxemburg continues her criticisms in her article titled *Credo* (1911).¹¹⁵

Yet her criticism of party and organization results in the assumption that she opposes them. On the contrary, in the Russian revolution, by saying ‘only the party that knows how to lead’ will win, Luxemburg does not ignore the importance of party and organization. Although Luxemburg, in *The Mass Strike*, highlights the ‘spontaneity factor’ in Russian mass strike, she attributes the initiative of mass strike to the organized and enlightened part.¹¹⁶ Turning to social democrats, it is clear that she does not exclude the party concept when she suggests that they (a) pioneer politically, (b) determine the direction of the struggle and (c) develop tactics for the struggle to continue existing.^{117, 118} In addition, political and union collectiveness are conditions for the coming mass struggle.¹¹⁹ As she regarded it as the party and leadership that will take the revolution forward,¹²⁰ Leninist party struggle is also a clear example of the justification of Marxist philosophy of revolution. Yet it is the dominance of the theory of the Leninist vanguard party that causes a misunderstanding of her ‘spontaneity’ concept.

¹¹⁰ While responding to Luxemburg’s critics about the October Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky assert that her thoughts are the classical conceptions of Marxism, and they are not suitable for Russia in 1917. They indicate that they should renovate Marxist strategy through the experiences that they had had in the conflicts with state and bourgeois parties.

¹¹¹ Luxemburg, ‘Rus Sosyal Demokrasinin Örgütsel Sorunları’, transl. T. Tayanç, op. cit., p. 372; Online Version: *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*, op. cit.

¹¹² Luxemburg criticizes the thoughts in Lenin’s book *Step Forward, Two Steps Back* published in 1904, in her writings in *Neue Zeit*’s issues of 41 and 42. Lenin writes a critical writing as a response to this criticism (‘One Step Forward, Two Steps Back’ op. cit.). He sends it to Kautsky in order to be published in *Neue Zeit* but Kautsky does not publish the writing.

¹¹³ Luxemburg, ‘Rus Sosyal Demokrasinin Örgütsel Sorunları’, transl. T. Tayanç, op. cit., p. 375; Online Version: *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy*, op. cit.

¹¹⁴ Although Luxemburg argues with Lenin about getting organized, she admires him. ‘The myth that she and Lenin had completely opposite poles about revolution and organization could be created after Rosa’s death’ (Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., p. 30).

¹¹⁵ Luxemburg keeps criticizing in her article ‘Credo: On The State of Russian Social Democracy’ (1922) that she originally wrote in 1911, although it could be published after her death: Lenin tries to activate the proletariat through a ‘centralist’ and mechanical method and ‘enlightened dictatorship’. Luxemburg, ‘Credo: On The State of Russian Social Democracy’ in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., p. 405; (transl. T. Tayanç, ‘Kredo: Rusya’da Sosyal Demokrasinin Durumu Üzerine’, in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit.). Her ‘blind mechanical radicalism’ (Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., p. 408) results in purism. However, Luxemburg sides with Leninist struggle.

¹¹⁶ Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 147.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 149.

¹¹⁸ ‘The task of social democracy does not consist in the technical preparation and direction of mass strikes; firstly it undertakes *political leadership* of the whole movement’ (Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 161).

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 179.

¹²⁰ Lenin’s party is a real revolutionist party; it guaranteed the future of revolution by saying ‘all power in the hands of the proletariat and peasantry’ (Luxemburg, ‘The Russian Revolution’, op. cit., p. 430).

The attitude of the Bolsheviks, who advocate 'the way to bring the masses in the revolution' and 'the assumption that consciousness belongs to the leadership', is about the two issues that were left from the Second International to the Third International. Lenin, like Kautsky, advocates that consciousness will be given externally to the working class, which, as Korsch and Lukács presumed, is an extension of the contradictory link that German Philosophy has with Hegel. This means waiting for theory to act. While in Germany getting organized was stipulated for the mass strike, 'these organizations are in Russia, on the contrary, already born from the mass strike'.¹²¹ Organizations that will solve the problems will emerge spontaneously within the actions that start for democratic rights.¹²²

'Regarding the dialectic whole and its opposition', Luxemburg seems to oppose Lukács. Lukács criticizes Lenin for glorifying the party design and Luxemburg for disdaining the party. Despite this, Lukács is Hegelian because he attaches importance to the pioneering role of the party exactly like Lenin. According to this, party becomes the conscience of proletariat's historical role through transferring class consciousness to them. Only the theory and the organization of the party can free people from the reflections of a bourgeois society. While Lukács is influenced by the Hegelian side of Marx, Luxemburg's critical radicalism is influenced by the Kantian side of Marx. Luxemburg does not refuse the concept of 'organization'.¹²³ Before anything else, the guarantee of the labour movement is 'among the organized proletarian masses'.¹²⁴ Since she makes a dialectical connection between spontaneity and being organized, she regards the class consciousness as the one that awakens in the organized struggle, which is a progressive point of view in terms of the transition of consciousness from subjectivity to objectivity.

Still, Luxemburg's humanism causes her to be cautious against the totalitarianism of organization discipline. Those who bring thoughts into action may revolutionize and free the working class from the dominance of capital, yet they may lose their freedom within the dominance of a party or theory. Therefore, the idea of one's autonomy of consciousness in political choices in Luxemburg's 'spontaneity' is developed and supported in a philosophical context by the concept 'freedom'. 'Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently'.¹²⁵ Luxemburg centres the first formula of Kant's moral law (freedom that determines the principle of action for humanity), but she develops it within the political content, not within the ethical border. Freedom here is 'political freedom' and is as important as the demand of 'a human standard of material existence for the proletariat'.¹²⁶ The transition from exploited and alienated being to revolting free man comes into light at the end of the action that is appropriate for the call of class consciousness.

¹²¹ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 135.

¹²² Ibid., p. 134.

¹²³ When it is thought that Luxemburg's German Social Democrat Party is in the organizations such as *Die Internationale*, *Spartaküs Association* and German Communist Party, this thesis is not true.

¹²⁴ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 180.

¹²⁵ Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter VII.

¹²⁶ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 163.

Overcoming Reality or Revolution

Since negation in dialectical ontology means going beyond contradiction, the *criticism* that wants to overcome reality is seen as logical ‘negation’ in theory and ‘destruction’ in practice. Revolution is the embodiment of criticism in history. The bourgeoisie identifies the existence of the proletariat with its own design—of capital; Marxist literature tries to negate this identification through the philosophy of revolution. The analyses and political goals in Luxemburg’s texts aim to bring Marxism into the surface of reality. From this perspective, the dialectical link that Luxemburg establishes between ‘theory’ and ‘action’—for example, mass strike and revolution¹²⁷—is a *philosophy of revolution* based on a materialist philosophy of history.¹²⁸

The reasoning that starts with the criticism of reality eventually turns into action that transforms reality. Criticism aims to change the conditions and contains the transformation of the one which will also cause it. In *Theses* (third), Marx repeats the link he had made in the *German Ideology* between the changing of the conditions and the changing of the cause of that change, in a more politicized way. ‘This revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.’ Luxemburg’s philosophy of revolution is after this ideal, regarding the process of enlightenment of proletariat about its own reality and the process of the revolution as one: (a) the working class should accomplish their own salvation; and (b) the process of revolution is that of the proletariat’s going beyond itself.¹²⁹

In her works *The Mass Strike, Party and Unions* (1906) and *The Russian Revolution* (1908), in which her observations from the laboratory of Russian revolution are compiled, Luxemburg observes how she can construct a philosophy of revolution on a social basis. She makes a comparison in terms of *differences* and *possibilities*, between the *reality* of Russian revolution and the *possibility* of a revolution for the German working class. In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel asks¹³⁰ why the French moved from theory to practice while the Germans were stuck in the theory.¹³¹ Although they are looking for different answers, Luxemburg this time asks, if the Russians can realize the revolution, why can the developed German working class not do it? The Russian working class succeeded in the revolution due to the unity of economic and political struggle. ‘There are not two different class struggles of the working class, an economic and a political one’; there is only one class struggle that will eliminate the bourgeoisie.¹³² The German proletariat sees these two fields as separate and the reformist policies of social politics turn into an obstacle for

¹²⁷ Ibid., Chapter IV, ‘The Role Of The Mass Strike In The Revolution’.

¹²⁸ The third part of ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit. (‘The Role Of The Mass Strike In The Revolution’) clearly confirms that Luxemburg wants to keep the revolution philosophy on a materialistic ground.

¹²⁹ As Marx informs in *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, it is self critical.

¹³⁰ G.W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, transl. J. Sibree (Canada: Batoche Books, 2001), p. 463.

¹³¹ Ibid., Chapter IV, ‘The Éclaircissement and Revolution’.

¹³² Luxemburg, ‘The Mass Strike’, op. cit., p. 170.

the revolution. For this reason, Luxemburg turns her observations into lessons for German revolution to get organized. (a) She introduces the practical condition of the idea of revolution. (b) German proletariat is far from the practice of revolution, yet owing to their class consciousness, they can be encouraged to start one. (c) The social democrat tendency demands reforms instead of revolutions and the proletariat should contain this tendency by starting a 'mass strike' that is a combination of economic and political struggle.

As a result, economic and political struggles feed each other. Every victory and move in the political struggle turns into a strong motive for economic struggle,¹³³ which leads to a significant change in working class self-confidence and class consciousness, making it a power against the dominant power. 'The most precious, because lasting, thing in this rapid ebb and flow of the wave is its mental sediment: the intellectual, cultural growth of the proletariat'.¹³⁴ This lasting is also necessary for the struggle for freedom. Through her analyses, it can be assumed that proletarian praxis in the process of mass strike should include three main categories of unity: (a) the unity of struggle (the unity of economic and political struggle); (b) the unity of organization (the unity of union and party organizations is a necessity); (c) and the unity of aim (revolution should be aimed for, not reforms).

According to Luxemburg, revisionists, for example Bernstein, want to eliminate capitalism through reforms as they consider changing the society in legal ways.¹³⁵ Yet the dominance of class relies on 'real economic relations', not on the 'acquired rights'. 'No law obliges the proletariat to submit itself to the yoke of capitalism. Poverty, the lack of means of production, obliges the proletariat to submit itself to the yoke of capitalism. And no law in the world can give to the proletariat the means of production',¹³⁶ all of which have been stolen by economic growth. Wages are not determined by law, for the phenomenon of capitalist exploitation does not rest on a legal disposition, but on a purely economic fact'.¹³⁷ If the proletariat wants to negate the exploitation stemming from capitalism, it should aim to abolish the political power and capitalism completely.¹³⁸ The struggle for democracy increases the awareness of the historical role and acquisition of class consciousness for the proletariat,¹³⁹ yet as long as the aim is not socialism, the contradictions will not be resolved. The reason for this is that they are historical and history is changed only by those who are determined to fight. As far as Western history of revolutions is concerned, the bourgeoisie has left its revolutionary and vanguard role to 'a modern class-conscious proletariat'.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ Ibid., p. 144.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 90–91.

¹³⁶ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 91.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁴⁰ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 162.

Luxemburg takes Engels's putting up the barricades against legal struggle in his *Class Struggle in France* as a reference¹⁴¹ and observes the revolutionary potential of the working class. 'If our programme contains the formula of the historical development of society from capitalism to socialism, it must also formulate, in all its characteristic fundamentals, all the transitory phases of this development.'¹⁴² She studies the link between the political struggles of her time and the idea of socialist revolution and monitors whether the proletarian struggle can act as the right negative phenomenon or not. She argues that the question of 'reform or revolution' will be determined by 'the petty bourgeois or proletarian character of the labour movement'.¹⁴³ As she thinks about the role of the working class in history, she is in a very careful defence against the opportunist policies that denigrate this role.

In *Reform or Revolution* Luxemburg criticizes Bernstein's thought that socialism can be realized by reforms, saying the question of 'reform or revolution' is the same as 'to be or not to be',¹⁴⁴ which is clearly a question of 'petty bourgeoisie or proletariat'.¹⁴⁵ Bernstein distorts capitalism, which is on the brink of reality or barbarianism. According to his revisionism, socialism will be established by the transformation of capitalism through reforms. For her, 'If it is true that theories are only the images of the phenomena of the exterior world in the human consciousness', 'Bernstein's system, that theories are sometimes inverted images'.^{146,147}

Reforms cannot prevent the developmental tendencies of the system that create the real pressure, yet struggling for reform can help limit the pressures that capitalism creates in favour of capital and create several advantages for the benefit of the workers. Those who struggle for reform may have two leaps of consciousness: (a) the idea that struggle evokes in the person and (b) the idea that reforms have a restrictive side. In this consciousness process one reaches the tragic definition of his own reality: the labour of Sisyphus.¹⁴⁸

In *The Mass Strikes*, by looking at the 1905 Russian revolution, Luxemburg theorizes a proletarian revolution around the concept of 'mass strike'. She gives priority to Engels's words¹⁴⁹ and she gives theoretical priority to the mass strike.¹⁵⁰ Yet as far as the Russian revolution is concerned, things told about this subject are

¹⁴¹ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

¹⁴⁷ Hegel uses the term 'inverted world' in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (op. cit., §157). While criticizing religion in *The Introduction of Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marx uses the term 'inverted consciousness of the world'. Luxemburg uses the term 'inverted images' while criticizing Bernstein's theory.

¹⁴⁸ Union enables labour power to increase its power in the market and to get a share from the social capital; however, over-proletarianization pulls down this gain of union. 'In other words, the objective conditions of capitalist society transform the two economic functions of the trade unions into a sort of labour of Sisyphus, which is, nevertheless, indispensable' (Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., 83).

¹⁴⁹ The part of Engel's book to which Luxemburg refers for her thought: Frederick Engels (1988), 'The Bakuninists at Work' in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 23 (1871-1874), pp. 584-585).

¹⁵⁰ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., pp. 111-112.

out of date. The mass strike is the first natural, impulsive form of every great revolutionary struggle of the proletariat'.¹⁵¹ From this perspective, 'Revolution' like 'mass strike' signifies 'an external form of the class struggle'.¹⁵² Luxemburg confirms, through the use of different perspectives, the fact that the mass strike is the emergence of political struggle during the process of revolution and it is another form of the struggle. (a) Mass strike cannot be formulated as one group of actions. For example, *demonstration strikes*, *fighting strikes*, are the sub-genres of mass strikes and these are spontaneous and irregular.¹⁵³ (b) However when the party programme and the education of the proletariat join the struggle, political struggle, a higher level of union struggle, *political demonstration strikes* start.¹⁵⁴ (c) Since revolution is the unity of political and economic struggle, mass strikes cannot be separated from revolution.¹⁵⁵ 'In reality the mass strike does not produce the revolution, but the revolution produces the mass strike'.¹⁵⁶ (d) Mass strikes are connected to the 'element of spontaneity'. Mass strikes do not occur owing to the 'decision' of a party or spontaneously,¹⁵⁷ rather they develop as a result of the workers' decision and the initiative of the most organized.¹⁵⁸ Assessment cannot be made 'about historical situations by resolutions at party congresses'.¹⁵⁹ From this perspective, (a) 'to make the mass strike generally, as a form of proletarian action, the object of methodological agitation (b) trying to 'impose' this idea on the working class is as meaningless as making 'the fight at the barricades the object of a special agitation'.¹⁶⁰

The action process, strikes, demonstrations and marches that begin with the revolt of the subjective conscious ('spontaneity'— for example, sensitivity for social events or union with economic purpose) against the reality turns into the spirit of the 'mass strike', which in turn becomes the material of the proletarian revolution. The action process, strikes, demonstrations and marches that begin with the revolt of the subjective conscious against the reality turn into the spirit of the 'mass strike', which in turn turns into the material of the proletarian revolution.¹⁶¹ The naive negative attitude of the subjective conscious becomes revolutionized by the transformational pedagogy of the mass strike and reaches a level of negative mass conscious. The more highly developed the antagonism is between capital and labour, the more effective and decisive must mass strikes become.'¹⁶² Negative conscious interacts with the

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 163.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 141–142.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 143–144.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁵⁷ To fix beforehand the cause and the moment from and in which the mass strikes in Germany will break out is not in the power of social democracy, because it is not in its power to bring about historical situations by resolutions at party congresses (Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', p. 166).

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 147–148.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 135–140.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 163.

material that the mass strike turned into in a dialectical way. At this level, consciousness demands that action be in the name of all the proletariat of the world, conforming to the necessities of the politicized class consciousness. Luxemburg interprets this process in harmony with the soul of *The Communist Manifesto*. This interpretation is confirmed by the Russian proletariat that carried 'mass strike' to a 'general strike', later to the first¹⁶³ socialist revolution in history.

What Luxemburg said about the crisis and collapse of capitalism and the realization of socialism resulted in the comment that she developed two diverse views concerning history, which are: (a) an economistic view; and (b) a critical realist view. The former represents her economistic view that the collapse of capitalism was a necessity of history. This argument forms the basis of the assumption that she has an economic determinist understanding. Luxemburg sees an obligatory link between credit, excessive consumption, depression and destruction.¹⁶⁴ Excessive economic growth of capitalism will bring its end,¹⁶⁵ which is also confirmed by imperialism. The contradictions of capitalism save socialism from being an 'ideal' turning it into a historical necessity.¹⁶⁶ Economic struggle 'formed a broad background of the revolution'.¹⁶⁷ As history indicates that 'revolution is inevitable',¹⁶⁸ therefore the fall of capitalism and the emergence of socialism is inevitable. The historical connection, the logical link of the succession from capitalism to socialism and the causality between these two has led to the assumption that she has a determinist understanding of history. Löwy¹⁶⁹ blames Luxemburg for not being able to save herself from 'revolutionary fatalism'.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, Laclau¹⁷¹ regards Luxemburg's theory of collapse as an example of 'class reductionism'.¹⁷² All of these comments are the results of an assessment of her as excessively economistic. However, in her analyses, one cannot conclude that she is an 'economist'; while she aims to show the inner resources of the phenomena at the imperialist stage of capitalism such as expansionism, colonialism, militarism and war, on the other hand, she aims at presenting a detailed criticism of these. She takes the economy as the basis while doing so. Yet one should not reach the conclusion that she is an economist.¹⁷³

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 45–46.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁶⁸ History shows that the revolution 'was as inevitable as it was, in its consequences, incalculable'. Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Löwy, *On Changing the World* (Humanities Press, 1993); transl. Y. Alagon, *Dünyayı Değiştirmek Üzerine* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Press, 1999), p. 129.

¹⁷⁰ 'Rosa couldn't escape from the deception of the revolutionist fatalism' (Löwy, *On Changing the World*, op. cit., p. 129).

¹⁷¹ Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: LNB, 1977), p. 127.

¹⁷² 'Rosa Luxemburg's demonstration of the impossibility of capital accumulation in a closed system and her consequent theory of collapse' is 'an intellectual style in which economism came to be a basic mechanism of class reductionism' (Laclau, op. cit., p. 127).

¹⁷³ Göçmen, 'Rosa Luxemburg's Critical Realism', op. cit., p. 73.

Although it is possible to find economic determinist elements in the functioning of the history that Luxemburg perceives, these are insufficient evidence to assume that her understanding of history proceeds on a mechanical determinist argument. In her writings until 1914, Luxemburg views the collapse of capitalism as a necessity. The reason for this is her devotion to Marx's theses of history as well as the way imperialist economy was interpreted. Marx, in the first section of *Capital*,¹⁷⁴ develops the theory of economic crisis around the fetishism of commodity. Marx's understanding that 'the development of the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history'¹⁷⁵ is not the determinism of history that is explained by the effects of capitalism's natural law, but rather is the organic relation of the nature of the social relations with capitalism. It can be concluded from the critical evaluation of this relation that man has turned into an object of capitalism. For Luxemburg, whose starting point is this idea, socialism is not an automatic historical stage. Man has to free himself from the alienating reality of capitalist economy. From this perspective, to assume that she has a view of 'political fatalism' results from the misreading of her philosophy of history. If Luxemburg's concepts such as 'spontaneity', 'organizing' and 'class consciousness' are not taken into account, one will ignore the importance that she attaches to the creative role man plays in the making of history. When Marx studied the effects of economy on life, he also considered the proletariat's organized collaboration through unions 'to weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalist production on their class'.¹⁷⁶ Although economic contradictions are determinant,¹⁷⁷ there will not be a social transformation in history as long as the will of man is not active. 'It is not true that socialism will arise automatically from the daily struggle of the working class. Socialism will be the consequence of (1) the growing contradictions of capitalist economy and (2) the comprehension by the working class of the unavailability of the suppression of these contradictions through a social transformation.'¹⁷⁸

The second view Luxemburg developed regarding the collapse of capitalism highlights the historical conditions and the will of the humans that will interfere as well as the development logic of the capital. Statements like 'spontaneity', 'experience', 'pedagogy of defeat' and 'ebb and flow' free the historical process from mechanical determinism, leaving it in the middle of a situation summed up as 'socialism or barbarism'. As far as Luxemburg's theoretical integrity is concerned, she did not change her ideas concerning the functioning principles of history. In her writings after 1914, 'critical realist' attitudes become more dominant, as a result of the world war. Much to her surprise, the working class was indecisive about the war and

¹⁷⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, transl. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1982), pp. 163–167.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Preface to the First Edition, p. 92.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 793.

¹⁷⁷ Economic determinism cannot be inferred from this. '[She] does not adapt the data that she got from the analysis of economic background in the imperialist process of capitalist society and the results she reached, to the superstructure institutions of the society in a simple way' (Göçmen, 'Rosa Luxemburg's Critical Realism', op. cit., p. 74).

¹⁷⁸ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 68.

social democratic parties supported war policies and war expenditures, which may have weakened her optimism about the future of socialism.¹⁷⁹ Just as Marx lost his enthusiasm in his *The Communist Manifesto* after the unsuccessful revolution experience of 1848, Luxemburg was also in a similar state. It is possible to see the traces of that clearly in the text named *Our Program and the Political Situation* (1918). However, one cannot see despair here. On the contrary, the things that happened should be reinterpreted ‘in view of the changes brought about by historical development’.¹⁸⁰ First of all, there is already a successful Russian revolution. As capitalism confirmed its barbaric side, the proletariat was successful in opening a new dimension for the salvation of humanity and freedom. So she is never hopeless about the collapse of capitalism. In all her texts, capitalism is the creator of economic causes; what is more, the same economy is the destruction of itself. From this perspective, the collapse of capitalism is ‘obligatory’. Yet here it would be unwise to interpret Luxemburg’s ‘necessity’ as ‘by itself’.

The idea of ‘moving forward in history’ is the ideal of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Since Luxemburg also has the idea of moving forward towards a ‘socialist’ society, she is connected to the ideal of the philosophy of Enlightenment through Marxism. Yet as the whole of German philosophy foresees through Kant, ‘thinking being’ is not moving towards a rational system in history, but to a destructive one. The destruction that occurred at the beginning of 20th century, in accordance with Kant’s answer to *What is enlightenment?*, is the product of man ‘who dared to use his mind’. Yet the enlightened culture that is the reflection of the mind cannot be negated by a moral criticism as Rousseau did, since, as Nietzsche saw it, destruction is the morality of the bourgeoisie. As the world war confirms it, humanity has entered a barbaric phase and this is the necessary result of capitalism.

As Luxemburg assesses the ‘crisis of the German social democrats’ in the *Junius Pamphlet* (1915), she quotes Engels and uses the expression ‘socialism or barbarism’. ‘Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism’.¹⁸¹ However, she does not give a reference for her quote from Engels. In addition, such an expression is not found in Engels’s texts. Yet in Engels’s *Anti-Dühring*,¹⁸² one can find similar passages that will correspond the meaning of the above-mentioned quote. As Engels puts it, modern capitalism has entered into a destructive and self-contradictory process and if the society has to be saved,

¹⁷⁹ ‘With the exception of Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and a few others, the bulk of the SPD leaders either endorsed German war aims or refrained from opposing the war effort’ (Le Blanc, op. cit., 12).

¹⁸⁰ Rosa Luxemburg, ‘Our Program and the Political Situation’, in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit.; transl. Tayanç, ‘Programımız ve Siyasal Durum’ in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 533. Online Version: *Our Program and the Political Situation*, transl. D. Howard, Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive, 2004, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/12/31.htm>

¹⁸¹ Rosa Luxemburg, ‘The Junius Pamphlet’, in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit.; transl. Tayanç ‘Junius Broşürü’ in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 477. Online Version: *The Junius Pamphlet*, transl. D. Hollis, Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive, 2003, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1915/junius/index.htm>

¹⁸² Frederick Engels, ‘Anti Dühring’ in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, op. cit. Vol. 25.

revolution is compulsory.¹⁸³ While Engels evaluates Fourier's 'conception of the history of society', he says 'the so-called bourgeois society of today' is a deliberate 'barbarism'.¹⁸⁴ For Luxemburg, 'This world war is a regression into barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilization.'¹⁸⁵ The accumulation of capital turns into crisis, crisis into war, and war into barbarism, leading to collapse of the mass. Since this is how the historical reality functions, history cannot be a product of an expectation. As she tries to awake the proletariat's historical responsibility, she considers the spirit of *Communist Manifesto*. In her *What does the Spartacus League want?* (1918) article she turns the expression 'socialism or barbarism'¹⁸⁶ into a slogan. She mentions her idea that history is offering a junction by referring to *the Communist Manifesto*;¹⁸⁷ however, as in *Anti-Dühring*, there is no reference to this statement in *Communist Manifesto*.

Luxemburg's use of 'or' as a conjunction in her statement of 'barbarism or socialism' does not make socialism a matter of 'choice' against capitalism, but views it as a historical moment that is the negation of capitalism's historical reality. Both of them are in the same objective reality. As clearly mentioned in the dualist problem of the Russian revolution, the opposition of 'victory of the counter-revolution or dictatorship of the proletariat'¹⁸⁸ is not a logical opposition or an existential opposition of choice; it is an opposition because 'the real situation' is directly like this. As far as the process of socialism's coming into being is concerned, it is an objective possibility, like Aristotle's *dynamis* in his ontology. In this respect, socialism, which is presented with 'or', is a historical possibility within the present, more than a theory that is suggested or a historical stage in the future, realizing that this historical possibility is the responsibility of class consciousness and this assignment is activated by the reality of capitalism. As Luxemburg evaluates Lenin and Trotsky's 'theory of dictatorship', she points out that socialism is not a prescription that needs to be realized. 'The socialist system of society should only be, and can only be, a historical product, born out of the school of its own experiences,

¹⁸³ 'In other words, the reason is that both the productive forces created by the modern capitalist mode of production and the system of distribution of goods established by it have come into crying contradiction with that mode of production itself, and in fact to such a degree that, if the whole of modern society is not to perish, a revolution in the mode of production and distribution must take place, a revolution which will put an end to all class distinctions' (Engels, 'Anti-Dühring', op. cit., Part II: Political Economy, p. 146).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., Part III: Socialism, p. 248.

¹⁸⁵ Luxemburg, 'The Junius Pamphlet', in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit., Chapter I.

¹⁸⁶ Rosa Luxemburg, 'What Does the Spartacus League Want?' in *Selected Political Writings, Rosa Luxemburg*, transl. M. Nicolaus (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 368.

¹⁸⁷ 'In this hour, socialism is the only salvation for humanity. The words of the *Communist Manifesto* flare like a fiery *menetekel* above the crumbling bastions of capitalist society: Socialism or barbarism!' (Luxemburg takes the term 'menetekel' from the Old Testament's *Daniel* (V, 26, 27); she uses it for the sign of the impending bad end. In the origin 'Mene' ('numbered') and 'Tekel' ('weighed') are different words; she uses the statement 'You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting'.)

¹⁸⁸ Luxemburg, 'Rus Devrimi' in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 426; Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter II: 'The Bolshevik Land Policy'.

born in the course of its realization, as a result of the developments of living history'.¹⁸⁹ From this perspective, for Luxemburg the revolution that will bring socialism does not occur according to an economic determinist principle—but she does not exclude it—and the choice of an absolute organization—she does not exclude it either. Revolution is the result of *class consciousness* responding willingly to the historical causality. While capitalism's economic choice determines life, the proletariat's economy and political choice determine the history.

In reality, it was Luxemburg who invented the road junction of history in this form, where one can see possibilities that will be clear through Marxist thought. The latter has the habit of following Hegelian rationalism proceeding in history, going beyond the contradictions or waiting for the contradictions of capitalism to mature. While she grounds her thoughts through a devotion to her predecessors, this devotion prevents her from seeing the difference of thought she develops. So one can see that it is Rosa Luxemburg who established socialism *as an objective historical possibility*¹⁹⁰ (inspired by Engels),¹⁹¹ not as an inevitable product of historical necessity.¹⁹²

In addition, the expression Luxemburg turns into a slogan is appropriate for the spirit of *Communist Manifesto*. As Marx–Engels analyses the destruction that competition caused in a bourgeois society as 'putting back into a state of momentary barbarism', they see the power that will negate this situation in the proletariat.¹⁹³ Luxemburg never leaves this thought. In addition, she strives to turn the deep contradictions of the new reality—capitalism's imperialist war—into the condition of internationalist solidarity and revolution. However, she does not have the optimism that socialism will come during the post-war crisis like Lenin or Lukács.

Surely as well as the question of when the revolution will be realized, the main issue of how it will be realized is answered by the revolutionary struggle, not by the philosophy of revolution. While offering to put proletarian power up against capitalist

¹⁸⁹ Luxemburg, 'Rus Devrimi' in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 453; Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter VI: 'The Problem of Dictatorship'.

¹⁹⁰ The emphasis belongs to me. I defined 'The socialism in barbarism or in socialism' objectively by means of an Aristotelian term. However, as I saw that Löwy had identified 'possibility' beforehand I can't help addressing to him. For the subject and a more detailed analysis: Löwy, *On Changing The World*, op. cit., Chapter VII, Rosa Luxemburg's concept of 'Socialism or Barbarism'.

¹⁹¹ In another writing Löwy ('The Spark Ignites In The Action', op. cit.) interprets, 'If she refers to Engels, it is perhaps to try to give more legitimacy to a fairly heterodox thesis'.

¹⁹² Löwy, *On Changing The World*, op. cit., p. 133.

¹⁹³ 'In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of over-production. Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. ... And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented. ... But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians' (in *Marx–Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., p. 478).

power, in order to stop the world war, Luxemburg offers a peaceful struggle here. The Russian revolution showed that peace is the international aim of the proletarian revolution.¹⁹⁴ However the harsh reality of the state mechanism, the relation capitalism developed with militarism and eventually the severity of the war show that it seems difficult for the proletariat to realize its socialist aim through peaceful means. One cannot stand against injustice only with 'the idea of justice'.¹⁹⁵

However, Luxemburg recognizes Russian revolutionaries' way of using violence and terror in order to achieve socialist aims. Revolution is the future but it is not a result of tyrannical terror. It is a future as a humane liberation programme. Revolution is more than spilling blood.¹⁹⁶ The Russian revolution came as a result of the conflicts with the tsarist soldiers; however, even in this situation conflicts are linked with class such as the economic struggles.¹⁹⁷ While the statist view sees the revolution as 'street conflicts', 'the interpretation of scientific socialism sees in the revolution above all a thorough going internal reversal of social class relations'.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, wars on the barricades are not the basic form of the revolution, 'they are a moment in mass struggle'. History civilized and softened these class struggles in this new form of revolution. Bourgeois opportunism does not lead to a socialist regime. Similarly its revolutionist terrorism cannot bring the revolution. For Luxemburg, mass strike or 'the advent of revolutionary mass strikes' will not replace 'brutal street fights'; however, it will reduce them to a moment in the long period of the political struggle.¹⁹⁹

Luxemburg's ideal of socialist peace develops together with humanism from the very beginning. In her article *Martinik* (1902) Luxemburg interprets the rush of nations for help after the destruction caused by a volcano disaster in Martinik Island: 'Against the destructive anger of the nature the fellowship of the peoples emerges; humanism resurrects on the ruins of human culture'.²⁰⁰ This destruction reminded humanity. However the ones rushing for help created the same disaster in their colonies. 'And now they all turned their faces towards Martinik; once again, one thought, one emotion: helping, saving, wiping their tears, cursing the destructive volcano'.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁴ Luxemburg, 'Rus Devrimi' in *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 424; Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution*, Online Version, op. cit., Chapter II.

¹⁹⁵ Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁹⁶ Luxemburg, 'The Mass Strike', op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 145.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., op. cit., p. 164.

²⁰⁰ Rosa Luxemburg, 'Martinik' in Hudis and Anderson (eds) *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, op. cit.; transl. Tayanç, *Rosa Luxemburg Kitabı— Seçme Yazılar*, op. cit., p. 187. Online Version: *Martinique*, transl. D. Wolff, Rosa Luxemburg Internet Archive, 1999, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1902/05/15.htm>

²⁰¹ Luxemburg, *Martinik*, op. cit., p. 187.

Acknowledgement

This article was created by the development of the manifestation presented at the International Rosa Luxemburg Conference (organized by Rosa Luxemburg Stftung and Fesato-der, on 22–23 November 2013, Istanbul). It was first published in Felsefe Logos (*Journal of Philosophy*, 52, 2014) in Turkish. I would like to thank Professor Sinan Özbek (editor of FelsefeLogos) for his permission to publish this article. I thank Professor Hillel Ticktin for giving me the chance to publish this article. Also, I am grateful to him for correcting English of this article. However, any remaining mistakes are my own.