



HISTOREIN/ιστορεῖν
a review of the past and other stories

Volume 7, 2007

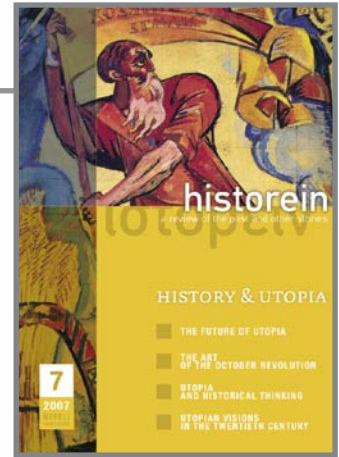
HISTORY & UTOPIA

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At first glance, the relationship between history and utopia seems clear: they follow two different logics, which exclude each other. History wishes to establish “how it actually was” (wie es eigentlich gewesen); utopia is interested in showing how it actually should or could be. However, the initial perception that represents a contradiction is superficial. It overlooks an interrelationship between both modes of looking at the human world. One cannot think of one without at least indirectly referring to the other. Both deal with change, both refer to experience and to expectation, both have an orientation function for humankind, but they do it in a completely different way, and it is this difference that gives them their peculiarity. Looking closer at this difference, one will see intermediating relationships, hidden references and dependencies.

The current discussion on utopia is characterised by a general criticism of utopian thinking, which came about as a result of the fundamental change in world politics for which 1989 is a generally accepted indication. This change has been characterised as a definite end of utopian thinking. So is utopia dead and history still alive? The articles in this volume show that this is definitely not the case; on the contrary: one of the most interesting points raised in different contributions is the thesis that we live in a time in which an essentially new way of utopian thinking has started. This novelty is not without consequences for historical thinking. In their mutual otherness, history and utopia synthesise. From this viewpoint, history is changing, possibly without sufficient awareness on the part of historians.

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