



The Autonomy of the Political: Carl Schmitt's and Lenin's Political Realism (Contributions in Political Science)

Eckard Bolsinger

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In contrast to sociological debates about the inherently violent nature of modern politics, current political theory has little to say about the place of force, violent conflicts, and coercive power in politics. Bolsinger urges a reexamination of the political thought of Carl Schmitt and Lenin since they conceptualized the nature of politics as founded on force, domination, and conflict. Bolsinger argues that a fresh look at these two thinkers may serve as a remedy for the contemporary neglect of these hard facts of political life. Much as one might reject their views as politically dangerous or morally repulsive, political theory has to come to terms with the problems they raised and the solutions they offered.

In conceptualizing politics mainly in terms of violence, struggle, and power, Bolsinger explains that Schmitt's and Lenin's theories represent central contributions to the realist or power politics traditional in political thought. In focusing on the conceptual relations between politics and armed conflicts and between power and violence, he demonstrates how Schmitt and Lenin succeed in constructing the specificity and autonomy of the political in opposition to other spheres of social life. Bolsinger maintains that realist political theory provides a valuable frame of reference to understand the basic mechanisms of political change and order. An important resource for scholars and students involved with the foundations of politics, twentieth-century political thought, and the relation between politics and violence.

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