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EDITORIAL

The contribution of Critical Theory in understanding society

Federico SOLLAZZO

Abstract: *Is Critical Theory a part of our knowledge we can access just in a kind of museum of history of ideas, or is Critical Theory a living part of our culture on which we can still rely in order to understand and (re)orient our society? To answer this basic question, and many others, and also to shed some light on what seems to be a recent abuse of the term “critical”, in this issue will be addressed, under different points of view, the meaning of the expression Critical Theory.*

The papers here collected are divided in an English and an Italian section, to facilitate the reader who is confident, or prefers, only one of these languages. In both sections, Critical Theory is addressed in a twofold way: as regards its origins in the so-called School of Frankfurt and as concerns its further and contemporary developments, from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords: *Critical Theory, Society, Philosophy, Sociology, Anthropology.*

The locution Critical Theory has become increasingly widespread and influential in the last decades. If, on the one hand, it indicates a growing interest in this field, on the other, it risks to inflate this term and concept, until the point that it can mean everything and nothing. Therefore, the first task imagined for the present issue is to take stock of the meaning of the expression Critical Theory: what the/a Critical Theory is. Indeed, only after having clarified it, it is possible to move forward, investi-

gating how a theory, eventually considered critical, can offer an interpretation and, with it, a possible orientation of society. To be close to this perspective, in this issue Critical Theory is not taken in a general, generalist and generic meaning of problematization of something (as recently often happens), but in the particular meaning it had and, notwithstanding several shadows, have in the tradition of the Institut für Sozialforschung of Frankfurt. That is to say, designating particular topics

on the base of a particular background, being those topics resumable (in a kind of list of possible keywords) as: social change – and its possible subject –, capitalism, mass culture technology, instrumental rationality, alienation, repression, domination – of man over nature and man –, critique, emancipation, reason, and being that scenario nothing more and nothing less than the Western civilization.

Obviously, the abovementioned prospect is still too broad, given the fact that, as it is known, the School of Frankfurt is not a monolith, is not a homogeneous address of thought. Very differently, it is rife with distinctions and tensions. Under this, crucial, regard, I do not simply mean the classical division in generations – being the first that including, among the others, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse; the second, that led by Jürgen Habermas; the third, that turning around Axel Honneth; and observing in the fourth what seems to be a shift from philosophy to sociology –, I instead mean the peculiarity of any singular thought of any individual thinker turning around the “School” – unfortunately, often these thinkers are reduced into pre-established interpretative models where they are lumped together and this is a very pity and a paradox, considering that one of the fundamental points at stake in them is the question of the disappearance of individuality in modernity.

Now (also to open towards the papers here published), I just would

like to briefly remember what seems to be one of the most significant differences inside the School of Frankfurt about the meaning of the Critical Theory: the Horkheimerian and the Marcusean view of it.

In distinguishing between “traditional” and “critical” theory, Horkheimer states that a theory is critical according to a specific practical purpose that is to seek human «emancipation from slavery [...] to create a world which satisfies [human beings] needs and powers»,¹ that is to say «to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them».² In order to accomplish this task, Critical Theory must be explanatory, practical and normative. Namely, it has to explain what is wrong with current social reality, to identify the subject for a possible change and to provide clear norms to grasp the social transformation, and this tension to emancipation can only be developed in an interdisciplinary perspective able to embrace all the aspects of the contemporary society.

To Marcuse, things are definitely different, considering that any Critical Theory of society is, to him, confronted with the following two points:

1. the judgment that human life is worth living [...]

2. that judgment that, in a given society, specific possibilities exist for the amelioration of human life and specific ways and means of realizing these possibilities [...] Social theory is historical theory, and history is the realm of chance in the realm of necessity.³

Here, I cannot go deeper in this comparison, but I would at least like to clear that with Marcuse we are facing an extremely different (than Horkheimer) and peculiar idea of Critical Theory, indeed, he takes emancipation not as the pursuit of an ideal, neither as a task for someone, but as a possibility, for all and for none.⁴

Moving now on the papers collected in this issue, they are divided in an English and an Italian section. This is to facilitate the reader who is confident, or prefers, only one of these languages.

The English section opens with the article of Silvio Ricardo Gomes Carneiro, *Towards an Epistemology of Social Noise*, where the author wisely compare each other Marcuse and Habermas, integrating this work with Michel Foucault and the psychoanalyst Bento Prado Jr., proposing, in order to decipher our present, an epistemology of noise as an alternative to the theory of recognition and the theory of communicative acts.

In the second paper, mine, *The Marcusean Inheritance as a Possibility Not yet Realized: From a Pre- to a Post-Technological Culture and Society*, I point my attention on the famous (but lately academically underestimated) book of Marcuse *One-Dimensional Man*, a kind of milestone⁵ in the tradition of the Critical Theory, dealing with it on different levels: criticizing some interpretation of it; presenting (some of) the links are possible to be found between it and other relevant texts of political and social philosophy and

ethics; and, especially, trying to show that this book contains the key of the thought of the late Marcuse: a particular philosophy of technology that, theoretically, seems to deserve to be (re)meditated more and more and, practically, we have not yet experimented (and maybe it will never be).

Still meditating on Marcuse, Michael Kidd's article *Technology and Nature: A Defence and Critique of Marcuse*, investigates the concept of nature and the call for a "new science" and a "new technology" in the German/American philosopher. As for the concept of nature, the author of the article wonders if Marcuse means it as an essentialist or a constructivist phenomenon – under this regard, it can be interesting to note that the nature that matters for Marcuse is that absorbed in a particular, historical human project that, in turn, is aimed to recognize the beauty, also in nature, through the *Sinnlichkeit*; this is the reason why in reading Sigmund Freud he is more interested in the Freudian metapsychology than in the scientific/clinical side.⁶ As for the proposal of a "new" science and technology, the author stresses in depth the issues related to this project – under this regard, beside an analysis of the Marcusean term of techno-capitalism (maybe adequate in his time, but to be rethought today), it can be a value to bear in mind that the pacification Marcuse was in searching of is twofold: the overcoming of the natural *Ananke*, *Lebensnot* as much

as that of the social one. In any case, Kidd very interestingly stresses that in some extent Marcuse still lies in the dimension of the instrumental rationality, and this awareness is pivotal in order to really go “beyond” the one-dimensional man.

The text of Ruggero D’Alessandro, *Critical Theory in Adorno and Marcuse*, closes that which is considerable as a kind of subsection, in this English section, devoted to the most prominently figures of the early School of Frankfurt: Adorno, Marcuse and also Horkheimer are here compared each other; it closes this text a brief appendix where Foucault and Gilles Deleuze too are taken into account.

With the article of Lorenzo D’Angelo, *Anthropology as Storytelling: Fetishism and Terror in Michael Taussig’s Early Works*, we face a Critical Theory no longer as a theory but, so to say, as a method. This paper, indeed, sharpens the Critical Theory influence, of Walter Benjamin in particular, on the anthropologist Michael Taussig. This influence is observable, as main samples, in two specific matters addressed by the anthropologist: the Marxian question of commodity fetishism – where Taussig refuses the analyses of Marx and Freud – and the issue of writing on and against violence and terror – where Taussig reflects on the politics of representation. Still, this inheritance of Critical Theory and of Benjamin is especially conspicuous in the general meaning the scholar attributes to his work:

starting from Benjamin’s reflections on the role of the storyteller in the bourgeois society, for Taussig anthropology is a form of storytelling.⁷

At last, this English section ends with the text, *Throw the Bathwater out but Save the Baby: New Perspectives in Critical Theory*, by Giacomo Pezzano. In this paper the author tries to launch new questions deserving attention in the field of Critical Theory. This effort risks to be undermined by the use of some generalizations, which use is for sure provocative (e.g., the threshold between modern and postmodern Critical Theory seems to coincide with that between German and French thinkers and, in any case, among these thinkers there are radical differences – for one, the Critical Theory of Marcuse is not teleological as that of Horkheimer).⁸ However, it is a deliberate choice of the author to use a less academic style and in so doing he can absolutely succeed in raising problems that each one has to meditate with the independence of mind.

Then, we move to the Italian section that is opened with the article of Luca Baldassare, *Pulling Oneself out of the Bog by One’s Own Pigtail: The Legacy of Adorno’s Metacritique*, where the metacritical philosophy of Adorno (in some extents compared to Marcuse) is stressed in order to remember its fundamental importance in fostering the “power of negative thinking” and in criticizing questions such as: cultural industry, managed

world, presumed snobbery about mass society, decline of aura, end of individuality, post-individual or pseudo-individuality, ticket mentality. A form of metacritique, that of Adorno, that seems to be more fruitful than those travelled by the second generation of critical theorists onward.

Adorno is still at stake also in the paper of Valeria Ferraretto, *The Society of Paradox and The Paradox of Society: An Adornian Reflection*, where it is discussed the paradoxical relation the German philosopher establishes between society and individual (society exists only through individuals and at the same time it liquidates individuality), and his call (expressed to Horkheimer) for a “New Manifesto”, for a new society.

Now, because Critical Theory extends itself beyond its auroral phase (whose richness is maybe not yet fully developed), the last three papers are contributions to delineate (some of) these further directions. Under this regard, *Transformation of Critical Theory and Political Questions: a Comparison Between Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, by Francesco Giacomantonio considers the turn impressed by

Habermas in the School of Frankfurt, also in the light of a comparison with the positions of Jacques Derrida.

Among the polemics Habermas has had, there is also that with Peter Sloterdijk. Maria Teresa Pansera remembers it in her article, *Anthropotechnics and Its Declinations in Sloterdijk*, taking it as the starting point to introduce the Sloterdijkean discourse on technology, where is pivotal the notion of “anthropotechnics” – which calls for a close confrontation with the Heideggerian philosophy of technology.

Finally, this issue on critical theory is closed by Ubaldo Fadini’s paper, *Different Bodies: Going Back to a Theoretical Critical Approach*, where the author investigates the link between modern technology and work, and the aftermaths it produces on life and body of the contemporary subject.

In conclusion, with this issue we hope to have provided valid reasons to still rely on, study and develop the Critical Theory of society (this number is enriched by other extra sections edited by the Editorial Board of the Journal).

Note

¹ M. Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. M.J. O’Connell, Continuum, New York, 1982, p. 246; this collection also contains his 1937 essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*, pp. 188- 243.

² *Ibid.*, p. 244.

³ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964, p. xli. See also: H. Marcuse, *Philosophy and Critical Theory*, in *Negations: Essays in Critical*

- Theory*, trans. J.J. Shapiro, Beacon Press, Boston, 1968, pp. 134-158.
- ⁴ «If art “is” for any collective consciousness at all, it is that of individuals united in their awareness of the universal need for liberation – regardless of their class position. Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* dedication “Für Alle und Keinen” (For All and None) may apply also to the truth of art.» (H. Marcuse (1977), *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1978, p. 31.).
- ⁵ Just like the very famed M. Horkheimer, Th.W. Adorno (1944), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. E. Jephcott, Stanford U.P., Stanford, 2002. A book that Horkheimer would have to write with Marcuse, but the dynamics inside the Institute and the personal biographies of its leading figures brought the German sociologist to write it with Adorno; on the vicissitudes of the Frankfurt School in its American exile, see: D. Kellner, Introduction: *Technology, War and Fascism: Marcuse in the 1940s*, in H. Marcuse, *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 1998, vol. 1, pp. 1-38.
- ⁶ See: H. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1955.
- ⁷ Perhaps, these conceptions (the original one by Benjamin and its rehash in Taussing) can be fruitfully intertwined with the Adorno’s essay *Trying to Understand Endgame* (1961), in «The New German Critique», n. 26, 1982, pp. 119-150; now also in Id., *The Adorno Reader*, B. O’Connor (ed.), Blackwell, Oxford, 2000.
- ⁸ «The critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future; holding no promise and showing no success, it remains negative. Thus it wants to remain loyal to those who, without hope, have given and give their life to the Great Refusal.» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 261).

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ENGLISH SECTION

Towards an epistemology of social noise

Silvio Ricardo Gomes CARNEIRO

Abstract: *This paper intends to present some considerations on a possible epistemology of noise as a response to theory of recognition and its bases on theory of communicative action. The principal movement will be to recover some aspects of Marcuse's and Foucault's perspective on the disturbances narratives in social sphere. The interest for them becomes stronger from Habermas' perspective on their "performative contradicions". Both of them would appeal to social aspects that escapes from critical normativities. Foucault's structures of power as well as Marcuse's psychoanalytical drives would represent aspects of the same Habermasian problem: the absence of auto-critical rationality. However, we can question: what would offer to the two authors the limits of communicative action?*

Keywords: *Marcuse, Foucault, Habermas, recognition, noise.*

Introduction: a question on recognition

When Critical Theory refers theory of recognition as central for its diagnosis of the present, it is important to note its implications and limits. Axel Honneth focuses his efforts on the question of "struggles for recognition" presented as a moral grammar by which intersubjective relations would share the same social sphere by a communicative action.¹ However, as Vladimir Safatle questi-

ons: «how else [...] could one understand or term a situation in which no normativities remain to which one might appeal?»² In other words, how else could be possible to recognize social subjects that lives in social contexts of anomie? Is there a grammar of anomie?

From such questions, we are proposing an "epistemology of noise". That is an attempt to considering social struggles by systems of resistance. In this sense, we recover two perspectives on resistance by diagnosis of something that escapes from

the clear communicative sphere: Foucault and Marcuse. In spite of their philosophical differences, both of them recover a domain of resistance in which aesthetic dimension appear as fundamental. Moreover, Habermas' theory symptomatically considers these two authors as "performative contradictions" in face of critical normativity. What is at stake in such consideration? Recognition would be under suspect in face of Marcuse's and Foucault's questions. They both knows above the silence of social suffering and its dissonant noises.

The question on normativity

According to Habermas, the crisis of advanced capitalism may to a great extent be regarded as a consequence of the imbalance existing between the life-world and the technical-administrative apparatus of the State and the market. When social systems and their institutions advance that much over the life-world, a continuous legitimation crisis is finally established where one of the parties in the struggle adopts pretensions to universality, and ceases to recognize the autonomy of the other parties – with, for instance, the bureaucratic system in the democratic State under the rule of law operated on localized living beings with no regard to their particular modes of living. Consequently, the legitimation of social spheres plunges into crisis the moment the life-world is massively integrated into the State

apparatus without the consolidation of an effective political conscience having first occurred. In effect,

*the arrangement of formal democratic institutions and procedures permits administrative decisions to be made largely independently of specific motives of the citizens. This takes place through a legitimation process that elicits generalized motives – that is, diffuse mass loyalty – but avoids participation.*³

To put it differently, the dynamics of the life-world have no bearing upon the institutions of the social system, and vice-versa. Without a rationality that allows the limits of each social sphere to be recognized, a legitimation crisis is likely to occur, one characterized by normativity conflicts between the social systems and the life-world – something which occurs because, as Habermas puts it, «a process as a crisis is tacitly to give it a normative meaning.»⁴

Why do such crises occur, after all? The entirety of Habermas' critical efforts is directed at noticing that in the social conflicts peculiar to a legitimation crisis there is a "privatization of language" – as if two contending groups played according to different rules, each one attempting to impose its own grammar to its adversary. Against that, Habermas' critical exercise seeks to unblock language from the effects of such a privatization, leading it to the public sphere [Offentlichkeit], and translating the discourses from one to the other party in the struggle so as to promote a new normative cycle

where the conflicts of intersubjectivity may lead to self-reflection, and to a subsequent discovery of its own limits and potential compatibilities.⁵ This translation process suggests, of course, rules of validity through which both groups may attain the necessary recognition for the establishment of a common experience. That is the experience at the bottom of the normativity of a communicative ethics.

Arnold Farr, conversely, will cast doubts on the normative sense of Habermas' communicative reason, noting that the

*cry of the oppressed is often not heard because the oppressed are not always able to articulate the nature of the injustice from which they suffer. That is, the oppressed do not always (nor can they be expected to) appeal to general, coherent, universal theories or norms.*⁶

Indeed, communication between opposites will feature countless noises and silences that Habermas' perspective disregards, or treats as distortions ensuing from privatizations of language. While Habermas' separation between argumentative discourse and the discourse of rhetoric and narratives is a necessary one, to give one priority over the other is, as Farr reminds us, an arbitrary choice in the ethics of discourse promoted by Habermas – a choice that, in view of the argumentative nucleus and its rules of validity, risks rendering secondary any silencing beyond the reach of the communicative field. There is, then, a

particular rhetoric in transgression – as in the extreme cases of the grammar of violence – that evades the communicational core advanced by Habermas. In this sense, the weakness of Habermas' normativity is made evident, in particular as it fails

*to see that norms are themselves produced by narratives which may be exclusionary. Norms are themselves produced by a narrative form of discourse, which is situated within a certain kind of community.*⁷

Is it possible a social epistemology of dissonant noise? It is within the domain of such dissonances that Marcuse and Foucault will develop their investigations. This renewed interest in the narratives that stem from particular discourses is evident in the Foucaultian sphere; narratives of this sort will be a determining factor, after all, for constitution of the abnormal and infamous individuals who feature so heavily the Foucault's intellectual experience. Farr, however, will point out the insufficient character of Habermas' position by means of an appeal to the works of Marcuse. In this context, it may be of interest to note how often the German philosopher will take an interest in discursive forms.

A reified language under psychoanalytical critique: Habermas versus Marcuse

Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man would be dedicated to a critique of the discursive forms that paralyze thought within an enclosed discursive

universe; and, after the political upheavals of 1968, he would recognize the risks inherent to repressive-desublimated discursive formations, such as the one espoused by the New Left. Regarding the various left-wing movements and parties, Marcuse will be very suspicious of the effects of the freedom values of anti-intellectualism present in the language of the defenders of the New Left. In a lecture addressed to the students of Berkeley, the philosopher reinforces the idea that the new, post-1968, ideological configuration has a serious impact on the rhetoric adopted by the New Left, with

*its withdrawal, its confusion of private with social and political liberation, and even more with its attitudes towards those institutions which can still be used far better than they now are.*⁸

Clearly perceiving both the anti-intellectualism and the dogmatism of the left, Marcuse will develop a critique of the discursive foundations of both camps. At either case, the greatest risk one incurs in is dialectical paralysis, and the subsequent obstruction of critical thinking. Ultimately, what is at work is a reification of discourses, the most significant consequence of which is critical paralysis.

So the reified character of language may be better understood, it is of interest to notice how Marcuse will analyze advertising strategies as a way of neutralizing contradictions. Superficially, what this entails is conceiving the type of thought that

turns words into clichés, with an aim to providing a particular discourse with hegemonic rule over all writing and thought; that occurs, more specifically, when the use of a term activates a series of other terms conjugated with it. Thus, the use of terms such as “democracy”, “freedom” or “equality” brings with it a set of additional attributes, a phenomenon configuring what are termed «habits of thought».⁹

Up to that point, Habermas’ analyses on communication in public spaces bear a great deal of similarities to those of Marcuse. Such clichés, after all, correspond to the “privatizations of language” which occur when a social group assumes a particular “habit of thought” that has to be adequate for the social totality, in complete disregard to the multiple fragmentations of, and contradictions within, the public space. Still, in an even deeper sense than that which was suggested by Habermas, advertising strategies, for Marcuse, are correlated to a one-dimensional experience: their very communicative form consolidates the integration of opposites, with the result that such a strategy reproduces contradictions, rather than assist the social whole to overcome them. Habermas’ own articulation presupposes

*language as the medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested.*¹⁰

The game of oppositions is not able to escape the trappings of an Orwellian language,¹¹ of a grammar of one-dimensional thought that reproduces the contradictions of social life as a totalitarian scenario constituted by a constant revising of the system of conceptual oppositions. As George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984 underlines: "freedom is slavery" and "peace is war" as a way to integrate opposites. As effect, this movement collapses public and private opinion,¹² to the point where «the spread and the effectiveness of this language testify to the triumph of society over the contradictions which it contains.»¹³

A more contemporary example may be found in the expression "surgical strike", whose component terms bear entirely different – and, to an extent, opposite – acceptations: while "strike" is a word often associated to the attack and death-producing capabilities of the war machine, "surgical" is an adjective commonly characterizing high-precision medical procedures capable of saving lives. The association between the two terms leads to a "habit of thought" that associates the destruction of the enemy to a clean and precise military exercise. Constructions of this sort deactivate the contradictions present in their own lexical composition. More than a privatization of language, this one-dimensional grammar leads to the creation of a field of integrated oppositions and, most of all, to the obstructing of the development of

word-meanings into concepts. Publicized by the pages of newspapers and advertisements of all sorts, such terms render discourses and communication immune to all expressions of protest and refusal.¹⁴ Furthermore, they turn the exercise of thought something removed from concept-production, subsequently keeping it away from any and all explorations of the multiple meanings of a term when this is expressed within certain socio-historical contexts, as if all concepts were alienated from the workings of thought as means that are alienated from production.

A Habermasian defense against such considerations would be the fact that the return to the language of the life-world – the language of daily existence – is not a phenomenon restricted to the analytic field Marcuse is pitched against. Indeed, Habermas seems to be in agreement with Marcuse's position concerning the philosophy of language's potential to reduce the experience of thought to a pure instrumentality. In this sense, both Marcuse and Habermas will see the limits of the neo-positivist adoption of a kind of therapeutics of thought through ordinary language, where thought is reified into an instrument for the reproduction of the ideas circulating within established society. To some extent, additionally, both will make use of psychoanalysis as a counterpoint to analytic therapeutics against to the *pathology of communication*.

For Habermas, everyday language provides important traces to the

extent that it communicates something, that is, to the extent that it is presented within the social context of intersubjective interactions.

According to him:

*The ongoing text of our everyday language games (speech and actions) is disturbed by apparently contingent mistakes: by omission and distortions that can be discounted as accidents and ignored, as long as they fall within the conventional limits of tolerance. [...] If the mistakes in the text are more obtrusive and situated in the pathological realm, we speak of symptoms. They can be neither ignored nor understood. Nevertheless, the symptoms are part of intentional structures: the ongoing text of everyday language games is broken through not by external influences but by internal disturbances.*¹⁵

The points of coincidence, however, end with this, for while Habermas will orient the psychoanalytic field towards ordinary language (considering it an adequate therapeutics for the communicative deviations present in the life-world). Marcuse will acknowledge the progress of psychoanalysis as a therapy that takes into consideration the discontentment of civilization through the lens of libidinal economy rather than an “internal disturbance”. This allows Prado Jr. to state that both authors will notice the hermeneutic artifice of Freudian therapy. Still, Habermas’ interpretation discards metapsychology in its entirety, turning the unconscious into a

discourse of the subject in his «crisis of communicative experience».¹⁶ In effect, it is precisely in the crisis of experience that Habermasian self-reflection operates; it is in the experience of the implosion of subjectivity, after all, that intersubjective therapeutic work leads the split subjectivity to reflect on itself. This leads Prado Jr. to the following consideration.

*The curious thing about this reading of Freud through the new pragmatics is that the opposition between the normal and the pathological colors the opposition between the public and the private, between ordinary language and privatized language, which is to say language destroyed as such. Dreams, just like the illness of which they are the paradigm, are nothing but a degrammaticalization of ordinary language.*¹⁷

In light of this – and, here, the differences between Marcuse and Habermas are more clearly noticeable –, the theory of communicative action (still in embryonic form in Knowledge and Human Interests) contemplates the need for a therapy that, given the crisis ensuing from a privatization of language, requires grammar to be relearned in order to structure an asymmetrical intersubjective relation between the analyst and its patient.¹⁸ This is reflected in Habermas’ considerations on the clinical-psychoanalytic setting that aims at “pure communication”:

According to this model, all interactions established out of habit,

*as well as all interpretations that are relevant for a vital praxis, are – at every moment and based on the interiorized apparatus of unrestricted quotidian language – accessible to a public communication free of all coercion, so that the transparency of the biography that is remembered is assured.*¹⁹

Hence, the work of elaboration of the past in psychoanalysis carries with it a therapeutics that has the grammar of suffering as its object. This “self-reflexive” movement is one in which the therapeutic aspect of communicative action leads to an understanding of the social grammar of language games present in processes of individuation, so that in analysis mutual recognition, the intersubjective validity of symbols, and the verbal mediation of interactions are established.²⁰

Still, this Habermasian conception of psychoanalysis forces critical theory to operate, as Prado Jr. suggests, an «intensive training for the competent reuptake of the various games of language»²¹ – a process that, according to the commentator, would set aside the Freudian discovery of the unconscious. For Habermas, after all, the unconscious grammar of desire is, deep down, nothing but a normative deformation of language as it becomes conscious through the analytic process. In this fashion, the materiality of psychoanalysis is lost: the sphere of desires, of drives, and all the subsequent pessimism of Freud’s regarding the civilizing process and its repressive

mechanisms – all lost, along with everything else that falls beyond the communicational scheme of the community of discourse intended by Habermas. All dissonant noise, lost.

In this sense, Prado Jr.’s diagnosis on what is lost in the theory of communicative action is, generally speaking, an accurate one: Habermas ignores the metaphor pertaining to, and the confusion between, the inside and the outside. In Prado Jr.’s terms, the important thing about Freud’s texts is

*the idea that an internal peril [...] is transported to the outside: that other who I am [...] is like a true other, a danger that threatens from the outside towards me.*²²

These are ambiguities and contradictions that pervade the language of the oppressed previously described by Arnold Farr: a semantic field that obeys a particular rhetoric and set of narratives that are distant from the argumentative field defended by Habermas. This is the place of a language so near, but it appears distant; so familiar, but it feels foreign. This is the place of that language towards which Marcuse aims to lead his reader, a semantic field within which discourse is constituted in the register of the unconscious. This is a step that makes Habermas and Marcuse diametrical opposites: for the first, what is needed is a renewed, critical apprehension of ordinary language and the debate on public opinion, attuning the experience of thought to the grammar of the doxa oriented by the

constitution of a democratic State under the rule of law; Marcuse, in turn, will listen to the dissonant noises coming from the discursive community, the ambiguities of the foreign body inhabiting the life-world.

Habermas versus Foucault: the norm of discourse

This distance of the latter in relation to Habermas is a position that seems sensible for Foucault as well: the French author will cast doubts on this therapeutics advanced by Habermas and its utopian-normative horizon. In an interview from 1984, Foucault summarizes said suspicions in the following way:

The idea that there could exist a state of communication that would allow games of truth to circulate freely, without any constraints or coercive effects, seems utopian to me. This is precisely a failure to see that power relations are not something that is bad in itself, that we have to break free of. [...] The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication, but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the ethos, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible.²³

The problem, then, does not lie in one's imagining of such a condition of transparency, but rather in one's failure to question the narrative that

operates communicative normativity. How does said normativity conduct all other conducts? Which practices have been elaborated so that the exercise of freedom is possible? Or, additionally, and bearing Farr's warning in mind, to what an extent can discourses be silenced? What discursive models are relegated to an indeterminate field of suffering? In a way that comes very close to the model of language defended by Marcuse (except, of course, without the burden of repression), Foucault – insofar as he will defend the discoveries of Freud – is himself concerned with that which is “foreign”, the inside which is out, the I who is other, the ambiguities of language.

However, Habermas could insist: wasn't Foucault risking an incursion into the relativism propitiated by instrumental reduction when he deposited into the ambiguities of language and sexuality an objective criterion that is diluted within *praxis*?²⁴ Consequently, Foucault's practice of freedom would be an expression of “performative contradictions”, an endless movement from which every

Counterpower already moves within the horizon of the power that it fights; and it is transformed, as soon as it is victorious, into a power complex that provokes a new counterpower.²⁵

Notwithstanding, Foucault would likely have answered this criticism considering the so-called “counterpower” as a disturbance noise rather than a dispute between two sove-

reigns that aims a place of speech. At the end of Discipline and punishment, Foucault presents his aims at the place without discursive struggles, but «we must hear the distant roar of battle.»²⁶ Again, the metaphor of noise appears as central to diagnosis different from communicative actions.

The aesthetical front

The point here is not the creation of a critical theory of silence, or a genealogy of power that babbles the inexpressible. Rather, it is the recognition that the philosophical exercise understands ordinary language as the product of contradictions (in the case of Marcuse) or as the effect of a network of powers (in the case of Foucault). This understanding allows both philosophers to affirm that while everyday language is a product of a discourse of normativity, there remains something in it which evades such determinations. Perhaps, in his attempt to bring greater clarity to critical normativity, Habermas has operated an excessive reduction of the normative sphere, disregarding the normative specificity of other spheres – that of art in particular. Saddled with an aesthetic deficit, Habermas defends the doxa against philosophy, setting aside not only the latter's dissonant noises, and absences, and overall strangeness, but also other possibilities of language.

The role that art plays in Habermas' perspective could be noted by the text *Technical Progress and the Social Life-World*, that

begins precisely from a disagreement with the aesthetic narrative of Aldous Huxley. The writer of fiction differentiates his literary experience from scientific experience, determining the former to be the narrative of subjective experience as opposed to the objective sphere of technical-scientific experiments. For Habermas, this is a mistaken differentiation, as the question does not pertain to a “disproportion between two cultures” (one objective and the other subjective) but, rather, to the way the life-world is understood in view of instrumental rationality. More than a subjective narration, the life-world is the domain of intersubjectivity and its interactive communicational matrix, within which literature is merely one example – occasionally adequate – brings clarity to opinions, but never to the form of their rationality. At the light of communicative rationality, art lost its mode of intersubjective relation, where silence can express more than words. What is at stake here, finally, is not a defense of pure incommunicability, but an exploration of the frontier between the word and its silencing.

On that topic, Marcuse and Foucault will provide different answers, each author understanding this borderline territory in his own particular way. Both certainly agree with Adorno's aesthetic theory, which states that «no artwork is to be described or explained in terms of the categories of communication.»²⁷ This is a sentence that echoes within the chasm that separates Habermas from

Marcuse and Foucault, as the language sought by the latter two is in no way founded on consensus, but rather on a diffusion of meanings that extends all the way to silence – a language, therefore, that demands self-confrontation. This is a process that communicative action apprehends only as a pathology of privatized language: a silence submitted to the value of the discourse that circulates and normatizes living beings, and which is, therefore, insufficient for any recognition as a critical element in social contexts.

In opposition to this communicational model, aesthetics appears as a foreign body with the potential to significantly divert the discursive order of the world. In this sense, Marcuse and Foucault's interest in aesthetics as a model capable of critically approaching the biopolitical discourse is rather curious; ultimately, they find in it a valuable dislocation that advances not only a counterpoint to the reified discourse of communication, but also a greater appeal for an aesthetic normativity.

It is quite interesting how both Marcuse and Foucault will appeal to aesthetics as the answer to discourse on status quo; more interesting still is the presence in both intellectual experiences of a common aesthetic imperative: "turn your life into a work of art". In *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978), Marcuse develops the concept of "sensuous rationality" for unveiling a new relation to be found in the "inner logic of the work of art", one which culminates «in the

emergence of another reason, another sensibility, which defy the rationality and sensibility incorporated in the dominant social institutions.»²⁸ In his own way, Foucault will also recognize in aesthetic exercises the composition of the critical narrative capable of deactivating apparatuses of power and their technologies of subjectivation; that is precisely what he will term «technologies of the self»²⁹, defined as those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.

This is a passage that marks rather well the degree to which the later Foucault will be concerned with the «aesthetics of existence».³⁰ Actually, this position insinuates itself in modernity through what Foucault terms an «ontology of the actuality».³¹ That, it should be said in passing, was the closest the French philosopher would come to the Marcusean tradition, openly declaring that such an ontology represented "a form of philosophy that, from Hegel to the Frankfurt School, through Nietzsche and Max Weber, has founded the form of reflection within which I have attempted to work."³² The answer to the social noise is presented by an aesthetic normativity where both philosophers will attempt to provide a response to biopolitical normativity, seeing the

aesthetic core of life as a kind of imperative able to refuse – or at the

very least, to resist – being shaped by the apparatuses of governmentality.

Note

- ¹ A. Honneth, *Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflict*, trans. J. Anderson, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995, p. 1.
- ² V. Safatle, *Grand Hotel Abyss: Desire, Recognition and the Restoration of the Subject*, trans. L. Carpinelli, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2015, p. 16.
- ³ J. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarty, Beacon Press, Boston, 1975, p. 36.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ⁶ A. Farr, *Critical Theory and Democratic Vision: Herbert Marcuse and Recent Liberation Philosophies*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, 2009, p. 153.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ H. Marcuse, *The Movement in a New Era of Repression*, in Id., *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, vol. 3, p. 152.
- ⁹ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 91.
- ¹⁰ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarty, Beacon Press, Boston, 1985, vol. 1, p. 99.
- ¹¹ See: H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 92.
- ¹² See: *ibid.*, p. 95.

- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- ¹⁴ See: *ibid.*, p. 93.
- ¹⁵ J. Habermas, *Knowledge and human interests*, trans. T. McCarty, Beacon Press, Boston, 1972, p. 219.
- ¹⁶ B. Prado Jr., *Autorreflexão, ou interpretação sem sujeito? Habermas intérprete de Freud [Self-reflection or subject-free interpretation? Habermas as an interpreter of Freud]*, in Id., *Alguns ensaios: filosofia, literatura, psicanálise, Paz e Terra*, Rio de Janeiro, 2000, 2nd extended edition (my trans.).
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ¹⁸ See: J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, cit., p. 21.
- ¹⁹ J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, cit., p. 250.
- ²⁰ See: *ibid.*, p. 270.
- ²¹ B. Prado Jr., *Autorreflexão, ou interpretação sem sujeito?* cit., p. 17 (my trans.).
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- ²³ M. Foucault, *The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom*, in Id., *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth - Essential Works of Foucault (1954-1984)*, P. Rabinow (ed.), The New Press, New York, 1998, vol. 1, p. 298.
- ²⁴ See: J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. F. Lawrence, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1985, esp. ch. X, *Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again*.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

- ²⁶ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. A. Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York, 1995, p. 308.
- ²⁷ Th.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006, p. 109.
- ²⁸ H. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetic*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1977, p. 7.
- ²⁹ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. R. Hurley, New York, Vintage Books, 1985, vol. 2.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ³¹ M. Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?*, in Id., *The Politics of Truth*, S. Lotringer (ed.), trans. L. Hochroth and C. Porter, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, CA, 2007, p. 95.
- ³² M. Foucault, *The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom*, cit., p. 232.

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The Marcusean inheritance as a possibility not yet realized: from a pre- to a post-technological culture and society

Federico SOLLAZZO

Abstract. *The main constrains in heritage of One-Dimensional Man is to leave open the chance for a radical change in the possible continuation of our civilization towards a two-dimensional society, and this may be possible thanks to the level of development reached by current technology. Indeed, there is already a two-dimensional society in our past that Marcuse defines as led by the pre-technological culture. This seems to be a paradox and a contradiction: how to realize a two-dimensional society through and thanks to advanced technology, if the only example we have of such two-dimensionality is given by the pre-technological culture?.*

Keywords: *Marcuse, Technology, Society, Culture.*

Introduction

One-Dimensional Man¹ is the work through which Marcuse carries on the critique of Western society, already begun with *Eros and Civilization*² but now stressing new topics in such a way that a possible subtitle for the book could be: technology and civilization. A book that does not absolutely define a hopeless landscape.³ Sometimes it returns the question of the “pessimism” in *One-Dimensional Man*. Regarding this, I believe simply that the book is realistic. Indeed, in his 1964 book Marcuse traces a dark scenery which is, however, not completely compromised, there are

social cracks in which a new society could take place. Later, he sees the concrete possibilities to realize something completely different, a new phase in Western civilization – this is mainly represented in *An Essay on Liberation* and *The end of utopia*. However, even after, he ascertains the paradox that there are concrete possibilities – this is the emancipatory side of automation – but nobody seems able to grasp them. In fact, his final work, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, is devoted, following a Nietzschean suggestion, as a book for all and none.⁴ In other terms, a possible solution for pacifying existence is at our fingertips, but is there someone able to grab it?

It is precisely this condition that opens the intensive search for a new “revolutionary” subject. Even Marcuse’s biography militates against the interpretation of his pessimism: if he had found no chances in the one-dimensional society, why did he decide to stay in it instead of fleeing when, at the end of World War II, he had the opportunity to depart from it coming back to Germany? (Mind you, I do not want to identify the one-dimensional society only with USA society, it was just (still is?) its main emblem).

On the contrary, the book is a harsh criticism of the industrial advanced society that not for this reason is depicted as a black monolith. In fact, inside it, fractures, possible breaking points are identified.⁵ To dwell there trying to widen them is precisely the purpose of that criticism. Exactly for this reason a very important *pars construens*, sometimes underestimated, is present in the book, where the Author leaves open the chance for a radical change in the possible future development of our civilization, towards a two-dimensional society. The latter is finally possible thanks to the current level of intellectual and material development reached by the industrial advanced society. Consequently, technology plays a crucial role in this possibility. But there is already a two-dimensional society in our past that Marcuse defines as led by the pre-technological culture. It is

followed by the technological culture, who Marcuse introduces in these terms «our society distinguishes itself by conquering the centrifugal social forces with Technology rather than terror, on the dual basis of an overwhelming efficiency and an increasing standard of living.»⁶

This seems to be a paradox and a contradiction. The two pillars of any Critical Theory of society, as Marcuse characterized them, are «1. The judgment that human life is worth living (...) 2. The judgment that, in a given society, specific possibilities exist for the amelioration of human life and specific ways and means of realizing these possibilities.»⁷ Still, how to realize a two-dimensional society through and thanks to advanced technology, if the only example we have of this two-dimensionality is given by the pre-technological culture? Nevertheless, for the American/German philosopher a solution is definitely handy, handy because *historical*: «the “possibilities” must be within the reach of the respective society: they must be definable goals of practice.»⁸ The solution lies in the fact that Marcuse points towards and opens to a new kind of two-dimensional society, in which, «by virtue of the rigorously historical character of the transcendence»,⁹ art and higher culture guarantee for it and technology permits its concrete realization.

This kind of social setting has its ground in a post-technological

culture. Where post- does not mean a refusing and/or a deleting of technology as such, but its absorption in and subjection to another form of Reason (evidently, not instrumental).

This hermeneutics, besides offering a panel of the *construens* side of the book, definitely subtracts Marcuse to any kind of conservative interpretation, as if he had criticized technology as such instead of a certain kind of relation that individuals are addicted to have with it, showing and confirming the continuous progressivism of his thought. Moreover, throughout this interpretation it is possible to overcome some Marxist-orthodox views, and establish an interesting comparison with the Hegelian master-slave dialectic.¹⁰

Preliminary Issue

In the following pages I would like to address the core topic of *One-Dimensional Man*, that is the dialectic between the pre- and the post-technological culture, because it opens towards the Marcusean conception of Critical Theory. However, before do that, there are some issues I would like to briefly clarify in order to avoid possible misunderstandings in the continuation of the paper; namely, a rejection of possible objections to the Marcusean discourse on technology.

At first, because for Marcuse liberation requires a constant technological development, as a primary

mean against *Lebensnot*, in the struggle for existence, and because the technological apparatus has developed itself in a repressive way, then an increasing in the technological development would also be an increasing in alienation.¹¹ In this perspective technology and alienation are unavoidably bound together as directly proportional to each other – this risks to be a very conservative interpretation of the Marcusean question of technology. Still, in Marcuse's thought, technology and alienation are not necessarily but *historically* linked together. Indeed, the fact that until today technological progress has been realized under the mark of repression and domain, does not absolutely mean that another kind of technological development outside the mark of alienation may not be possible.¹² This is precisely the question (that will be addressed in the subsequent pages) of the transition from a technological to a post-technological culture.

Also, though Marcuse writes that «qualitative change seems to presuppose a *quantitative* change in the advanced standard of living, namely, *reduction of overdevelopment*»,¹³ this criticism of overdevelopment is not assimilable to that of the so-called “degrowth theories”.¹⁴ Indeed, for Marcuse to militate against overdevelopment does not mean to militate against development as such, but versus a certain kind of development that is nothing but a vehicle of propagation

of the instrumental rationality. Moreover, and especially, the Marcusean criticism of overdevelopment is for sure aimed at a liberation of the human being, but in very different terms from those of most of nowadays degrowth theories: «liberation from the affluent society does not mean return to healthy and robust poverty, moral cleanliness, and simplicity.»¹⁵

Moreover. The problem we face with *One-Dimensional Man*, and in spite of significant changes which are still outstanding nowadays, is the transformation of the struggle for existence from a natural issue to a political decision.

With “significant changes” I mean what I propose to be seen as the completion of a parabola, which, what is more, explains why the Critical Theory of society has no longer a relevant appeal on the new social protest movements. Somewhere,¹⁶ this lack of appeal has been related to the deficiency of a prosperity able to guarantee for the future, which characterized the earlier era. Unlike this, I would suggest to relate this lack of appeal in the completion of the consciousness colonization, a dynamics resumable as follows. Consumerism, as it is arisen in the first phase of the advanced industrial society, was not just an economic, capitalist question. It was a phenomenon of absorption of consciousness into the realm of the established order of things, seductively proposed, through the hedonistic fascination of objects, as

the best possible one. Presently, this dynamics of absorption has definitively happened, the established order of things appears not as the best one but as the only one (not as a possible order, but as the only possible order). Thus, investments that conveyed and supported this order have no longer reason to be maintained, they may be suspended. In other words, in the second half of last century, goods have spread a certain ideology, and now that ideology is definitively absorbed and ossified into individuals, it is possible to overhaul and reset the vehicle of its diffusion. I propose reading the current global economic crisis under this perspective.

This dynamics has resulted in the absorption and the containment of the transcending, of the excess of human being in front of any established situation. To be sure, this does not mean that the one-dimensional society is a totally administered society, completely impermeable to critical thought. There are still possible breaking points. However, if this kind of society works by containing and absorbing the antagonism, the possible transcendence, and if a large part of its population seems to interiorize this mechanism – what Marcuse named as “repressive desublimation” –, this means that the possibilities of liberation present in it can be grabbed only from an already free man. The latter point rises at least two aftermaths, already addressed by Marcuse, but that we have to

update. It is my intention to approach them in the conclusions of this paper.

From the Pre- to the Post-Technological Civilization¹⁷

According to Marcuse, there was already a two-dimensional society. It was the world of the pre-technological culture, and it was two-dimensional exactly for this. It held values that were other from the established reality, indeed «its authentic works expressed a conscious, methodical alienation from the entire sphere of business and industry, and from its calculable profitable order».¹⁸ That was a kind of second, transcendent reality that in this form took place in the material reality, shaping it. Still, to this pre-technological culture corresponded a pre-technological society. That is to say, a society dominated by suffering and toil, pain and fear, a society under the mark of *Ananke* and *Lebensnot* and into which the struggle for existence was not a problem just for a privileged minority, inasmuch as it was «a world with the good conscience of inequality and toil, in which labor was still a misfortune; but a world in which man and nature were not yet organized as things and instrumentalities [...] It is an outdated and surpassed culture, and only dreams and childlike regression can recapture it. But this culture is, in some of its decisive elements, also a post-technological one».¹⁹

This was the form of the past phase of our civilization.

Subsequently, another kind of society arose. A society better organized in solving the struggle for existence, thanks to the technological development. So, a technological society, able to guarantee a comfortable life to the large part of its members. Still, this society is²⁰ able to carry out this task through a particular use of technology and a particular relation man engages with. A relation that stills maintain *Lebensnot*, just through another way: no longer *Ananke* via nature, but *Ananke* via technology.²¹ A relationship which promotes instrumental rationality to the best, and so gradually to the only one, form of rationality, that permeates the life of all and all the life, making disappearing the second transcendent reality in the triumph of the established order of things. Thus, to the technological society corresponds the technological culture, synthesized by Marcuse with the word operationalism;²² shaping in this way the current form of civilization. However, as I wrote, the link between society and culture is never a necessity, but it is ever a historical dialectic. This means that somewhere it should be possible to cut the bond which ties together the advanced technological society and its culture in terms of operationalism.

Therefore, the question that arises is: is the technological society obliged to be led from a techno-

logical culture, namely operationalism? If the answer were yes, this would establish a mechanistic relation between society and culture. Nevertheless, as I said, the relation between them is not necessary but dialectical. This means: there are historical reasons that determined it, therefore there are historical possibilities to break and reconfigure it. Which are the first and which the latter?

The Marcusean thought about it, is known, i.e. the reason why technology affirmed itself in our civilization is nothing but because it is a valid mean, the best one mankind has,²³ in the struggle for existence. However, codifying instrumental rationality more and more in theoretical terms, our civilization determined a unique line of theoretical development from the Aristotelian formal logic to the affirmation of operationalism, passing through, as main stations, Descartes, the birth of exact sciences as autonomous field of knowledge, and positivism.²⁴

Though, I would like to point out that maybe Marcuse underestimated another factor which in the advanced industrial society contributes to the affirmation of operationalism: the hedonistic power of fascination by technological advanced objects, the so-called hi-tech.²⁵

Anyway, what I would like to emphasize one more time, is that this is not an unavoidable law but a historical possibility that has been realized. Now, because in any

conditions, even in the worst possible society and culture, the human being is always bearer of a possible excess, surplus, which can overflow any *status quo*,²⁶ it follows that other historical possibilities may always be realized. Precisely here lies the chance for the rising of a post-technological culture applied to a technological society. Permitting so to open a new historical phase in our civilization, nameable as post-technological,²⁷ in which society is not technophobic but freely uses technology, permitting its further development as instrument to solve the struggle for existence, ameliorating the concrete life conditions towards the pacification of life, nevertheless, subjecting technological rationality to another kind of Reason. Another kind of reason that Marcuse never defines in detail, just because this is (will be) the task of each future generation – maybe the task of this one, is to show why, any kind of reason it will be, may never be the instrumental one. Under this regard, Marcuse enlightened the ambiguity of technology as the reason why people are not free and the reason thanks to which people could be free – in other words, a liberation thanks to technology from any form of slavery, beginning with that new kind of totalitarian slavery promoted even through technology.²⁸

Hence, the paradoxical situation described by Marcuse is that, on the one side, mankind has finally, for the first time in the history, a level

of intellectual and material development sufficient to overcome Ananke in a technological society guided by a post-technological culture – where post- does not mean the overtaking of technology as such but that of the instrumental rationality, thus, a reorientation of the whole technological apparatus that is currently set –, still on the other side, it is not possible to clearly find who may be a possible social subject able to grab this historical opportunity, thinking, acting and living in a transcendent way, according to the critical and dialectical thought.

This is the wall Marcuse could not climb, oscillating amidst various social subjects (from the intellectuals to the students, to the so-called outsiders), to the point that he will dedicate his last book for none and for all.

I rebuilt the basic lines of the Marcusean project in order to introduce the following conclusions, where I would like, at first, to add two remarks to that project as I sketched it above, and also to build a sort of bridge, made by two proposals, able to bind and so integrate the core of the construens side of *One-Dimensional Man* with the particular features of the society of these first decades of the third millennium.

Being in search of a Marcusean inheritance means, at first, to comprehend that, even before the stressed particular topics, the general perspective is neither that of spiritualism, nor that of mere political

activism. It is not spiritualism because the starting point is the concrete real situation in which we are and the arrival is a possible transforming of it. It is not mere political activism because that transforming is essentially transcendence originarily free from any activity, or better, transcendence in itself is already the activity.

It would be too long to follow now the Marcusean argument on this regard. At this moment, I just would like to clarify that when Marcuse criticizes the dynamics of the bourgeois culture that operates «separating “culture” from the everyday world»,²⁹ thus narrowing art as an object of spiritual contemplation (and so, happiness in the real world, just as an internal form of happiness) detached from the real world that, then, it is no longer able to shape (suppression of the “artistic alienation”), well, his criticism is twofold. On the one side, it is clear the criticism to spiritualism. Yet, on the other, it is inferable a criticism to mere activism (it is a pity he did not develop extensively this side of his argumentation, because exactly here lies the answer to whom see in him a kind of paternalism that simply invite youths to act) meant as the realization of something in the real world in order to escape from mere inconclusive speculation; in Marcuse, indeed, there is not such an issue because «epistemology is itself ethics and ethics is epistemology»,³⁰ then a dialectical contact between individuality and real world

is precluded so much from the withdrawal from the reality into the interiority (spiritualism), as from the duty of doing something concrete in the reality (activism), a duty completely extraneous to the art, to the higher culture, to the dialectical thought but that, not paradoxically, they realize exactly because this task is extraneous to them.

In other words, if what is at stake here is the transcendence, then, it is denied both from a withdrawal from reality (in this case, there would be nothing left to transcend) and from a permanence in the reality (in this case, there would be no longer transcendence)

Conclusions

To conclude, I would like to stress two remarks, which appear to me as essential in comprehending Marcusean thought, finally presenting two proposals.

1st Remark. To pose the relation between society and culture not in a mechanism but in a dialectical relationship – maybe it is possible to say, an apophantic relation, in which things could be, even in the realm of the historical possibilities, in a certain way or in another for reasons that are not merely mechanistic – means to be far from a certain Marxist orthodoxy that fixes this relation as a necessity elapsing between the so-called structure and superstructure, explaining it in mere materialistic terms. Consequently, political economy becomes the best,

even the only one, theoretical tool to decipher the world.

Differently, without denying the value of political economy, Marcuse introduces in this perspective an element which escapes from any rigid determinism, the role of the consciousness, often defined as excess.³¹ So, the passing from political economy to Critical Theory of society in understanding the world. Now I would like to note that this transition from political economy to Critical Theory is not a critique or a refusal of Marxian theory but, on the contrary, it is the accomplishment of such theory until the ultimate aftermaths. Indeed, if producing goods also means producing social relationships and thus the structure of society, we have to observe that nowadays production passes through technology, it is a technological gesture. It follows that «today domination perpetuates and extends itself not only through technology but as technology».³² The primary issue at stake here is no longer economical, but technological.

Moreover, let me express a kind of petty sub-remark as a possible confirmation of my first remark above. The fact that we are not in front of a mechanism but a historical dialectic is confirmed considering that in mechanistic terms it would be not possible to justify the presence of *differences* in a situation in which all members share among them the same concrete conditions of life (unless using a very rigid sort of atomistic theory, which negates any

kind of freedom to individuals,³³ more or less just like an extreme kind of *clinamen* theory).

2nd Remark. *One-Dimensional Man* is entirely crossed by a dialectic Marcuse establishes by capital and technology, until the point that sometimes it has been spoken of techno-capitalism.³⁴ However, the latter definition risks holding an ambiguity, that, really, not even Marcuse himself solved – and maybe this is the reason why it sometimes comes back amid his scholars. Though he did not clarify it just because fifty years ago the interaction between capital and technology was still confused, in an initial, rough form. At that time a locution as techno-capitalism was in line with the (that) present. But nowadays we are immersed in a social situation never experimented before. In earlier phases of capitalistic development and in historical totalitarianisms, technology was the slave, someone/something else was the master; today, technology, nay instrumental rationality, is the master. Yet, differently from the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, the more competences the slave acquires, the stronger becomes the master, insofar as the first uses the form of rationality of the latter.

Anyway, what I would like to argue, is that techno-capitalism seems to me a good term to express the previous stage of our civilization, more or less the age lived by Marcuse himself: a phase in which capitalism uses technology. Yet,

today, in a register and milieu that of course is foreign to Marcuse and the earlier generation of critical theorists, things have changed. Now technology uses capitalism, and though they are still allied, a possible suppression of the latter does not imply the necessary suppression of the former. Technology nowadays is autonomous, it is the new ideology, applicable to everyone and everything. Its core is efficiency for efficiency, blind efficiency – and this core can work both inside and outside from current virtuality. This is the reason why the locution techno-capitalism seems to be unable to depict the present. Today we are not in front of an element, technology, which impacts society with changes that are relevant economically, politically, sociologically, even anthropologically, but without affecting the essence of society and individual, an essence that would still remain that imposed by capital. On the contrary, the main effect that technological rationality produces is a sensible change in the ontology of society and in the consciousness of individual: a phylogenetic and ontogenetic turn in civilization.

Besides, we have to note that Marcuse himself seems to be more inclined to consider the issue of technology than that of capitalism:

Marx held that organization and direction of the productive apparatus by the "immediate producers" would introduce a qualitative change in the technical continuity [...]

*However, to the degree to which the established technical apparatus engulfs the public and private existence in all spheres of society [...] to that degree would the qualitative change involve a change in the technological structure itself.*³⁵

According to what is argued above, it seems to me that it is no longer possible to speak of an equal relation between capital and technology, and the time has come to think about a prosecution of that dialectic, i.e. a new phase of it. Hence, I would like to propose a possible prosecution of the dialectic between capital and technology.

In reality, I admit that my proposal is not so original, still it seems to well fit with the current time. It is nothing but the application to capital and technology of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic.³⁶ Indeed, if we look to the dynamics of capital we can note that throughout all of its progress it has made use, always and gradually increasing, of technology. The more it enhanced itself the more it enhanced the technology it used. Capital was the master. Technology was the slave (furthermore, a similar dialectic was before established between political power and capital). A slave which finally, as in the Hegelian dialectic, has become the master. This idea finds a confirmation in at least two respects.

At first, under this regard there is confirmation for the Marcusean idea that one of the main changes in the prosecution of the previous ideolo-

gy³⁷ of domain in the industrial (technological) advanced society, is the fact that the ideology of the latter is impersonal. It is not possible to precisely find in it a leader (or a group of), as instead it was in the past, with the figures of “industries’ captains” and/or political *Führer*. To be sure, political and financial oligarchies still exist, and of course they have a certain decisional autonomy. But to whom they respond if not to the instrumental rationality?

Furthermore, we are used to thinking of the financial markets as the temples of capital. But this is wrong. They are temples of technology. Indeed, where is capital in them if not in data? Who manages data? What would happen if this manager disappeared, for instance due to a black out?

Now, it would seem that, according to the master-slave dialectic, there would be no means to avoid or escape this issue: the triumph of technology, namely instrumental rationality, as new impersonal *Führer* of an ideology without leader(s). Still, one more time, the solution lies in considering that we are not treating fixed mechanisms, but dialectical (i.e. historical). Indeed, in the Hegelian master-slave dialectic there is a fundamental trait we cannot forget to deal with: the will of the slave to become master. One more time, it is not a mechanism, but a human excess we are faced with. Consequently, technology becomes master not because it desires, has the will, to become so,

but just because individuals, consciously or not, let it become such a master, electing and accepting it as impersonal master. A master that is nowhere identifiable, and exactly for this it is everywhere.

Now, before introducing my little proposals arisen from *One-Dimensional Man*, I would like to clarify something, nay, to reject a possible objection, to the Marcusean project about technology and so about the possible transition from a pre- to a post-technological civilization, that if not refuted risks affecting all reasoning about it.

This kind of criticism Marcuse met in the work of Simondon.³⁸ In short, it affirms that because technics is domain, it is not possible to use it for freeing and saving men (and so the world) which use it, from the issue of domain itself. Such position is very dangerous because it risks being an anti-modern, technophobic, conservative position, that supports a world in which toil, suffering, pain, earning a living, in short Ananke, cannot be overtaken. Very far from this, the Marcusean post-technological civilization inserts technology in another paradigm of thought than the technological one, foreshadowing a society which uses and develops technology as a main tool in the struggle against *Lebensnot*, but at the same time uses another form of rationality to organize itself than the instrumental one.³⁹ This is possible thanks to the power of transcending, thanks to the excess from the given

situation, that is a permanent faculty of individual (indeed, Marcuse never speaks of deleting of transcendence, but always speaks about its containment).⁴⁰

To confirm how the Marcusean view of a post-technological civilization is immune from such criticism, let me add a personal remark. In any slave society, did the masters have the same kind of *forma mentis* and *modus vivendi* of the slaves? This is precisely the point: enslaving technology, contracting it our struggle for existence, without being affected from the form of rationality of the slave, and this is possible if and when the master preserves his faculty of transcending.

What is more, this project and perspective clearly shows, if it were again needed, that what is at stake here is not an academic issue but nothing less than our lives: in what way technology affects individuals and thus society and, in so doing, determines a whole civilization – because the «whole is not merely a perceived *Gestalt* (as in psychology), nor a metaphysical absolute (as in Hegel), nor a totalitarian state (as in poor political science) – it is the established state of affairs which determines the life of the individuals»⁴¹ – and in which other terms it can (ought to) be replaced.

I can now finally pass to the concluding proposals.

1. The *vexata quaestio* of the new social subject of a possible social change. Marcuse already stressed that it cannot be nothing but a

transversal, inter-classes (in the classical meaning of class) subject. But he did not find it. Indeed, basically, the subject for a social change can be nobody but those who live badly in society itself. However, in the advanced industrial society, namely the one-dimensional society, either nobody lives badly, and this is the ascending phase of consumerism, or those who live badly are by now so integrated into the system to be able to only ask for benefits contained, and so confirming it, into the social, economical, linguistic, cultural order, border of the established society,⁴² and this is the current phase of capitalism in an advanced technological society where consumer goods are not anymore necessary to be diffused as representative of the one-dimensional society; that is nothing but a new articulation of the same ideology of domain that crosses all the Western civilization.⁴³

Today, 50 years after this original thematization, trying to overpass this issue, I propose considering the subject for a possible change, of which we are still in search of, not directly as a social but primarily as an individual subject. This way of reconfiguring the question, is nothing but the prosecution of what Marcuse already fixed:

*all liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude, and the emergence of this consciousness is always hampered by the predominance of needs and satisfactions which, to a great extent, have become the individual's own.*⁴⁴

This kind of approach would permit both, to underline that the social situation derives from individual (each individual) conscience, and to shift the attention from the individuation of the social subject to the identification of the social aggregative dynamics, in organizing such individuals, that may be immune from the well-known problems of the mass culture, of the society of the spectacle, of the industry of (cultural) entertainment. Therefore, a new question arises: how to socialize a feeling that is, originally, individual? The subsequent point is so introduced.

2. The primary problem any Critical Theory of society faces today, is not theoretical but practical. It is no longer to conceptualize the intellectual and consciousness profile of the antagonistic (in front of any *status quo*) new social subject of a possible change, but to identify new aggregative ways of it, out of the repressive desublimation's dynamics. A problem that is multiplied to nowadays new forms of power and communication, considering the means used to communicate and aggregate already as a vehicle of this repression already and as able to absorb in it (of course, not in the form of rejecting alleged alternatives, but in that of support of a false version of them) any kind of antagonistic value. Will these values survive in a dormant form, or will they be corroded and forgotten until the complete self-consumption of man and society?

Looking for a possible answer to the previous question, I believe we should not be afraid in taking a couple of preliminary steps that, on the one side, could seem illiberal, and on the other, break with a long tradition of thinking – but that are nothing but the creation of circumstances suitable for an authentic reasoning: the deleting of all that is today pro(/im)posed as a token of freedom, but is nothing but the building of an invisible cage in the form of the repressive desublimation, and the breaking with the theory of the liberation “from below” that was undoubtedly a progressive element in the past but is turned into a conservative rhetoric nowadays.⁴⁵

According to this, maybe a possible solution could be to take any critical discourses primarily as a discourse for a narrowed audience,⁴⁶ whose first issue is not so much social analysis in itself (already extensively developed), but rather studying how to involve a broader audience into this discourse without turning it in something inauthentic – and this is already a question of social, political and cultural analysis.

In other terms, when people not (entirely) subjected to the repressive desublimation are looking for a collective form of organization, they become unavoidably subjected to the mass-culture and mass-mediatic dynamics, led by technology, and this dynamics progressively increase with this kind of technological development.

On the contrary, if higher culture ever needs for an “elitist” dimension

– «would not an art which rebels against integration into the market [but the same for any kind of integration] necessarily appears as “elitist”?»⁴⁷ – the same goes for the organization of the antagonism.

Concluding, the work of Marcuse, from *Eros and Civilization* to *The end of utopia, An Essay of Liberation* and *The Aesthetic Dimension*, passing through the “lintel” of *One-Dimensional Man*, provides a foundation for a Critical Theory of society able to merge together the theoretical side and the empirical data. The theoretical side is to be meant as the permanent commitment for a progressive emancipation from any kind of *Lebensnot*, as biological, so brought from nature, as societal, so brought from the form of the social organization. The empirical data are to be meant as the given form of social organization in a certain, historical, situation.

Exactly for this, *One-Dimensional Man* can still provide such a foundation for Critical Theory. However, it cannot anymore provide the tools to accomplish, concretely realize it – means for which I proposed above two possible reconfigurations, certainly to be improved, if accepted.

All of this, according to an idea that I propose to take as a main point of any Critical Theory: an idea can be progressive only as long as it is not yet realized.

Note

- ¹ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of the Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1964.
- ² Id., *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1955.
- ³ To settle this issue it should already be sufficient to remember the information given to the reader: the book «will vacillate throughout between two contradictory hypotheses: (1) that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future; (2) that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. xlv). Or, in other words, «rather than conceptualizing contemporary societies as closed monoliths of domination, they should be analyzed as system of contradictions, tensions, and conflicts which oscillate from stasis to change, from oppression and domination to struggle and resistance, and from stability and containment to conflict and crisis» (D. Kellner, *Introduction to the Second Edition*, in H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. xxxiv).
- ⁴ See: both by H. Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, and *The end of utopia*, in Id., *Five Lectures: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia*, trans. J.J. Shapiro and S.M. Weber, Beacon Press, Boston, 1970, 62-82, and *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward A Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. E. Sherover, Beacon Press, Boston, 1979, 31.
- ⁵ «Philosophical project [...] pertains to a specific stage and level of the societal development, and the critical philosophic concepts refer (no matter how indirectly!) to alternative possibilities of this development» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 222). Years later, in works such as *An Essay on Liberation* and *The end of utopia*, Marcuse tried to expand the liberating and alternative tendencies still present into the one-dimensional society, and even when, at the end of his life, he did not find social forces that seem able to apply for them, as in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, he never negated that, in spite of the absence of a social subject that may realize them, those tendencies still are present.
- ⁶ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. xl.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xli.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xlii.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. xli-xlii.
- ¹⁰ See: G.W.F. Hegel, *The Truth of Self-Certainty*, in Id., *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. Miller, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977.
- ¹¹ See: L. Casini, *Eros e utopia. Arte, sensualità e liberazione nel pensiero di Herbert Marcuse*, Carocci, Roma, 1999. Among other places, Marcuse diffusely writes on the fulfillment of the technical reason, and on its transcending, in the chapter *The Catastrophe of Liberation*, in *One-Dimensional Man*.
- ¹² An emblematic sample of this is given in his *Eros and Civilization*, cit., p. 216, when Marcuse describes the way of life of Arapesh as an

efficient path in the struggle against *Ananke*, but not for this reason repressive and alienated. Moreover, this differentiation in the way to intend technology, one strictly bound with domination and one (at least quite) free from it, seems to have its roots in the Heideggerian distinction between technics as “Bringing-forth” and as “challenge”. See: M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, in Id., *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt, Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1977.

¹³ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 246.

¹⁴ Emblematic examples from one of the today’s most known authors on this topic: S. Latouche, *Vers une société d’abondance frugale. Contresens et controverses sur la décroissance*, Fayard / Mille et une nuits, Paris, 2011, Id., *De-growth, Inequality and Poverty, in Sustainable development Policies for Minor Deprived Urban Communities*, P. Ventura and E. Calderon and M. Tiboni (eds.), McGraw-Hill, Milano, 2011, pp. 71-79.

¹⁵ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 247.

¹⁶ See: M. Forman, “One-Dimensional Man and the Crisis of Neoliberal Capitalism: Revisiting Marcuse in the Occupation”, in «Radical Philosophy Review», n. 2, 2013, pp. 507-528.

Moreover, it is interesting to note that a theory of hedonism of objects, that seems to very well fits with the Marcusean argumentations, was autonomously elaborated by Pier Paolo Pasolini. On this topic, I

permit to report the following paper of mine: F. Sollazzo, *Pasolini e la “mutazione antropologica”*, in E. Pîrvu (ed.), *Discorso, identità e cultura nella lingua e nella letteratura italiana*, Universitaria, Craiova, 2013, pp. 419-434.

¹⁷ To approach the question of the building of a post-technological society, it is preliminary helpful to fix the meaning of the main terms I’m going to use – a meaning defined to me according to what Marcuse expresses in *One-Dimensional Man*.

With culture, I mean a system of values. A values’ system that certainly arises from the concrete structure of society and has then significant effects on it, heavily affecting it. But, what I would like to clearly stress is that the dynamics who links together a concrete society’s structure with a values’ system and the latter with a possible new society’s structure and so on, it is not a necessity, a mechanism, but a dialectical bond. It means: not an imperative, but a possibility which becomes real for particular historical reasons. To be sure, in the context of the one-dimensional society the borders of this dialectic becomes more and more tight, and this dynamics seems to be nothing but an automatic mechanism. Still, it remains a dialectic, namely something historical. Precisely here lies the permanent possibility to turn a historical choice (though unconsciously taken) in another historical choice (hopefully aware).

With society, I mean the above concrete social structure, that produces and that is affected by a system of values, even if it happens

in a not necessary, mechanistic, but historical dialectics.

With civilization, I mean the whole kind of world that intellectually (culture) and materially (society) human being (consciously or not) produces.

¹⁸ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 61-62.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

²⁰ Now we have to use the present form, because we are speaking of the one-dimensional society, that, notwithstanding its updates of the last decades, is still the society in which we live.

²¹ Maybe, it is not worthless to underline that Marcuse's thought is in no extent conservative because his criticism is aimed at a certain use (and subjection to it) we made and make of technology, and in no measure towards technology as such.

²² «Operationalism, in theory and practice, becomes the theory and practice of containment». This is clearly possible to observe in the linguistic tendency according to which «words and concepts tend to coincide, or rather the concepts tends to be absorbed by the word. The former has no other content than that designated by the word in the publicized and standardized usage, and the word is expected to have no other response than the publicized and standardized behavior (reaction). The word becomes *cliché* and, as *cliché*, governs the speech or the writing; the communication thus precludes genuine development of meaning». Also «the noun governs the sentence in an authoritarian and totalitarian fashion, and the sentence becomes a declaration to be accepted – it repels demonstration, qualify-

cation, negation of its codified and declared meaning». Ultimately «the closed language does not demonstrate and explain – it communicates decision, dictum, command» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., pp. 19, 90, 91, 105). This seems to be even the fate, whether not already the current state, of the word democracy, reduced to a predefined set of operations not to think about, but just to execute.

²³ Here lies an interesting possible link with that piece of the modern philosophical anthropology that characterizes technics as a necessary anthropological datum. As main reference in this regard: A. Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, Columbia U.P., New York, 1980.

²⁴ «Under the rule of formal logic [...] well defined in their scope and function, concepts become instruments of prediction and control. Formal logic is thus the first step of the long road to scientific thought – the first step only, for a much higher degree of abstraction is still required to adjust the modes of thought to technological rationality [...] The scientific concept of a universally controllable nature projected nature as endless matter-in-function, the mere stuff of theory and practice. In this form, the object-world entered the construction of a technological universe – a universe of mental and physical instrumentalities, means in themselves [...] *the process of technological rationality is a political process* [...] Only in the medium of technology, man and nature become fungible objects of organization [...] technology has become the great vehicle of *reification* [...] The world tends to

become the stuff of total administration, which absorbs even the administrators [...] Under these conditions, scientific thought (scientific in the larger sense, as opposed to muddled, metaphysical, emotional, illogical thinking) outside the physical sciences assumes the form of a pure and self-contained formalism (symbolism) on the one hand, and a total empiricism on the other» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., pp. 141, 172, 173); the sentence emphasized by me, explains why «epistemology is in itself ethics, and ethics is epistemology» (p. 129). In contrast with formal logic, «dialectical thought is and remains unscientific to the extent to which it is such judgment, and the judgment is imposed upon dialectical thought by the nature of its *object* [...] This object is the reality in its true concreteness [...] Dialectical logic cannot be formal because it is determined by the real, which is concrete» (p. 144).

It is noteworthy that Marcuse was elaborating this thematization since the lectures he gave in the academic year 1958/1959 by the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes of Paris – partially published as “De l’ontologie à la technologie. Les tendances de la société industrielle”, in «Arguments», n. 18, 1960, pp. 54-59. Moreover, this theming, and all the Marcusean thought on technology, clearly brings in itself the legacy of the Heideggerian reflection on technics, with his differentiation between the ancient notion of *aition* and the modern scientific idea of “cause”, and technology as *pōiesis* as bringing-forth, and as challenge.

²⁵ See: footnote 16.

²⁶ For the main reflections on society and desire in which lie possible touch points with the Marcusean perspective, see: G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, cit., S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. J. Strachey, Norton, New York, 1961, G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. R. Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane, Minnesota U.P., Minneapolis, 1983, J. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan VI: Desire and its Interpretation*, trans. C. Gallagher, Karnak, London, 2002, S. Žižek, *How to Read Lacan*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2007.

²⁷ As it is known, the main value that make possible the transfiguration of the other ones, is what Marcuse defines as the «Great Refusal – the protest against that which is» (*One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 66), a refusal that is «progressively closed by the advancing technological society» (p. 67), paying its tribute to a *Zeitgeist* resumable in this paraphrase: what is real is rational though what is rational is not yet real. Great Refusal seems to be a possible application of the “apophantic logos/logic”. Now, it is not the aim of these pages to directly approach the issue of the Great Refusal. Nevertheless, I would like to stress that the fact by which «the “other dimension” is absorbed into the prevailing state of affairs» (p. 67), is made possible in virtue of the advancement of the massification and popularization of culture – of course, it is not the cultural diffusion in itself to be a problem, but a

diffusion in banalized forms according to the needs of the entertainment system. In other terms, today it seems to be extremely urgent fix that it is not possible have culture always and in every circumstance. Culture needs for particular times, spaces and conditions that respect its essence – that is to be oriented toward nothing but culture itself; otherwise, it is just the executive of something else.

Moreover, in line with the aims envisaged by the Great Refusal it is possible analyze the current social protest movements (from Occupy to the so-called Arab Spring, as main samples). But the aim I have in such an investigation is not to discuss if and how much such movements are ideological and radical – this is one of the main topics of the correspondence between Marcuse and Löwenthal here published: H. Marcuse and L. Löwenthal, “The Dialectics of Liberation and Radical Activism: An Exchange of Letters between Herbert Marcuse and Leo Löwenthal”, trans. Ch. Reitz, in «Radical Philosophy Review», n. 1, 2013, pp. 21-23. The source of these movements can be located in the legitimation crises of the advanced capitalist society – see: L. Langman, “Capitalism, Crises, and ‘Great Refusals’: Critical Theory, Social Movements, and Utopian Visions,” in «Radical Philosophy Review», n. 1, 2013, pp. 349-374 – however, the crucial point is to investigate if they have a kernel of authentic criticism toward to established society, or whether they represent a form of criticism *a priori* already contained in the realm of the established order of things (about which, they just

would ask to take their part) and, in the latter case, if and how would be possible imagine new escape lines; on this topic: F. Sollazzo, “Through Sartre and Marcuse: For a Realistic Utopia”, in «Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria: Filosofie», n. 32, 2013, pp. 90-100,

http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/analele_universitatii/filosofie/2013/Anale31.pdf, accessed on 30 September 2016.

(Moreover, among many university activities held during 2014 to acknowledge and push forward Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*, I permit myself to report the lecture I held in English the October 9, 2014 by the Faculty of Arts of the University of Szeged, titled “Herbert Marcuse: *Az egydimenziós ember – 50 évvel később*” (Herbert Marcuse: *One-Dimensional Man – 50 years later*); also, in the 1st semester 2014/2015 I devoted to this topic one of my courses by the Dept. of Philosophy of the University of Szeged, in the form of a commented reading of the book, and in the 1st semester 2016/2017, another course on comparison between the socio-political philosophical perspectives of Marcuse and those of Pasolini.)

²⁸ «Automation indeed appears to be the great catalyst of the industrial advanced society [...] the technical instrument of the turn from quantity to quality [...] Complete automation in the realm of necessity would open the dimension of free time as the one in which man’s private *and* societal existence would constitute itself. This would be the historical transcendence toward a new civilization» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 40). Still, though Marcuse writes that «automation is

- more than quantitative growth of mechanization» (*One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 38), he intends automation just like an accumulation of resources. However, fixing the qualitative leap only in a quantitative accumulation of something (automation) there is the risk to underestimate the social impact of non-quantitative social forces. In fact, it is absolutely possible to imagine a society completely automatized but not for this reason necessarily free from instrumental.
- ²⁹ H. Marcuse, *The Affirmative Character of Culture*, in *Art and Liberation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2007, vol. 4, pp. 82-112
- ³⁰ Id., *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 129.
- ³¹ This seems to be exactly what he was in searching for, associating Marx, on the one side, with Hegel, Husserl, Freud and Heidegger, on the other.
- ³² H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 162.
- ³³ It is easy to imagine how much Marcuse could be far from this view, considering that the basilar point of all his work is the protest against the continuous annihilation of individuality throughout Western civilization.
- ³⁴ As main reference, see the famous work of D. Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, Polity, Cambridge, UK, 1989, in which the chapter 7th is indeed titled *Techno-Capitalism*. See also S. Best and D. Kellner, *The Postmodern Adventure: Science, Technology and Cultural Studies at the Third Millennium*, Guilford Press, New York, 2001.
- For safety sake, I clarify that I'm not negating that there exists a phenomenon definable as techno-capitalism. But I argue that capital (as political power) is just the historical current form of an issue that is metaphysical: instrumental rationality as social ontology – see: H. Marcuse, *From Ontology to Technology*, trans. M. Ishay, in *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, S.E. Bronner and D. Kellner (eds.), Routledge, New York, 1989, reprinted in H. Marcuse, *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and Emancipation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner and C. Pierce (eds.), Routledge, London and New York, 2011, vol. 5, pp. 132-140, H. Marcuse, “Some Social Implications of Modern Technology” in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, n. 3, 1941, pp. 414-439, reprinted in H. Marcuse, *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 1998, vol. 1, pp. 39-66, H. Marcuse, *The problem of Social Change in the Technological Society*, in *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 35-58. Indeed, it is also possible to imagine a world without capitalism (and/or the current forms of political power), in which, however, instrumental rationality still continues to work.
- ³⁵ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 25.
- ³⁶ Marcuse already uses the Hegelian master-slave dialectic to describe how everybody in the industrial civilization based on technical

progress has become servants, in the form of instruments (*One-Dimensional Man*, cit., esp. pp. 35-36). This poses a very interesting comparison with the Gehlenian figure of the “job holder” (see: A. Gehlen, *Man in the Age of Technology*, trans. P. Lipscomb, Columbia U.P., New York, 1980), with the Arendtian analysis on Eichmann (see: H. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Penguin, New York, 2006), and with the Horkheimerean depiction of manager (see: M Horkheimer, “The Authoritarian State”, in *Telos*, n. 15, Spring 1973).

Differently, I use here the Hegelian master-slave dialectic not to describe “anthropological” social figures but for describing social tendencies.

³⁷ This also means, by the way, that contrarily to the idea of the end of all ideologies, diagnosed by J.-F. Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, the «absorption of ideology into reality does not, however, signify the “end of ideology”. On the contrary, in a specific sense advanced industrial culture is *more* ideological than its predecessor, inasmuch as today the ideology is in the process of production itself» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 13).

³⁸ See: G. Simondon, *On the Way of Existence of Technical Objects*, trans. N. Mellaphy, University of Western Ontario, London, 1980 (see: Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 163f.).

³⁹ «Such qualitative change would be transition to a higher stage of civilization if technics were designed and utilized for the pacification of the struggle for existence [...] I submit that such a new direction of technical progress would be the catastrophe of the established direction, not merely the quantitative evolution of the prevailing (scientific and technological) rationality but rather its catastrophic transformation, the emergence of a new idea of Reason, theoretical and practical» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 232).

⁴⁰ Indeed, the process by Marcuse codified with the formula “repressive desublimation”, it is not a phenomenon of desertification of transcendence but rather of containment of it. This is the reason why perspective as that of F. Lang’s movie *Metropolis* does not capture our present and our foreseeable future: human beings are (will be) never just like robots, pure objects, but are (will be?) controlled and contained in desires which are (will be?) brought back to the established order of things. What happened is indeed the conquering of the innermost dimension of man not through its deleting but through its containing (“repressive desublimation”). E.g., the dynamics of the sexual liberation described in chapter ten, *The Transformation of Sexuality into Eros*, of his *Eros and Civilization*, and the turn in the acceptance of some social figures previously socially refused, like that described on chapter three, *The Conquest of the Unhappy Consciousness: Repressive Desublimation*, of *One-Dimensional Man*.

⁴¹ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 212.

⁴² In this context, the view of Habermas according to which it is possible to open a crisis of legitimation of the social system, presenting to it claims that it is not able to satisfy, seems to be absolutely valid. «A legitimation crisis can be predicted only if expectations that cannot be fulfilled either with the available quantity of value or, generally, with rewards conforming to the system are systematically produced. A legitimation crisis then, must be based on a motivation crisis – that is, a discrepancy between the need for motives declared by the state, the educational system and the occupational system on the one hand, and the motivation supplied by the socio-cultural system on the other» (J. Habermas, trans. Thomas McCarthy, *Legitimation Crisis*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1975, pp. 74-75). Therefore, to trigger a social crisis should be advanced to system expectations it is not able to satisfy. Still, because Habermas seems to overestimate the formalistic framework of human interaction and to underestimate the content of individuality, a double problem here arises. Who can advance these radically nonconforming expectations, if the largest part of individuals are conformed to the system? (And this is the basilar problem of the late Marcuse). How a possible expectation like this can avoid to being absorbed in the system, as part of it, through the dynamics of repressive desublimation? (And this is the currently problem of the elaboration of a

strategy appropriated with the time we are living.)

⁴³ See: M. Horkheimer and Th.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. E. Jephcott, Stanford U.P., Stanford, 2002.

⁴⁴ H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 9. This establishes a parallelism with the book of É. de La Boétie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, trans. J.B. Atkinson and D. Sices, Hackett, Indianapolis, 2012. Though the matching point lies in the fact that the power of Power is given only if individuals accept, recognize and legitimate it, the irreducible difference is the role of the consciousness: the split between individuals who voluntarily give their servitude to Power, and individuals not aware of their subjection in front of the apparatus, into the so-called system.

⁴⁵ As for the first step: «rational is the imagination which can become the *a priori* of the reconstruction and redirection of the productive apparatus toward a pacified existence, a life without fear. And this can never be the imagination of those who are possessed by the images of domination and death. To liberate the imagination so that it can be given all its means of expression *presupposes the repression of much that is now free and that perpetuates a repressive society*» (my second emphasis). As for the second step: «“control from below” [...] This notion was valid, and still is valid, where the laborers [individuals] were and still are, the living denial and indictment of the established society. However, where these classes have become a prop of the established way of life, their ascent

to control would prolong this way in a different setting» (H. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, cit., p. 254-256). Namely, Marcuse himself had already envisaged the danger to idealize a past golden age of oppositional social movements.

- ⁴⁶ It seems to be a rejection of Feenberg's theory of instrumentalization, of a dialectical technological rationality. But it is rather an extension of it. In fact, if Feenberg himself says that «only through an approach that is both critical and empirically oriented is it possible to make sense of what is going on around us now» and «Critical Theory was above all dedicated to interpreting the world in the light of its potentialities» (A. Feenberg, "Critical Theory of Technology: An Overview", in *Tailoring Biotechnologies*, n. 2, 2005, pp. 47-64, <https://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/books/critbio.pdf>, accessed on 1 September 2016 – the Feenberg's main publication about is the well-known book *Critical Theory of Technology*, Oxford U.P., New York, 1991), we have to take vision that such an empirical analysis reveals as nowadays such societal and individual potentialities appear to be, quantitatively and qualitatively narrowed. In other terms, whether «the degree of repression must be measured not

only against the present and the past, but against the *possibilities* available to the individual and to society» (H. Marcuse, *The Containment of Social Change in Industrial Society*, in Id., *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 81-93); the yardstick of any Critical Theory is the concreteness, the feasibility, of those possibilities which today seem to be limited, even more and more, to a restricted audience.

- ⁴⁷ H. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, cit., p. 52. Obviously, a term such as elitist, here is not to be taken as something "snobbish". Indeed, a possible liberation turns around something nameable as excess: a force that is working inside every human being, aware of it or not, and that is the innate capability to overpass the (any) given situation (maybe this is one of the fundamental differences between man and animals), and in fact, the kind of domain which we are subjected to in the advanced technological society is not the disappearance but the containment of this excess, that generates distorted forms of it. Therefore, elitist is a way to name those whose excess is contained and those that are in some extent (more) free in the use of it.

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Technology and nature: a defence and critique of Marcuse

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Abstract: *In this paper I intend to discuss the relation of Marcuse's theory of technology to its grounding in the possibilities he believed lay inherent, but as yet untapped in nature. Marcuse was an early critic of what he considered to be the exploitative, predatory approach to nature brought about through the direction of technology, industry and science under consumer capitalism, however his alternative; a "new science" and "new technology" which would treat nature as an "ally" in the general struggle for liberation and emancipation, was not without its problems.*

Keywords: *Theory of Echnology, Marcuse, Nature.*

Introduction

As his Frankfurt School colleague Jürgen Habermas observed: «Long before the Club of Rome, Marcuse fought against "the hideous concept of progressive productivity according to which nature is there gratis in order to be exploited"».¹ However, although prescient in many ways, Marcuse's views on the topic of the exploitation of nature by our technologies were also problematic, and have subsequently faced criticisms from Habermas and others. The critique of the former consists of a two-pronged attack, one aimed at Marcuse's concepts of a new science and technology, the other directed toward his view of

nature. Over what follows, I will attempt to defend Marcuse's view from the first prong of Habermas' critique, with the remainder of the discussion to be directed toward Marcuse's vision of the inherent, semi-teleological potential of nature. Whilst Marcuse's connection between a philosophy of technology and a philosophy of nature was important and is still generally lacking in much modern philosophical work purportedly concerned with the technological phenomenon as a whole, it cannot be ignored that some of his reasoning in this context remains confusing and abruptly alters course away from his much earlier concern with "concrete philosophy" and praxis.

New Science? New Technology?

Although Marcuse had discussed technology throughout his career, by the late 1960^s and 70^s, he began calling not merely for a new approach to technology, but a “new science” and a “new technology” which would work alongside nature in order to fulfill its inherently liberating potentialities. These, he contended, were directly linked to our own potential for social change, and opposed to the predominant mindset consisting in plundering nature for reasons largely rationalised by consumer-capitalist economics. As will be noted a number of times in this article and contrary to many interpretations of Marcuse’s philosophy, the idea of nature’s potential being linked to our own is not a particularly radical idea. After all, long before the advent of capitalism, long before science, indeed, long before language itself, technics; the instrumental process by which nature’s potentialities are unlocked in order to secure and benefit the individual and collective, has been a historical constant.

It is likely unsurprising on this basis, that calls for a new technology should be greeted by most readers with some confusion, for does it not sound as if this is a call for a return to the old, the ancient? If, on the contrary, Marcuse was calling for some genuinely new approach, just what would this resemble? Unfortunately, Marcuse’s answers to such

questions were arguably not altogether coherent, hence, given their idiosyncratic tone, a brief indication of what he did *not* appear to be arguing seems necessary.

Firstly, by “nature” Marcuse was not always referring to the environment, biosphere, or “the wild” specifically, but usually uses the term as a common noun which includes his specifically Marxian view of human nature,² as well as “feminine nature” as discussed in such works as *Counterrevolution and Revolt*.³ Although he generally tended to distinguish “human” from “external” nature, he also often took the two concepts together. This can only be expected given the scope of his critique, however, it can also often be a source of confusion for the reader. Secondly, it should be pointed out that Marcuse was not making a nostalgic call for a return to “simpler times”, nor was he championing a worldwide retreat into medieval agrarianism. Specifically, he saw “nature” as

*A part of history, an object of history; therefore “liberation of nature” cannot mean returning to a pre-technological stage, but advancing to the use of the achievements of technological civilization for freeing it from the destructive abuse of science and technology in the service of exploitation.*⁴

Clearly, Marcuse was no more anti-science than he was technophobic; rather, he was highly critical of what he took to be a historically specific mode of production pri-

marily directed by the bottomless incentive of the profit-motive which had led technoscientific powers into irrational, predatory, and potentially self-defeating forms. As he claimed in a speech in 1968:

*the desublimation which is demanded today is not an undoing of civilization but an undoing of the archaic exploitative aspects of civilization. Far from undoing and regressing it is rather the reintegration into civilization of human faculties, needs and satisfactions which have been reduced, mutilated and distorted in the tradition of exploitative civilization.*⁵

Marcuse believed that a technologically mature society would involve the recognition of its contingency on nature. But this recognition did not imply simply leaving nature to its own devices. Rather, it would include the understanding that, despite ourselves being part of it, nature also served as the only means by which humanity might secure ourselves against its ultimate indifference to us. Hence, Marcuse's view was hardly anti-science or anti-technology as some commentators continue to claim, but against the predatory and exploitative manifestations of these forces as they are conditioned by consumer capitalism. The problem is that recently, the horizon of this noble and necessary end had been obscured, visible only in abstraction from the currently dominant direction of development.

The First Prong

The first prong of Habermas' critique argues, *contra* Marcuse, that modern technology is not part of a historically specific condition of civilization, but a generic enterprise, hence, there are reasons to doubt the coherency of the concept of a "new" science or technology. Coupled with this was a criticism of what he took to be Marcuse's «secret hope»⁶ of a «fraternal relation to nature.»⁷

Marcuse's position was that the technological mode of production is a specific form or set of conditions which our society has taken among other possible conditions, and it is this mode of production which plays the ultimate role in shaping technics, as well as directing their deployment and proliferation.⁸ What Marcuse considered was historically new about technology and the sciences in the modern epoch was that both had taken on controlling rather than liberating manifestations due to the mode of production which provides the framework and rationalization of their development. Borrowing a term from the existentialists, Marcuse contended that societies are always «a historical-social project: in it is projected what a society and its ruling interests intend to do with men and things.»⁹

The idea that technology and science are a neutral part of a historically generic enterprise is then, as Andrew Feenberg writes, «a special kind of ideological illusion.»¹⁰ The "illusion" consists in treating

technology and science as if they were unshaped or removed from their underlying foundations in social causes and dominant interests, and that they form a singular, separate universal, largely discernible from a merely *technical* perspective. But this arguably overlooks Marcuse's more nuanced distinction between technics and technology.¹¹ Nevertheless, Habermas' position tends to concur with theories of technology from sources as diverse as Marshall McLuhan to *Wired*, which tend to view it as a singular edifice, detached from its relative, prevailing cultural and economic incentives.

Habermas summarises this first aspect of Marcuse's position as follows:

*At the stage of their scientific-technical development, then, the forces of production appear to enter a new constellation with the relations of production. Now they no longer function as the basis of a critique of prevailing legitimations in the interest of political engagement, but become instead the basis of legitimation. This is what Marcuse conceives as world-historically new.*¹²

In a manner which has some similarities with Habermas's own "colonization thesis", Marcuse thought that this "technological rationality" had become formatively implicated within a tremendous dispersion of life-world domains which were previously technologically unmediated, and were now inappropriately imposed on them. But again: this

view should not be understood as being founded in some sentimental, nostalgic yearning; it arose from an obstinate conviction that such life-world domains and the ethical evaluations inherent to them were not subject to mathematical, economic, or "technological" quantification.

This is not to say that Marcuse was at all keen on the idea of the polar reaction to such a stance that is seen in various forms in Western society today: a pseudo-intellectual relativism masquerading as sophisticated "theory". After all, Marcuse considered that he lived at a time in history at which alternative forms of technological rationality were available, even those which may lead to something of a restoration of its essential end. *Ipso facto*, qualitatively different societies were available, just because of the riches, developments and advancements so lauded by the staunchest defenders of capitalism. So in short, despite what he considered the *artificial* suspension of the powers of technoscientific capacities in the service of the renewal of "business as usual", Marcuse's optimism regarding the prospects of a new science and new technology implied that there are always alternative ways in which the natural environment may be approached, treated, or used, and that these were ideally means which treated it in accordance with what he considered were its own inherent potentials. To paraphrase a recent discussion of aspects of the work of the earlier Frankfurt School critical

theorist, Walter Benjamin, Marcuse wished for a means by which society could grasp the «possibilities of technology so that it could be harnessed not to master nature but to master the relationship between humanity and nature.»¹³

Once again, although Habermas was critical of the «colonization of life world by system» or perhaps more specifically, the «technization of the life world»¹⁴ and shares with Marcuse a general suspicion regarding the spread of instrumental rationality into the realm of symbolic/communicative discourse, Habermas pays little attention to technics in his later works, and it does not feature as a category in his media theory at all.¹⁵ Aside from this, he appears to be in broad agreement with Marcuse's concern that the governing principles of "purposive-rational action" (i.e., those governing technics) are inappropriate if applied in the social realm, however he does not agree that they are inappropriate if applied to nature.¹⁶ As a form of purposive-rational action, there can only be one technological rationality in Habermas' estimation, so any invocation of a "new" technology, science or instrumentality are not simply suspect on the basis of their suspiciously romantic tone, but due to their outright philosophical incoherency. It appears in Habermas' estimation, Marcuse was simply making a category error or «boundary violation».¹⁷ As Steven Vogel summarises Habermas' position:

*there is no such thing as a new science, there is no alternative to the technology and science we have, because these are associated with a fundamental project of the human species, and not one that is socially variable.*¹⁸

In Habermas as in Weber, scientific-technical rationality is nonsocial, neutral, and formal. By definition it excludes the social [...] it is neutral because it represents a species-wide interest, a cognitive-instrumental interest which overrides all group-specific values. And it is formal as a result of the process of differentiation by which it abstracts from itself from the various contents it mediates. In sum, science and technology are essentially indifferent to interests and ideology and represent the objective world in terms of the possibilities of understanding and control.¹⁹

Once again taking up the argument from the basis of Marcuse's criticism of Weber, Feenberg questions Habermas' apparently blanket contention with reference to the concept of efficiency. If merely seen in abstract terms such as «the ratio of inputs to outputs», Feenberg contends such a concept «would apply in a communist or capitalist society, or even in an Amazonian tribe». This seems to be a strong argument showing that notions such as efficiency come to be embodied in different manners in different societies and cultures.

Concretely, when one actually gets down to applying the notion of

efficiency, one must decide what kinds of things can serve as inputs and outputs, who can offer and acquire them and on what terms, what counts as discommodities, waste, hazard, and so on. These are all socially specific, and so, therefore, is the concept of efficiency in any actual application.²⁰

It is not difficult to find many other examples which further endorse Feenberg's point, as any number of cultural forces can shape productive forays in various ways. Ritual, spirituality, and culturally varying standards of conduct and decency can come to play both instructional roles in the production and use of technical artifacts, as well as providing the incentives for their production and deployment. The principles of "scientific management" or Fordism may be more efficient per se in a society of mass-production, but this sort of efficiency is not necessarily the same as (say) the routines and rituals which played such an informative role in traditional Japanese swordcraft. Hence, Feenberg believes this aspect of Marcuse's thought attests to its continual relevance in the modern period. As Feenberg mentions, whereas Habermas' brief sojourn into the philosophy of technology was suited to the time of the "*neue Sachlichkeit*"; «a time when we tamed our aspirations», despite its perhaps excessive optimism, the pluralistic nature of Marcuse's account of technology appears to have stood the test of time better than the view

of his colleague.²¹ For Feenberg this seems at least in part due to its similarity with more recent work in sociological and philosophical approaches to technical development, such as social constructivism, (a set of approaches other philosophers of technology have not been so favourable towards),²² but in another sense, it also provides grounds for the sort of optimism Marcuse originally appeared to intend; not as a means to establish academic relevance or credibility, but in terms of his ongoing commitment to "concrete philosophy"; a means to exercise a actual practical import over the power and damage technological rationality has brought about to both human and non human nature.

So far, to the extent that other modes of production can be envisioned beyond the current stage of consumer capitalism, I contend Marcuse has the upper hand. For Marcuse's thesis of the historical novelty of the current established status quo, it is sufficient to note for now his contention that the given was always a state of affairs which could be subjected to change, and at the current apex of techno-scientific development and proliferation, there was never a better time than the present. Rather than the first, it appears to be the second prong of Habermas' criticism to have stood the test of time better than Marcuse's view.

The Second Prong

Rather than leaving it there, Marcuse takes his argument concerning a new science's relation to nature significantly further, and despite his reasoning for calling for the "subjectivisation" of nature being relatively clear, this element of his view cannot be defended so easily, and appears to be beset by a number of significant problems. My criticisms can be summarised as follows:

1. Marcuse appears to have an overly optimistic regard for human nature and contends that first nature contains inherently "liberating", positive qualities;

2. Habermas was generally correct to consider Marcuse's endorsement of nature as a "subject" a category error; and

3. by placing hope in revolutionary social change and replacing the current technologically rational incentives of production with those belonging to the environmental (or aesthetic) dimensions sidelines the practical necessity to confront the ecological crisis with an instrumental response, in short, a basis by which the incentive of the growth imperative can be replaced by an ecological imperative is arguably of foremost importance.

Firstly, Feenberg notes his agreement with «most commentators that there are insuperable problems in the dizzying multiplication of categories in which Marcuse attempted to cloth his position after *One-Dimensional Man*.»²³ Indeed, rather

than clarifying his position, Marcuse's conceptual apparatus arguably increases the gulf between theory and practice. As mentioned, his final major works: *An Essay on Liberation, Counterrevolution and Revolt* and *The Aesthetic Dimension* substantially differ from earlier writings in terms of their renewed optimism, but also in their almost playfully ironic tone and their bewildering categorial complexity. Within them Marcuse places a strong emphasis on nature (both human and non-human variants) and returns to the domain of the arts, especially literature, as a basis upon which to construct a renewed harmony between agents and things.²⁴ For example, he referred to the «rediscovery of nature as an *ally* in the struggle against the exploitative societies in which the violation of nature aggravates the violation of man», and described nature's potential role «as a vehicle for the liberation of man.»²⁵ As previously noted, he also calls for its treatment as a «subject»,²⁶ and, citing Theodor Adorno, pushes the point further by claiming that he wanted to help it «open its eyes». ²⁷ As will hopefully become clearer below, this implies more than merely allowing for the potentials of nature to be permitted release by humans in a more careful, less exploitatively instrumental fashion, but in conformance with what Marcuse took to be its intrinsic, life-enhancing aspects.

As previously noted, Marcuse's philosophy of nature owes much to

the philosophical anthropology outlined in Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*, in which humanity's supposedly «essential» capacities; its «musical ear» and its «eye for the beauty of form»²⁸ can be released in accordance with the currently contained aesthetic qualities of nature:

*The emancipated senses, in conjunction with a natural science proceeding on their basis, would guide the "human appropriation" of nature. Then, nature would have "lost its mere utility", it would appear not merely as stuff – organic and inorganic matter – but as life-force in its own right, as subject-object; the striving for life is the substance common to man and nature. Man would then form a living object.*²⁹

Although Marcuse aimed to re-establish the common ground between the "life affirming" aspects of human and non-human nature, he attempted to qualify that his view was not teleological and did not require a plan to be ascribed to nature, but, perhaps in a broadly Kantian sense, asserted a "postulate" of its objective status:³⁰ «the idea of the liberation of nature stipulates no [...] plan or intention in the universe; liberation is the possible plan and intention of human beings, brought to bear upon nature.»³¹ However, Marcuse's view does appear to assume the "potentialities" of nature are fundamentally *positive*.³² For example, he described nature as «receptive», and «opposed, not to productive activity, but to

destructive productivity», and, playfully tempting criticisms from an anthropomorphic context, that «nature, too, awaits the revolution!».³³ He ascribes «gratifying forces and qualities» which can potentially be «uncovered and released», and that nature contains «life enhancing, sensuous, aesthetic qualities.»³⁴ As he admitted himself, his approach is «outrageously unscientific»,³⁵ but nevertheless, despite it being existential (in a socio-political rather than ontological sense),³⁶ these remain broad, sweeping claims which apprehend nature as inherently positive and life affirming and would therefore appear to be open to a number of rather obvious criticisms. Further, given the highfalutin feature of his ideas in this context, it is hard to see how it would be convincing in practice, rather than of merely philosophical interest.

Many of the problems Marcuse's philosophy of nature faces appear to derive from his appropriation of Marx's early philosophical anthropology. From this source, Marcuse reads a means by which humanity might «understand nature as a universe which becomes the congenial medium for human gratification to the degree to which natures own gratifying forces and qualities are recovered and released.»³⁷ As Feenberg mentions, «Marcuse never distinguished his idea of nature from Marx's. Instead, he tried out a whole series of unsatisfactory explanations for the concept of nature he derived from Marx.»³⁸ It must be mentioned

that, amongst these unsatisfactory explanations, Marcuse's attenuation of the Marxian view of nature with recourse to Freudian depth psychology is merely the most obvious, however, this avenue of criticism will be passed over here in order to make a case for a more plainly philosophical criticism of inconsistency.

Simply put, Marcuse's view of nature appears beset with confusing antinomies. As noted previously, on the one hand he advocated a view of nature as an "external" realm upon which human survival crucially depends on.³⁹ Yet he also offered a view roughly in accord with the thesis that nature must be understood as a historical category, a concept which veers closely toward the assumption of it being a «social construction».⁴⁰ As such, this appears to be in direct conflict with Marcuse's other contention that nature contains *inherently* liberating and positive properties. However, it also raises tensions between Marcuse's almost Heideggerian-sounding recommendations to let nature be and allow it to flourish «as a life force in its own right.»⁴¹

Marcuse says that "nature is a historical entity" and eloquently insists that the role of a new science and a new technology is to rebuild the world; but on the other hand he constantly writes as though the model for this rebuilt world is to be found somehow in a noumenal nature's "own" "objective" or "inherent" qualities.⁴²

Furthermore, Vogel adds that the influence of the views of the early

Marx on Marcuse's theory of nature compound the problem, that «it is not the active character of knowledge that the new science is supposed to emphasize but rather (and quite inconsistently) its *receptive character*.»⁴³ These are not the only difficulties which arise due to Marcuse's reliance on Marx's philosophical-anthropological view of human nature in which nature's inherent properties become objectified through the transformative powers of labour and technics. As Feenberg summarises Marcuse's position: «in a free society labour both humanises nature and liberates it to the free development of its own potentialities.»⁴⁴ Hence, it appears Marcuse owes the reader an explanation as to how the prospect of a "human appropriation" of nature can be enacted which at the same time leaves nature to pursue its own ends. If "ends" or "functions" can be ascribed to nature in toto, at all, they are either in the service of the methodological procedures of the sciences, or, in the case of natural selection, say, simply to reproduce, pursue opportunity, and avoid the threat of pain and death. But to characterise this latter in terms of "ends" or "goals" is merely an artifact of the functional language by which nature is apprehended within biology. As goals and ends belong to agents and subjects (which natural selection most certainly isn't), then this appears to represent further problems for Marcuse's view.⁴⁵ The earlier Marxian response preferred

by Marcuse⁴⁶ appears to deviate from his later comments that the end of capitalism was not just a matter of political or psychological renewal, but of survival.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in *Capital* at least, with the exception of its role as a tool in human progress, Marx is not necessarily so attentive to the inherent value of nature in any case. As he writes: «[Man] develops the potentialities slumbering in nature, and subjects them to the play of its forces to his own *sovereign power*.»⁴⁸ Once again, in advocating the liberation of the supposedly suppressed potentials of nature, Marcuse clearly stated that he was not arguing civilisation should be abandoned to the weeds, but in advocating letting nature be what it might like to be a significant antinomy arises.

The call for a new sensibility which could allow for the «emancipation of the senses»;⁴⁹ a profound, global raising of consciousness which in his words would have the effect of making individuals «physically and mentally incapable of creating another Auschwitz», though inspiring, lacks practical efficacy.⁵⁰ Such a prospect may at least be philosophically conceivable, but is extremely difficult to envision in the context of the daily business of the consumer society, staunchly defended as it is by deeply-entrenched politico-economic practices which tend to be aligned with the uncritical pursuit of growth for the sake of growth.

Aside from these concerns, Habermas' criticism of Marcuse's

philosophy of nature are rather more straightforward. In a related manner to his criticism of the coherence of a new science and technology, Marcuse's invocation of a subjective approach to nature flows from this original category error. Habermas' position differs from Marcuse's insofar as the latter retains a basically monological outlook in regard to the anthropological centrality of labour, a position Marx made clear in the *1844 Manuscripts*. Yet Habermas famously splits action, initially into the separate contexts of "work" and "interaction", and later into "communicative" and "instrumental" domains.⁵¹ Vogel summarises Habermas' position as follows:

*Whereas scientism on the one hand takes categories appropriate to nature and misapplies them to the social realm, what happens in Marcuse is that categories appropriate to the social realm get misapplied to the natural one. Thus it is simply a category mistake, Habermas argues, to talk about "dominating" nature or "liberating" nature. Domination and liberation are ethical categories that have to do with relations between people, and nature is not a person.*⁵²

In defence of Marcuse, there is a hint of the Straw Man in this passage, as although he called for the treatment of nature as a subject, to my knowledge, he did not argue that it ought to be treated as one would a person or a moral agent as such.⁵³ Yet, Vogel persists with this characterisation. For him, Marcuse's

view of nature and the new science is a «romantic dream» which posits a «nature with whom we could speak, a nature that is itself a moral agent and with whom a reciprocal moral relation is a possibility.»⁵⁴ However, despite his use of subjective terminology in describing the close correspondences between the treatment of human and non-human nature under the technological mode of production being problematic in themselves, in all fairness, Marcuse often appears to be speaking metaphorically. For example, he wrote that «the pollution of air and water, the noise, the encroachment of industry and commerce on open natural space have the *physical weight* of enslavement, imprisonment.»⁵⁵ Marcuse was not arguing here at least that nature is *literally* imprisoned, implying an entrapped subject with the desire for release, but speaking figuratively by drawing a comparison between the reduction of human and non-human nature into the status of mere resources in a manner strongly reminiscent of Heidegger's critique of modern technology.⁵⁶ As always for Marcuse, there was nothing inevitable about this situation; control, production, or management per se were not inherently aggressive or exploitative, rather, the repressive elements were the result of a particular socio-historical condition or mode of production, one which he held could be subjected to qualitative change. As unlikely as it may sound, the

emergence of a “new sensibility” could allow the threateningly materialistic animating incentives of modern technological production to be replaced by alternatives, specifically those of imagination and creativity found within works of art.⁵⁷ Despite phrases such as “mastery of nature” no doubt connoting domination, perhaps also aggression and exploitation, as ever for Marcuse, there were other dimensions in which such terms could be understood; there can be dominating, exploitative forms of mastery, or there can be liberating ones.⁵⁸ As he pointed out, these apply to control and management in a number of contexts:

If it were demonstrable that the abolition of domination is biologically impossible, then I would say, the idea of abolishing domination is a utopia. I do not believe that anyone has yet demonstrated this. What is probably biologically impossible is to get away without any repression whatsoever. It may be self-imposed, it may be imposed by others. But that is not identical with domination. In Marxian theory and long before it a distinction was made between rational authority and domination. The authority of an airplane pilot, for example, is rational authority. It is impossible to imagine a condition in which the passengers would tell the pilot what to do. The traffic policeman is another typical example of rational authority. These things are probably biological necessities, but political

*domination, domination based on exploitation, oppression, is not.*⁵⁹

Hence, Marcuse's view, although confusing at times, makes more sense once it is realised that he was not collapsing technics and science in their entirety into "domination", but drawing our attention to the contingent incentives which currently prevail over their direction and proliferation. Of course, technical development itself can only but be directed toward a mastery of various elements of nature; those that are mastered in the production of the artifacts themselves, as well as those ends which they are set to perform.⁶⁰ Indeed, to save nature (and therefore potentially ourselves) from the continuing history of predatory human exploitation, certain levels of mastery over it, such as scientific knowledge of its workings, obviously remain necessary. Hence, as Marcuse continually emphasised, the advance of technoscience as a means of uncovering nature's secrets remain amongst the most important of human activities. It is not sufficient that technics should merely be remodelled with nature in mind or made "sustainable", (which always already contains the caveat: "economically viable") but informed by very different social incentives and attitudes than those currently in play. In his view, the reduction of wild and human nature were parallel; the former viewed as a collection of resources to be plundered for profit, the latter narrowly defined by economic models such as

"rational choice theory" as a self-interested and largely amoral agent, consumed by the conflation of material acquisition and happiness in their view of the Good Life and therefore conveniently quantifiable.

In a certain sense, this is confusing as Marcuse was a philosopher who had long stressed his concern for philosophy to have practical ("concrete") as well as theoretical worth; to address and critique the lived experience of modern life in advanced industrial nations.⁶¹ Of course, he could not necessarily have envisioned how soon concerns such as resource depletion, mass extinction, pollution and environmental degradation in general would come to pose dangers to civilisation on a global scale, despite his arduousness that qualitative change was now a matter of survival, but as such concerns are now at the forefront of an increasing number of discourses, both scientific, technological and social, it seems likely that were he alive today, they may have played a different, perhaps more significant, role in his philosophy and social critique. Indeed, addressing the question of technology in an environmental context is today of the utmost importance, however, again, it seems vanishingly likely that established economic motivations and incentives could be replaced by those from within nature, or the aesthetic realm any time soon, unless, that is, the worst were to occur.

Note

- ¹ J. Habermas, *Afterword. The Different Rhythms of Philosophy and Politics for Herbert Marcuse on his 100th Birthday*, in H. Marcuse, *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2001, vol. 2, p. 236.
- ² This view is chiefly owed to the philosophical anthropology of the “young” Marx, presented in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which Marcuse was one of the first to discuss in an enthusiastic early paper. See: his *New Sources on the Foundation of Historical Materialism* (1932), in Id., *Heideggerian Marxism*, R. Wolin and J. Abromeit (eds.), Nebraska University Press, Lincoln and London, 2005, pp. 86-121.
- ³ See: H. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1972, pp. 59-78.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ⁵ H. Marcuse, *Beyond One-Dimensional Man* (1968), in Id., *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), cit., p. 115.
- ⁶ J. Habermas, *Technology and Science as “Ideology”*, in Id., *Toward a Rational Society*, trans. J.J. Shapiro, Beacon Press, Boston, 1970, p. 86.
- ⁷ A. Feenberg leaves this quotation unreferenced in his *Questioning Technology* (Routledge, London, 1999, p.156). However, it appears arguable that Habermas’s use of the concept of a “fraternal” relation to nature is invoked in order to illustrate a potential *implication* of the way nature may be treated in the advent of a “new technology”, not as a way of characterising Marcuse’s view as a whole. See: J. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, cit., p. 88. However, Habermas *does* use this phrase in *A Reply to My Critics*, in *Habermas: Critical Debates*, J. B. Thompson and D. Held (eds.) Macmillan, London, 1982, p. 241.
- ⁸ This should not be confused with more recent and familiar sociological ideas which appear to accomplish little more than calling attention to the fact that the design of technical artifacts have diverse socio-cultural origins, as such views remain historically abstracted, thereby rendering instruments and artifacts as ethically neutral. Such views do not touch on what Marcuse contended was the more pressing overall context in which artifacts have come to have definite political, ethically normative content because of the historically novel condition of technology being directed by capitalist economic incentives of perpetual growth.
- ⁹ H. Marcuse, *Industrialization and Capitalism in Max Weber*, in Id., *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, S.G. Bohm (ed.), trans. J.J. Shapiro, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, p. 224.
- ¹⁰ H. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, cit., p. 160.
- ¹¹ Marcuse uses the term “technics” to describe the artifacts, instruments and machinery themselves which are ethically neutral. The term “technology” refers to the mode of production or the wider “social forces” in which they currently arise

- and are deployed. See: his 1941 essay, *Some Implications of Modern Technology* (in Id., *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), cit., pp. 41-65) for a discussion of the distinction, which appears significantly influenced by the classical economic distinction between means and modes of production.
- ¹² J. Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society*, cit., p. 84.
- ¹³ P. Thompson, "The Frankfurt School, part 5: Walter Benjamin, fascism and the Future", in «The Guardian», 22 April 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2013/apr/22/frankfurt-school-walter-benjamin-fascism-future>, accessed on 1 September 2016.
- ¹⁴ See: A. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, cit., p. 167.
- ¹⁵ A lacuna Feenberg attempts to remedy in his revised version of the media theory and his concept of "technical codes". See: *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.
- ¹⁷ S. Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996, p. 111.
- ¹⁸ S. Vogel, *Marcuse and the New Science*, in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, R. Abromeit and W.R. Cobb (eds.), Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 242.
- ¹⁹ A. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, cit., pp. 159-160.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- ²² For a critique of social constructivist approaches to technics, see: L. Winner, *Social Constructivism: Opening the Black Box and Finding it Empty* (1993), in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*, V. Dusek and R.C. Scharff (eds.), Blackwell, London, 2005, pp. 233-242. For a critique of Winner's essay and his response, see: M. Elam, *Anti-anticonstructivism or Laying the Fears of a Langdon Winner to Rest*, in *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition*, V. Dusek and R.C. Scharff (eds.), cit., pp. 612-616.
- ²³ A. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, cit., p. 83.
- ²⁴ See: H. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, cit., p. 59. Marcuse's long-standing interest in the liberatory aspects of the arts is significant, however it is beyond our scope to address it in any detail here.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60 (my emphasis).
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ²⁷ S. Vogel, *Marcuse and the New Science*, in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, R. Abromeit and W.R. Cobb (eds.), cit., p. 244.
- ²⁸ H. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, cit., p. 64.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.
- ³⁶ See: H. Marcuse, "Existentialism: Remarks on Jean-Paul Sartre's *L'Être et le Néant*", in «Philosophy and Phenomenological Research», n. 3, March 1948, vol. 3, pp. 309-336.
- ³⁷ H. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, cit., p. 67.
- ³⁸ A. Feenberg, *Heidegger & Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Liberation of*

- History*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 126.
- ³⁹ For example, see: H. Marcuse, *Ecology and Revolution* (1972), in Id., *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), Routledge, London and New York, 2005, vol. 3, p. 175.
- ⁴⁰ György Lukács appears to be the first Marxist thinker to explicitly describe nature as a social construct in his *History and Class Consciousness*, (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1968, p. 234). See also: N. Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, pp. 64-65; S. Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, cit. For a critique of postmodern views of nature as a social construct, see G. Sessions, "Reinventing Nature, The End of Wilderness?: A Response to William Cronon's Uncommon Ground", in «The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy», n. 1, 1996, vol. 13, pp. 33-38.
- ⁴¹ *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), cit., p. 65.
- ⁴² S. Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, cit., p. 136.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.
- ⁴⁴ A. Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Liberation of History*, cit., p. 124.
- ⁴⁵ For an excellent account of the topic of the language of functionality and the biological sciences, see: T. Lewens, *Organisms and Artifacts: Design in Nature and Elsewhere*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2004.
- ⁴⁶ «[...] that man is not *in* nature; nature is not the *external world* into which he first has to come out of his own inwardness. Man *is* nature» (H. Marcuse, *New Sources on the Foundation of Historical Materialism* (1932), in Id., *Heideggerian Marxism*, R. Wolin and J. Abromeit (eds.), cit., p. 97.)
- ⁴⁷ H. Marcuse, *Ecology and Revolution* (1972), in Id., *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), cit., p. 174.
- ⁴⁸ K. Marx, *Capital* (1867), Penguin Classics, London, 1990, vol. 1, part 3, ch. 7, p. 283 (my emphasis). In the *Grundrisse*, Marx goes further: «for the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power in itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human need.» (Cited in P. Hay, *Main Currents of Western Environmental Thought*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, p. 294.)
- ⁴⁹ H. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, cit., pp. 64-65.
- ⁵⁰ Marcuse, "Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society", in «Capitalism, Nature, Socialism», n.3, vol. 3, 1979, p. 38.
- ⁵¹ See: S. Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, cit., p. 107.
- ⁵² S. Vogel, *Marcuse and the New Science*, in *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader*, R. Abromeit and W.R. Cobb (eds.), p. 243.
- ⁵³ See: A. Feenberg, *Questioning Technology*, cit., p. 156.

- ⁵⁴ S. Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, cit., p. 111.
- ⁵⁵ H. Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, cit., p. 61 (my emphasis).
- ⁵⁶ See: M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology* (1954), in Id., *Basic Writings*, D.F. Krell (ed.), Harper and Rowe, New York, 1977, pp. 287-317.
- ⁵⁷ See: H. Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1978.
- ⁵⁸ See: Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Routledge, New York, 1964, p. 240.
- ⁵⁹ Marcuse, (1967) "The End of Utopia", a lecture delivered at the Free University of West Berlin in July, 1967, trans. J.J. Shapiro and S.M. Weber, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/1967/end-utopia.htm>, accessed on 26/07/2016. Also published in H. Marcuse, *Marxism, Revolution and Utopia: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner and C. Pierce (eds.), Routledge, London and New York, 2014, vol. 6, pp. 249-263.
- ⁶⁰ Perhaps oddly, this remains a topic of considerable debate in the philosophy of technology. Of course: technical artifacts can also be used to carry out functions that may be unintended by their designers, but this obvious point appears to have taken on a life of its own in certain circles.
- ⁶¹ For an early example of this intention, see: H. Marcuse, *On Concrete Philosophy* (1929), in R. Abromeit and R. Wolin, *Heideggerian Marxism*, cit., pp.34-52.
- ⁶² H. Marcuse, *Ecology and Revolution* (1972), in Id., *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, D. Kellner (ed.), cit., p. 174.

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Critical Theory in Adorno and Marcuse

Ruggero D'ALESSANDRO

Abstract: *Critical Theory is the key-word representing all the universe of thought commonly known as "Frankfurt School". Within it, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno and Herbert Marcuse are not so far each other, as instead are Max Horkheimer and Marcuse – considering what I in this paper define as the conservative turn of the director of the Institut für Sozialforschung. Whereas Adorno refuses any engagement in the political and lives as an obsession the theory-praxis relation, Marcuse is closer to a certain critical Marxism and to the student movements of Sixties and Seventies. The crucial issue of the theory-praxis relation comes back clearly in the distance between Marcuse and the other two maîtres à penser, about their judgment on the '68 movement.*

Keywords: *Critical Theory, Theory/Praxis, Administered World, Student Movement, Engagement.*

A laboratory of philosophical and social criticism

The non-systematic nature characterizing the group of critical theorists associated with the *Frankfurt School* is far from a simple, Capricious, stylistic choice. The aphorisms and scattered notes, the collection of thoughts and reflections not neatly categorized in a complete and official System reflect a very specific need: the theory is not systematic thought and is a penetrating criticism of other ways of thinking, ones that are organized into systems.

As if escaping the closed world's temptation were enough to guaran-

tee that the scores be settled with systems – and so to feed the hope of a World that is finally open, thus on a human scale.

The partners of the group deal with the pre-idealistic system and Idealism (thus, the tetralogy of Kant-Fichte-Schelling-Hegel), having to consider who has been there: Marx and Schopenhauer, Weber and Nietzsche, Dilthey and Bergson, Husserl and even Freud (in the sense of a non-philosopher *stricto sensu*).

Another possible explanation of the refusal of the concept of "Systems of concepts" (recalling Deleuze's definition, "to do philosophy is to elaborate concepts") is that it occurred in the 1920^s and

1930s and thus had to grapple with two worrisome, well-established Systems: Stalin's Soviet Union and European fascisms (Hitler and Mussolini, Franco and Antonescu, Horthy and Salazar).

Young Adorno is educated in philosophy at the same Frankfurter school owned by Hans Cornelius where Horkheimer attended. Thus the "odd couple" was born: on the one hand, Horkheimer is the great organiser and fundraiser (as we say nowadays) and author in the 1930s and 1940s of a series of articles of great originality and depth on philosophers and topics of modern and contemporary philosophy,¹ as well as author of a notable compendium of aphorisms;² on the other hand, Adorno is a young man, who at the beginning, is undecided about whether to go into philosophy or music, and thus whether or not to study for a year in Vienna with Alban Berg and Eduard Steuermann.

Once back in Frankfurt, he quickly obtains his teacher's license and then throws himself headlong into an almost infinite series of study and interests (between theoretical sociology and musical studies, psychology and psychoanalysis, literature and cinema).

Unlike Horkheimer, Adorno does not yet feel the need to produce a dizzying amount of books and articles, like he will in 1949 upon return into West Germany and over the following twenty years.

Berliner Herbert Marcuse stands out thanks to two aspects: historical

and political. We allude, respectively, to his participation in the revolutionary days in the capital, as a twenty-year-old follower of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's Spartacist group in the winter of 1918-1919; and to his studies, some years later, concerning perhaps the most talented philosopher of the 20th-century: Martin Heidegger. Even with the distance, that over time will become unbridgeable between the two, the young Marcuse will show evidence of the influence of the philosopher from Messkirch. After all, it is like what happens to Hannah Arendt (even considering the different kind of relationship they had).

Interest in topics like happiness and Epicureanism, the recovery of the Hegelian System and the discovery of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* are well documented in an intense collection of essays dating back to the delicate turning point of the 1920s and 1930^s.³

In Marcuse the idea of a Critical Theory as an analysis of thought is already present, at the same moment in which it becomes intervention in praxis, even with all the historical difficulties of that period (especially in those two difficult decades between the World Wars and the *Shoah*).

The philosopher from Berlin shows the real system of industrial and warmonger capitalism as a generator of unhappiness; but at the same time, he denies the eternity of such a model, siding with the change

with a clearness that will never decrease over the subsequent forty years. Being conscious means reflecting on evil in the world (recalling Hegel's "unhappy consciousness"); but humanity needs a push coming from the outside. And in this difference between theory and praxis (that, according to the author of *Reason and Revolution*, must always be in Marxian interaction) lies, in our opinion, the point of maximum distance between Marcuse and Adorno, also comparing to the risk of recurrent paralysis in the theory thought up by the latter. It is testified also by the following quotation from 1937, in which Marcuse, by this time in exile in the USA, marks with great clarity the diversity between philosophy and Critical Theory:

The truth, not being able to be realized within the existing social order, has in any case because of the latter the character of a simple utopia. This transcendence does not speak against, but in favour of truth. The utopian element has been the only progressive element of philosophy: such were the constructions of a better State, of supreme pleasure, of perfect happiness, of perpetual peace. The obstinacy, derived from remaining loyal to the truth against all appearances, has today given up its place in philosophy to lavishness and wild opportunism. Critical Theory remains loyal to obstinacy as the authentic quality of philosophical thought.⁴

To join the fight or sceptical caution: May 1968

The analogy of views between the director, Horkheimer, and the musicologist, Adorno, of the Institute is maintained during almost fifty years of friendship.

Synthesizing, we can identify some differences between Adorno and Marcuse. The latter soon decides to stay in the United States (from exile in 1934 to his death in 1979), while Adorno returns to Germany in 1949 (despite keeping an academic engagement in the USA in 1953-1954).

We have already talked about Marcuse's adhesion to the aborted revolution of workers and military member Councils in 1918-1919; not to speak of the complicated and alternating relationship between Adorno and the protesting students (albeit far from justifying the squalid legend of his death caused by these relationships) in 1966-1969; while the author of *One-Dimensional Man* rises to the role of prophet of the juvenile revolution (pseudo-myth of which he himself is the first to laugh with amused scepticism). Moreover, he keeps far from embedded sociology (except for his participation in some research in the early 1930^s on the work of labourers and then on authority and family); while the influential role played by "Teddie" in most sociological research between the 1940^s and 1960^s (from *The Authoritarian Personality* to the studies about company

atmosphere in Germany of the 1950^s) is well known.

As far as the students are concerned, both are great professors. If Adorno is deeply respected and feared but rarely loved (think about the clashes with the most brilliant among his pupils, Hans-Jürgen Krahl, student leader in 1966-1968, or the squalid “erotic provocations” of some fanatical female protesters), Marcuse is perfectly comfortable, amidst ironical glances and cigar drags, in the informal atmospheres of big American campuses, being very outspoken when it comes to political positions (the unconditional support of his good pupil Angela Davis, persecuted by the FBI and the para-fascist California governor and future president, Ronald Reagan).

It is question of aspects that deeply influence the links between theory and praxis in the elaboration of the two German scholars’ philosophy.

On the level of style, before a very subtle and at times twisted inquirer of dialectic, lost in the ravines of post-dodecaphonic music or in rational insanities of American capitalism, we find instead a language of great clarity that does not renounce the irony or the strength of political denunciation. If Adorno is deeply pessimistic and marked by irresolution in comparing himself with a world he indignantly rejects, Marcuse frequently shines thanks to the “optimism of the unconscious”, at least in the phase of social movements around 1968. He confesses,

for example, to Habermas, who comes to meet him in San Diego (where the author of *Eros and Civilisation* has taught since the end of the Sixties), that it is impossible not to think, while admiring the sea, that the world has got within itself a critical hope – a phrase we find hard to imagine in Adorno’s mouth. Only he, in fact, can subhead the collection of aphorisms *Minima Moralia* with the irremediable *Reflections from Damaged Life*.

Closure of the circle or irresolution of thought

The importance of a life horizon illuminated by a liberated unconscious is that it ends up building a theory that could be a productive Utopia.

The study of psychoanalysis shows itself to be different through the two associates of the IfS: while in the Frankfurter, Freud appears as a ruthless inquirer of the false bourgeois conscious (pure ‘master of suspicion’ as in Ricoeur); in the Berliner, he is seen instead as a bridge that helps build a horizon of strong thought, in view of a possible ‘other’ society (together with Hegel and Marx).

The game, the creativity, the *eros* liberated from the constraint of the ‘administrated world’ becomes the core condition of feeding and growing the ‘Great Refusal’ generation (refusal of exploitation, injustice and war). Only Herbert Marcuse could write that there is more creativity in

throwing a ball when children play than in a scientific/industrial invention.

Consider what he wrote as a young man already in his doctoral dissertation entitled *Der deutsche Künstlerroman (The German Artist-Novel)*:

*It is precisely the steady glance on human essence that becomes an inexorable impulse to keep the basis of radical revolution: that in the real situation of capitalism, it is not only a question of an economic or political crisis, but of a catastrophe of human essence; indeed, this awareness condemns 'a priori' to failure any reform that is purely economic or political, and unconditionally demands the catastrophic suppression of the existing state of things through total revolution.*⁵

We compare this passage with one of the Adorno's aphorisms:

The mission of the dialectic is to trip healthy opinions about the impossibility of changing the world, which are cultivated by powerful men who have taken their place, and of deciphering in their *proportions* the loyal and reduced image of the differences that have grown beyond any proportion. The dialectical reason is unreasonableness facing dominant reason: just because as it refutes and overcomes it, it becomes rational.⁶

For Marcuse, putting into play the act of thinking not only does not constitute a problem, but it is the only gesture to begin to build up the concrete Utopia of which we spoke before.

Adorno, instead, is struck as if by a Gorgon (consciously, in our

opinion, and thus with lucid pain) in the following trick: if theory does not open itself to reality like an intervention for an "other" praxis, it risks death by starvation; but if it mixes with practice like change, it is altered, losing afflatus and purity, as well as coherence and intensity.

Superficially, we can say: Marcuse runs the risk of facing the sea and throwing himself into it, without knowing if he will be able to swim or if he will drown; while Adorno remains on the beach frozen by the same doubt.

'Between the police and the students, I choose the latter'

Considering that it is a question of documents that have only recently emerged and due to the light that they throw on Critical Theory's protagonists, it seems valuable to us to link to some content from the Adorno-Marcuse correspondence. The collection of letters dates back to 1969, or the last 7 months of the author of *Minima Moralia's* life.

As Raffaele Laudani explains very well, the beginning of the correspondence is constituted by the notorious phone call the Institute's director makes to the police because of the students' occupation. 'Teddie' writes to "dear Herbert" on 14 February 1969:

Here the situation has again become dramatic. An SDS group led by Krahl has occupied an Institute room refusing to leave, in spite of three requests. We have had to call

*the police who have arrested all those who were in the room. The situation is terrible in itself, but Friedeburg, Habermas and I were present when it happened and we could check that violence was not employed [...] The propaganda is presenting the events in a completely twisted way, as if it were us who took repressive dispositions, and not the students who screamed at us to keep quiet and not to tell anything that had happened.*⁷

We find on this occasion a scared and disappointed Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno because of the severing of a very close relationship that had been established with the progressive student body in 1966-1967, and thus in the first phase of the protest in universities in West Germany.

We have to say, too, that, unfortunately for his scorned master, Krahl shows himself to be more resolute and less ready to dialogue in comparison with the analogous and better-known Rudi Dutschke in West Berlin (one of the Ernst Bloch's pupils).

Marcuse answers from San Diego on 5 April, with his usual frankness; he does not want to accept the invitation from *IfS* if a meeting with the protesting students is not foreseen too. It is clearly the German-American sociologist's way of siding with the students instead of with the police (besides, he himself writes, "If I have to choose [...] I am with the students"). In a similar situation, he would not call the police in the absence of violent

episodes because "our cause (that is not only ours)" is surely "better protected by rebel students than by police". A declaration regarding which Marcuse gets daily confirmation "here in California".

In conclusion, another meaningful passage is a long one from the same 5 April letter in which Marcuse comments on the significant distance with Adorno, Friedeburg and Habermas (not to mention the by then almost reactionary Horkheimer) regarding themes such as the relationship between theory and praxis, the building of dissent, the struggle against the late capitalist system:

I consider there are situations, moments, in which theory is urged forward by the praxis – situations in which, if theory keeps itself far from praxis, it becomes unloyal. We cannot delete from the world the fact that these students are influenced by us (and surely not least by you), I am proud of this and I am ready to count on patricide, even if it hurts sometimes [...] We know (and they do too) that the situation is not revolutionary [...] But the situation is so terrible, oppressive and humiliating that the rebellion against it requires a biological and physiological reaction [...] this fresh air is not that of 'left-wing fascism' (a contradiction in terms). Is the air that we too (or at least me) one day or other would like to breathe and surely is not that of the establishment. I discuss different problems with students and I attack them if, from my point of view, they

are doing silly things, playing others' game; but against their bad weapons, I would not make use of worse and more terrible weapons. And I would be very sorry for myself (for us) if it would seem that I (we) are on the world's side, sustaining the mass murder in Vietnam.⁸

Appendix. Which 1968?: Marcuse, Foucault, Deleuze

It is a well-known article which one of the world's most prestigious newspaper uses to comment on the situation in France at the beginning of the spring of 1968. As early as March, in fact, *Le Monde* irresponsibly (in hindsight) entitles a piece *La France s'ennuie* ("France is bored"), which talks of wellness and youth with neither problems nor great interests.

In a few weeks, the facts disprove this short-sighted analysis with which a good amount of intellectuals side while they are engaged on a different role. Among these are two Frenchmen and a German scholar who constitute three examples that might be interesting to briefly compare.

We have already referred to the vanity of the presumed role of Herbert Marcuse as "the 1968 prophet". It is sufficient to consider that in more than one inquiry (made by the same protesting students) the fact emerges that his books are many times barely read or merely quoted. Besides, in a famous interview by Giovanni Lisi for the former first channel of Italian public

television in the summer of that decisive year, it is the philosopher from Berlin himself, from whom Lisi requested a comment on the famous triad "Marx, Mao, Marcuse", who smiled and answered that those who mistake him for the master of the student movements in the West are fools.

Moreover, we have before us the case of one member of the old Frankfurt *Institute for Social Research* who frequently (not always) sides with the radical youth – in this respect analogous to literary critic and culture sociologist Leo Löwenthal, and differently from Adorno and even more so from Horkheimer, as we have already seen.

We have the passage from a radical pessimism expressed by his most famous text (dating back to 1964, *One-Dimensional Man*) to the beginning of a certain hope with *Essay on Liberation*, written precisely just before Parisian days in May. Marcuse is present in the French capital for the 150th anniversary of Marx's birth.

Then in the 1970^s, the philosopher dilutes that relative optimism under the weight of the repression, the end of the Vietnam War and the petrol-financial crisis, the withdrawal into private life of many young former protesters and the bloody defeat of experiences such as that of the *Black Panthers* or *Weathermen*.

The analysis comparing the USA to France is interesting; it is a recognition that Marcuse gives on the occasion of his speech on 23

May at the same university where he has taught since 1965, the University of California, San Diego:

If we ask ourselves why in France the student movement has found the support and sympathy of the population and the strategic support of the working class [...] while in this country it has been the exact opposite, the answer cannot but be two-fold.

Firstly, France is not a wealthy society anymore, in the sense that the living conditions of most of the population are far beneath the American standard of living. This, obviously, provokes a lesser identification with the system [...]

Secondly, the political tradition of the French workers movement still survives and in large measure [...] Besides, France in just a century has experienced four revolutions and then there is a sort of revolutionary tradition that can be provoked, rediscovered and renewed in case of need.⁹

For almost all of May and June, Michel Foucault lives in Tunis, where he has tenure; he stops by Paris only for a few days to discuss whether or not to accept the position of director of the Institute of philosophy in the new *Paris VIII-Vincennes* University (nowadays Saint-Denis). Thus he has got time to be less conscious of the police/student struggle, while he faces the much harder Tunisian reality. Not a few of his students are condemned to years and years of the most severe prison for political reasons; he

himself is arrested because of public sympathies shown toward the student movement. The author of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* will be engaged in France during the 1970s. In that decade, Foucault divides his time among Vincennes (where he is arrested several times by police for his support of the protesters), the foundation of *GIP-Groupe d'information sur les prisons* (together with Deleuze, Genet and others), the struggle for migrants (as in the example of *Goutte d'Or*) and the foundation of the extreme left wing newspaper *Libération* (together with Sartre and Deleuze once again).

Furthermore, Foucault reasons starting from a different image of substance of the philosopher:

The militant intellectual now tries to exploit his position of academic prestige in order to communicate through the mass media directly with public opinion – an opinion that is surely not the same as that of some years before, because the 1968 movement did not happen in vain.¹⁰

Regarding Gilles Deleuze, there are no particulars to add, beyond his aforementioned and passionate participation in the same initiatives as his friend Foucault. It is interesting the part during the long 1989 interview with Claire Parnet in which he tells the exhilarating scene of his *soutenance de thèses* (the defence of his thesis for his PhD, which, at that time, included two theses to present and discuss), precisely in May 1968.

The commission wasted time on the argument regarding where to hold the long examination of PhD candidate Deleuze: if on the ground floor or the first floor of Sorbonne. In the first case, it would be easier for

potentially violent students to reach the room, but also easier for professors to honourably escape; in the second case, it would be harder both for the former to create disorder and for the latter to escape!

Note

- ¹ His best essays are collected in: M. Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 1975.
- ² Id., *Dawn and Decline: Notes 1926-1931 and 1950-1969*, Continuum International Publishing Group, New York, 1978.
- ³ H. Marcuse, *Marxismo e rivoluzione. Studi 1929-32*, Einaudi, Torino, 1975.
- ⁴ Id., *Filosofia e teoria critica* (1937), in Id., *Cultura e società. Saggi di teoria critica 1933-1965*, Einaudi, Torino, 1969, p. 95 (my trans.).
- ⁵ Idem, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman. Frühe Aufsätze. Schriften I*, 1978, p. 536 (my trans.).
- ⁶ Th. W. Adorno, "E par malato tutto ciò che esiste" (1944), in Id., *Minima moralia. Meditazioni della vita offesa*, Einaudi, Torino, 1979, p. 76 (my trans.).
- ⁷ H. Marcuse, *Corrispondenza con Adorno sul movimento studentesco tedesco* (1969), in Id., *Oltre l'uomo a una dimensione. Movimenti e controrivoluzione preventiva – Scritti e interventi*, R. Laudani (ed.), Manifestolibri, Roma, 2005, vol. 1, pp. 307-08 (my trans.). The reference is to Friedeburg and Habermas regards two colleagues and full-time

- professors, present with Adorno on that dramatic day; Hans-Jürgen Krahl is the quoted pupil of the director contested in 1969. The SDS is the student movement gathered around the Socialist Student League, expelled from the SPD (the *Social Democratic Party*) in 1966.
- ⁸ Id., *Corrispondenza con Adorno sul movimento studentesco tedesco* (1969), in Id., *Oltre l'uomo a una dimensione*, cit., p. 309 (my trans.). The reference to 'leftist fascism' is connected to the accusation in 1968 by Habermas against the student movement (later retracted by the philosopher twenty years later): we consider, moreover, that Horkheimer critiques the strong student protests due to the visit in Germany of American Vice President Humphrey in 1967, thus siding with the United States warmongers in Vietnam.
 - ⁹ Id., *Impressioni sul maggio francese e il movimento tedesco* (1968), in Id., *Oltre l'uomo a una dimensione*, cit., p. 89 (my trans.).
 - ¹⁰ R. D'Alessandro, *La teoria e l'immaginazione. Sartre, Foucault, Deleuze e l'impegno politico 1968-1978*, Manifestolibri, Roma, 2010, p. 68 (my trans.).

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Anthropology as storytelling: fetishism and terror in Michael Taussig's early works

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Abstract: *Among anthropologists inspired by Walter Benjamin and the early Frankfurt School, Michael Taussig is notable. For Taussig, Benjamin is like a muse, a source of inspiration to ponder over his extended fieldwork in South America. This article outlines a possible reading path through Taussig's early works, a path specifically influenced by Benjamin's insights into topics such as fetishism, violence, and storytelling. In particular, it examines the way Taussig approaches two issues: the Marxian question of commodity fetishism, and the question of writing against terror. The analysis of commodity and State fetishism leads Taussig to reject the symptomatic reading offered by thinkers such as Marx and Freud. The issue of violence or terror drives him to reflect on the politics of representation. In line with Benjamin's reflections on the role of the storyteller in bourgeois society, Taussig intertwines these two lines of thought and interprets anthropology as a form of storytelling. This article highlights some of the epistemological and ontological assumptions behind this provocative idea. It argues that despite the radical nature of its premises, Taussig defends a weak conception of criticism.*

Keywords: *Postmodern Anthropology, Walter Benjamin, Storytelling, Violence, Fetishism, Truth.*

Introduction

In *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986), George Marcus and Michael Fischer emphasise the influence of the early Frankfurt School on cultural anthropologists' attempts to elaborate critical analysis. In this light, the main merit of thinkers such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Benjamin is that they offer a demystifying perspective that challenges the funda-

ments of capitalist society. Further, their insights often translate in an essayistic style that has become a source of inspiration for many postmodern anthropologists, undermining the most established academic writing style and rethinking the links between poetics and politics.¹

Among anthropologists inspired by Walter Benjamin and the early Frankfurt School, Michael Taussig stands out. For this anthropologist,

Benjamin is like a muse, a source of inspiration that has guided him throughout his extended fieldwork in South America. The ability to convey these experiences in written form is one of Taussig's central concerns, bordering on obsession. His writing experiments subscribe to the idea that ethnographers should abandon all pretence of innocence and consider their texts as forms of fictions rather than representations of allegedly objective realities. Re-interpreting one of Benjamin's most influential essays for postmodern anthropologists – *The Storyteller* (1936) – Taussig considers anthropology to be a form of storytelling that critically analyses the consolidated certainties of everyday life and the institutions and founding myths that sustain every society.

This short essay aims to outline a possible reading path through the complex, fragmented and elusive mixture of reflections and themes that Taussig tackled primarily in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990^s. It is in this period that this anthropologist develop his own critical anthropological perspective. The essay focuses on two recurring issues in Taussig's works: the Marxian question of commodity fetishism, and the question of (writing against) violence or terror. Following this path, this essay highlights some of the epistemological and ontological assumptions that drive Taussig to consider anthropology as a form of storytelling.

Getting with the fetish

In order to frame the theoretical path developed by Taussig on the issue of fetishism, it is useful to begin with his first book, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (1980). In some respects this is the most conventional work published during his long and prolific career. Yet, in 1980 its publication was a pioneering attempt to combine the political-economic approach based on Marx's works with the symbolic-interpretative perspective that had been in vogue in American anthropology since the 1970^s.²

One of the primary goals of this book is to show how all societies tend to present the categories of space, time, causation and human relations as "natural things", and not as historical and social products. In this perspective, the task of a critical anthropological analysis is to show the "social" that produces the "natural" in order to «liberate ourselves from the fetish and phantom objectivity with which society obscure itself.»³ To this end, Taussig makes the long journey that anthropologists often make, visiting distant lands in order to find the needed distance to de-familiarise the familiar.⁴ Thus, he examines two different Latin American contexts: on one hand, the Colombian sugar cane plantations, where in the early 1970^s, descendants of African slaves worked on contract, and on the other hand, the Bolivian tin mines studied by June

Nash at approximately the same period.⁵ These two cases share some similarities. For example, both plantation workers and tin miners were paid according to their production. However, what makes this comparison worthy of interest is the fact that both categories of workers entered into pacts with the devil to be more productive and increase their earnings without any added effort. In the case of the plantations, pacts were secret, and the money earned in this way was supposedly never productive: it ended up being squandered on luxuries or invested in unsuccessful assets. Similarly, land where peasants established pacts with the devil became infertile. Thus, by referring to pacts with the devil, peasant communities explained the success, as well as the fall from grace of some individuals. In the case of tin miners, the figure of the devil appeared in a ritualised context in which workers not only ask to become richer, but also to be protected from the dangers that frequently occurred underground. It is worth noting that in the latter case, the devil was often represented in the guise of an American *gringo*, complete with a brimmed hat and cigar.⁶

Beyond the details of Taussig's analysis, the central hypothesis of this book is that the devil «is a stunningly apt symbol of the alienation experienced by peasants as they enter the ranks of the proletariat»,⁷ the social class that, as defined by Marx, is dispossessed of the means of production and is forced to sell its

labour power like any other commodity. Because rural life is dominated, instead, by the logic of reciprocity and gifts, these plantation and tin mine workers face one of the fundamental contradictions of capital: that which exists between use value and exchange value. In this light, the image of the devil cannot be considered to be an anachronistic relic of the past, tied to a superstitious mentality, but rather as an oblique form of critique directed at exploitative forms of capitalism and its inherent contradictions. In other words, these South Americans workers show – using the metaphorical language of religion – the “unnaturalness” of the practices that our commodified society accept as “natural”, to the point where they are taken for granted. In this sense, commodity fetishism as discussed by Marx in Book I of *The Capital* finds “literal expression”, so to speak, in the imagination of these workers.⁸

It is against the background of this analysis that, in a dense and complex essay titled *Maleficium: State Fetishism* (1993), Taussig resumes his analysis of the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism to examine the question of the cultural formation of the modern State.⁹ In *Maleficium*, the underlying theoretical ambition is to place critical thinkers as Adorno and Benjamin into dialogue with radical and provocative intellectuals such as Jean Genet and George Bataille. The starting point of this essay on fetishism is represented by the opposing

attitudes that the State takes in regards to its subjects: on the one hand, sacred and almost erotic attraction – here, the attempt to unify the Marxist and Freudian perspectives on fetishism is evident, something Benjamin had already tried to do – and, on the other hand, repulsion and disgust.

Taussig is fully aware of not being the first anthropologist to have highlighted the fetishistic side of the modern State. The British anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown, father of structural-functionalism, had already addressed the question of the State in terms of a philosophical fiction.¹⁰ He had observed that at the theoretical level the State is represented as an entity above and beyond individuals – such as to appear to have its own will. From Radcliffe-Brown’s point of view, however, “being real” is limited to the power of action of the individuals and social structures of which they are a part. As a result, power can only act through *real* individuals such as “kings, judges and policemen” and not through the State – which is a fiction.

The idea that the State is a fiction has also been proposed by the sociologist Philip Abrams, but in less radical terms.¹¹ For Abrams, too, the State cannot be treated as a thing and therefore it cannot be a «material object» of study.¹² This does not mean, however, that one should not take seriously the idea of the State as a social and ideological project that legitimises the illegitimate. In this view, the State is a

mask for practical politics and not the underlying reality of these same practices.¹³

In tune with Abrams, Taussig recognises the impalpability and “fictionality” of the State, the actual political power that it has, for example, to arm itself, to deport or imprison *real* people, or convince others to kill and to be ready to die for it as heroes – in short, to act as an instrument of domination as silent and obvious as it is effective. Unlike Abrams, however, Taussig does not share the “epistemology of appearance” – or, to put it another way, the depth-metaphysics¹⁴ – implicit in the metaphor of the State as a mask. This metaphor assumes that behind the veil of appearance hides a secret, deeper truth. Contrary to this, for Taussig, the State is «a meticulously shielded emptiness and magnificent deceit in whose making all members of the society (...) conspire».¹⁵ Obviously, the various members of a society conspire to constitute the State in different ways. It is primarily the collective fantasies of the excluded, of those who are at the margins of the State, or those who have not been initiated into this “empty secret”, giving it sacredness and power, defining the specific shape to the “S” in “State”: «not the basic truths, not the Being or the ideologies of the center»¹⁶.

The question then is how to channel the power of the fantasies, produced at the margins and directed to an imagined centre, in critical and revolutionary practices. In this

regard, Taussig takes some of the suggestions offered in Benjamin's essay on surrealism (1929).¹⁷ In *Surrealism*, Benjamin credits the surrealists with having shaken the bourgeoisie consciousness by pointing out the mythical character of modernity. At the same time, he accuses them of being prisoners of its phantasmagorias – hence, the need for the surrealists to shock themselves and wake up from their dreaming. Similarly, Taussig invites theorists of commodity fetishism not to resist or to admonish it. If anything, the question is to how recognise it and, possibly, to submit to it. Hence, the exhortation: «Get with it! Get in touch with the fetish!».¹⁸ It is worth stressing once again that the underlying assumption of this exhortation is that there is not a mechanical way out of the fetishism; there is not a hidden truth to be brought to the surface which neutralises the fetish. Nevertheless, as the author of *Maleficium* recognises, critical thinking has the task of «defetishising»,¹⁹ or to use James Martel's expression, of being «anti-fetishistic».²⁰ What Taussig suggests is to overthrow the power of fetishism against the power itself, being aware of the fact that: «the fetish absorbs into itself that which it represents, leaving no traces of the represented»²¹. However, beyond exhortations, Taussig's proposal is not particularly clear or convincing. Martin Jay, for instance, sees it as a vacuous apotropaism that would have left Adorno perplexed.²²

A possible defetishising strategy is put forward more clearly in another work: *The Magic of the State* (1997) – a work that Taussig himself has declared as «the most “fictional” of my writings».²³ Here, the fieldwork is located in an unspecified “European Elsewhere”. As it is described, this place bears resemblance to a region of South America which roughly corresponds to Venezuela. In this essay-fiction, the anthropologist changes the names of places and people, inventing characters not only to protect the confidentiality of his interlocutors, but also to produce in the reader an estrangement effect that evokes the rhetorical strategies adopted by Bertolt Brecht in his works. Once again, the goal is to show the fetishist or fictional character of the nation-state. The idea pursued here is that in order to deal with these types of «terribly real» fictions²⁴ – to highlight, in other words, their arbitrary nature and, at the same time, their ability to produce material effects – it is necessary to be on the same level as the fictions of the dominants, turning their own strategies of reification and sacralisation of the constituted dis-order against them.

Culture of terror and healing

In Taussig, the notion of fetishism is closely intertwined with those of violence or terror. In an interview with John Cline, the anthropologist acknowledges that he

became interested in this specific subject in the mid-1980^s while working on the draft of his second book, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* (1987). This book brings to mind Horkheimer and Adorno's philosophical masterpiece *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), written during the Second World War when they were both in exile in the United States. Against the backdrop of the European experience of the horrors of Nazism and Fascism, a crucial question guides the analysis of the two philosophers: how is it possible that a society that has achieved such an extraordinary degree of production power «instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism»?²⁵ The two scholars highlight the limits of Marxism's critique of capitalist society. Indeed, it appears inadequate when it come to their question, and does not give a clear explanation as to why Marx and Engels's prophesied revolution has not yet taken place. One of the core theses of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that the logic of domination transcends the pure logic of the economy; in fact, the first precedes and survives beyond the latter, and therefore cannot be secondary. For Horkheimer and Adorno, analysing this logic means exploring the contradictions inherent in the Enlightenment's idea of Reason and examining the very idea of "progress", beginning with its own mythical and magical aspects, its "irrational rationalism."

As the authors of *Dialectic Enlightenment* are interested in

exploring the «subterranean history» that runs beneath the known history of Europe,²⁶ in the same way, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild West* is largely an underground colonial history of the Amazon region of Putumayo. Taussig's attention is captured by this particular South American region because the descendants of blacks slaves living in the Valley of Cauca in Colombia often refer to the shamans of Putumayo as the most powerful healers. Thus, Taussig embarks on a long journey which brings him into Amazon rainforest, a journey that becomes also an initiation into the local healing systems and the ritual use of yagé, the hallucinogenic beverage used by shamans to stimulate visions.

A central thesis of Taussig's book is that in the repertoire of the shamanic imaginary and visions native to the region, traces of a colonial holocaust emerge. From an historical point of view, this Holocaust is well-documented. In 1907, Walter Hardenburg was among the first to document the violence in Putumayo against local population, particularly, the Huitotos. Hardenburg was an American engineer who spent a period of time imprisoned by men employed by Julio César Arana's rubber company. He told of what he saw during his imprisonment in a series of journalistic accounts. Hardenburg was able to witness first-hand the senseless violence in Putumayo: tortures, rapes and gratuitous killings.

When Hardenburg's words reached the British public, they created such an outcry that the British Government decided to send one of its representative on the site. The task was entrusted to Sir Roger Casement, who had already carried out a similar survey in the Belgian Congo in the early twentieth century, denouncing the barbarity of the European colonisers. The result of Casement's prolonged exploration of the Amazon forest (1910-1911) was a report that confirmed what until then had seemed, for the most part, to be rumours: mutilated and tortured bodies; executions and systematic abuses against young and old members of indigenous communities.

As Taussig notes, Casement's report offered a rigid political-economic reading of these events. According to the British government representative, the rubber company had to face a problem of an economic nature: how to make profits with a limited number of labourers and low-quality rubber. In this light, the use of violence was instrumental in subjugating the indigenous labour and increasing productivity. For Taussig, this analysis is unsatisfactory because it does not explain the unprecedented level of violence reached in Putumayo. Indeed, Casement attributes an "illusory rationality" to the market that makes sense of what, in reality, escapes to any effort of rationalisation. To what end did the company massacre defenceless people to the point of

almost exterminating the local population? Rationalising the logic behind these atrocities means concealing the underlying reasons that have turned violence from a means to an end in itself. In Putumayo, the men of the company reached such a level of brutality and destructiveness that the very possibility for the reproduction of the indigenous workforce was jeopardised. Casement's analysis does not explain why the company, acting for profit, in fact, created the conditions for the destruction of its essential source of profits: the indigenous labour force.

Taussig suggests engaging, rather than simply penetrating, the veil of the logic of profit in order to turn the hallucinatory quality of violence against itself.²⁷ Taking into account the fantasies and the imaginary of the oppressors, the author of *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, argues that the "culture of terror" created by the men of the company acted not only on their primary victims, the Huitotos, but also on the oppressors themselves. In this regard, Taussig uses the expressions «epistemic murk» and «epistemic confusion» to describe what lies between what is true and what is false, between the real and the fictitious. Analysing the existing historical documents, it emerges that the men of the company were obsessed with death, and therefore they lived in fear. Surprisingly, they were terrified by the Huitotos. They thought that their victims were primitive and violent "savages",

capable of abhorrent practices such as cannibalism. As stated by Romulo Parades, a Peruvian judge in charge of investigating the facts regarding Putumayo:

*Their imagination [of the station managers where the rub was extracted] was diseased [...] and they saw everywhere attacks by Indians, conspiracies, uprisings, treachery etc. and in order to save themselves from these fancied perils [...] they killed, and killed without compassion.*²⁸

According to Taussig, this diseased imagination was partially triggered by the corps of indigenous guards employed by the company, the so called “muchachos” of Barbadian origins, whose purpose was to enforce the orders of the managers and to punish transgressors. These guards played an important symbolic role in feeding oppressors’ fears by confirming the truthfulness of the rumours about Huitotos, and in so doing, objectifying their paranoid fantasies. Thus, these “savage Indians” of the Putumayo acted as a sort of “colonial mirror” onto which the men of the company projected their own barbarism. In the world of fear that they themselves had created, the only way to survive was to imitate the terror seen through this mirror. To use Taussig’s words: «the terror and tortures they devised mirrored the horror of the savagery they both feared and fictionalized.»²⁹

Unsurprisingly, Taussig rejects those sociological theses that interpret shamanic healing rituals only to

be symbolic attempts to restore psychic order and social unity. For the author of *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, contemporary shamanic practices are efforts to simultaneously create and undo (with the sufferers) what he defines as the «space of death». Paradoxically, it is from this space «where the social imagination has populated its metamorphizing images of evil»,³⁰ filled with anguished images and stories of terror, that shamans derive their healing power. This space is fraught with contradictions that open up the possibility of transmuting the death in life, the evil in salvation. Thus, the magic power of today’s shamanic healing rituals includes the memory, full of hope of salvation, of the “wild” men of the Putumayo. It is worth emphasising that these sad figures and images are the result of complex process of co-creation in which the colonisers, missionaries, and local population each played a part. In not entirely predictable ways, Huitotos have now become what Benjamin would consider “dialectical images”, that is, «picture puzzles which shock by way of their enigmatic form and thereby set thinking in motion».³¹ As images of the space of death, Huitotos are capable of simultaneously representing and transforming misfortune in the power of healing, the evil in the good. Significantly, Taussig explicitly refers to the dream-world of popular imagination evoked by Benjamin. It is in this reality of images and myths that

the battle for preparing a truly revolutionary act is played. This reminds us that for Benjamin, too, in opposition to orthodox Marxism, myth and fantasy were battlefields that could not be left to reactionaries or fascists.³²

Some thoughts at the margins

Taussig considers anthropology to be a way of telling stories, a form of critical analysis that is aware of the role of language and consider the author to be a producer of realities. In line with Benjamin's reflections on the role of the storyteller in bourgeois society, Taussig argues that most anthropologists tend to reduce their stories to information explaining the unknown with the known and the strange with the familiar. In other words, from his point of view, they are unable to face the fear of what is elusive and rationally untameable. On the contrary, postmodern anthropologists have the merit of recognising this fear and experimenting with narrative strategies «to leaving weirdness weird».³³

In the texts examined in this short essay, some epistemological and ontological assumptions emerge supporting this view. The analysis of commodity and State fetishism leads Taussig to reject the symptomatic reading offered by Marx and Freud. In this respect, his position is closer to those thinkers that for the most part share an aversion to the "depth", particularly, Nietzsche, but

also Adorno and Benjamin to a certain degree. The issue of violence or terror drives Taussig to reflect on the politics of representation, and on how to deal with these phenomena without reproducing them in the very act of writing, because «violence is such a phenomenon that writing about it can make it worse».³⁴

These two lines of thought converge on the idea that the anthropologist's task is not to discover allegedly hidden truths, or to explain "facts". For Taussig, the truth is always a mediated truth.³⁵ Further, he is not specifically interested whether something called "truth" corresponds with the real. In *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* he states unequivocally that «my subject is not the truth of being but the social being of truth, not whether facts are real but what the politics of their interpretation and representation are».³⁶ Recently, Taussig has provocatively compared his works to fairy tales and has claimed that he is first a writer and then an anthropologist.³⁷ The result is that Taussig has continued to write books that are stimulating from a literary point of view. Readers are fascinated by the narrative style and the erudite thoughts contained in his stories, but they are often unsatisfied, sometimes even becoming "irritated" when they seek explanatory interpretations.³⁸ Often, readers have to assemble heterogeneous and allusive fragments by themselves. These materials, as they are presented, do not always offer enough

information to dissect the contexts and gaining an understanding of the perspective of the social actors in question.

At times, it seems that Benjamin is taken too literally, or out of the context, particularly when the Berliner thinker states that narrating consists largely of keeping «a story free from explanation as one reproduces it» so that the reader is free «to interpret things the way he understands them».³⁹ The problem, however, is that “things” do not always speak for themselves.⁴⁰ In addition, not all interpretations can be considered on the same level.

In relation to this, the medical anthropologist Paul Farmer – who has worked as a physician in some of the poorest regions of the world in direct contact with those who directly experience the effects of poverty, endemic diseases and global social injustice – reminds us that «some versions [of truth] must have more points of contact with external reality and actual events

than others».⁴¹ In a certain way, those most vulnerable to structural violence themselves demand unequivocal positions. Looking for something that may be called “truth of facts” does not necessarily mean being naively positivist, as some postmodernists affirm in a somehow hasty and confused way.⁴² Rather, it means seeking a more solid foundation for strong critical thinking that is capable of combining understanding with compassion and solidarity with the most vulnerable.⁴³ On the contrary, despite the radical nature of its premises, Taussig defends a weak conception of criticism that inevitably has weak effects. In this view, storytelling is only likely to become a rhetorical art of challenging the dominant discourses – but the effectiveness remains to be seen. Rather, the issue is to establish ethical relationships with others differently positioned⁴⁴ and at the same time, to radically question the world in order to *change* it.⁴⁵

Note

¹ See: G.E. Marcus and M.M.J. Fischer (eds.), *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1986.

² See: *ibid.*, it. trans., p. 165.

³ M. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, University of North

Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1980, p. 5.

⁴ See: C. Kluckhohn, *Mirror for man*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1949.

⁵ On this subject Nash published in the 1970s, but his monograph on Bolivian miners, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* (Columbia University Press, New York), was published only in 1993. Taussig re-elaborates some of Nash's

- ethnographic material in the third part of his book after taking into account the plantation workers of the Cauca Valley.
- ⁶ The similarity with senior executives of mining companies does not go unnoticed.
- ⁷ M. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*, cit., p. xi.
- ⁸ See: A. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 54.
- ⁹ See: M. Taussig, *Maleficium: State Fetishism*, in E. Apter and William Pietz (eds.), *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY and London, 1993, p. 218. This essay is also collected in M. Taussig, *The Nervous System* (Routledge, New York and London, 1992, pp. 111-140).
- ¹⁰ See: A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Preface to African Political Systems*, in M. Fortes and Edward Evans-Pritchard, (eds.), *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1940, p. xxiii, cit. in Taussig's *Maleficium*.
- ¹¹ See: P. Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State", in «Journal of Historical Sociology», n. 1, vol. 1, 1988.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- ¹⁴ See: N. Castree, "Commodity fetishism, geographical imaginations and imaginative geographies", in «Environment and Planning A», n. 33, 2001.
- ¹⁵ M. Taussig, *Maleficium*, cit., p. 240.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ See: W. Benjamin, *Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia*, in Id. *Reflections*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1978.
- ¹⁸ M. Taussig, *Maleficium*, cit., p. 229.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- ²⁰ J. Martel, "Anti-fetishism: Notes on the thought of Walter Benjamin", in «Critical Legal Thinking», 22/03/2013, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/04/22/anti-fetishism-notes-on-the-thought-of-walter-benjamin/>, accessed on 22 October 2016.
- ²¹ M. Taussig, *Maleficium*, cit., p. 246.
- ²² M. Jay, "Unsympathetic magic", in «Visual Anthropology Review», n. 2, vol. 9, 1993, p. 81.
- ²³ D. Levi-Strauss and Michael Taussig, "The magic of the state: An interview with Michael Taussig", in «Cabinet», n. 18, 2005, <http://cabinetmagazine.org/issues/18/strauss.php>, accessed on 24 October 2016.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ M. Horkheimer and Th.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002, p. xiv.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 249.
- ²⁷ M. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987, p. 10.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 369.
- ³² See: M. Taussig, "History as sorcery", in «Representations», n. 7, 1984, p. 89.
- ³³ M. Taussig, "The Diary as Witness: An Anthropologist Writes What he Must", in «The Chronicle Review», 19/12/2003, <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Th>

- e-Diary-as-Witness-an/11035, accessed on 15 October 2016.
- ³⁴ J. Cline and M. Taussig, "I swear I saw this: John Cline interviews Michael Taussig", in «Los Angeles Review of Books», 03/01/2013, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/i-swear-i-read-this-john-cline-interviews-michael-taussig>, accessed on 27 October 2016.
- ³⁵ See: M. Taussig, "The Diary as Witness", in «The Chronicle Review», cit.
- ³⁶ M. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man*, cit., p. xiii.
- ³⁷ See: J. Cline and M. Taussig, "I swear I saw this", in «Los Angeles Review of Books», cit.
- ³⁸ See: S. Nugent, "Taussig Michael. Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing", in «Man», n. 2, vol. 32, 1988, p. 402.
- ³⁹ W. Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Schoken Books, New York, 1968, p. 89.
- ⁴⁰ See: N. Polier and W. Roseberry, "Tristes Tropes: Post-Modern Anthropologists Encounter the Other and Discover Themselves", in «Economy and Society», n. 2, vol. 18, p. 251.
- ⁴¹ P. Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2005, p. 69.
- ⁴² See: N. Polier and W. Roseberry, "Tristes Tropes", cit.
- ⁴³ According to Paul Farmer, the concept of truth is both the premise of the possibility of knowing with compassion and solidarity, and bearing witness to those forms of violence and misery that afflict the most the vulnerable. Farmer aims to call into question the myths and propaganda of the oppressors (see: *Pathologies of Power*, cit., pp. 269-70).
- ⁴⁴ E. Cameron, "New geographies of story and storytelling", in «Progress in Human Geography», n. 5, vol. 36, 2012, p. 583.
- ⁴⁵ On the idea of "storytelling for social change" it worth mentioning geographer feminists such J.K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2008), and S. Razack, "Story-Telling for Social Change" (in «Gender and Education», n. 1, vol. 5, 1993). R. Maggio offers a useful review on anthropology and storytelling in "The Anthropology of Storytelling and the Storytelling of Anthropology" (in «Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology», n. 2, vol. 5, 2014).

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Throw the bathwater out but save the baby: new perspectives in Critical Theory

Giacomo PEZZANO

Abstract: *In this paper, I discuss the status of critical theory and thinking, claiming that we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater: if a certain way of conceiving and practicing it has nowadays become partial and unfit, then it's not true that it is qua tale useless, old-fashioned, or dead. I start stressing that, in general, Critical Theory highlights that there is a problematic relation between individuals and social structure, which has to be pointed out, to indicate actual and possible transformations. Then, I propose a heuristic distinction between two main paradigms of Critical Theory and thinking (the modern Critical Theory and the postmodern Critical Theory), discussing three main aspects, separated but intertwined. The first is more strictly philosophical, involving the problem of the transcendent or immanent position of the critique: on the one hand, we have the external condemnation of the society, in the name of some kind of superior truth; on the other hand, we have the inner problematization of a given social field, according to criteria that have been posited by itself or that are implicit in it (§ 1). The second is more strictly anthropological, dealing with the problem of human nature and alienation: on the one hand, we have the hope for the restoration of a lost state of originary plenitude; on the other hand, we have the effort of learning the better way to deal with human openness and relationality (§ 2). The third is more strictly sociological, posing the question of ways and forms of life: on the one hand, we have an ironical attitude, aiming to elaborate a true counter-society that should take the place of the false present one; on the other hand, we have a humoristic attitude, that attempts to make the problem that a society both poses and tries to answer a problem that reemerges, so that it can be again for the first time seen as a problem (§ 3).*

Keywords: : *Postmodernism, Philosophical Anthropology, Immanent Critique, Alienation, Paradox, Ways of Life.*

*What I want to teach is: to pass from unobvious nonsense to obvious nonsense.
(L. Wittgenstein).*

Critical Theory is Said in Many Ways

Talking about critical theory and thinking (CTT), we refer to the general idea that philosophy is linked with a critical attitude towards society: it can, should, or either must develop a critique of society, in order to make it better, or – at least – make people perceive the necessity of its transformation and improvement. CTT provides a sort of *normative description*: it says that something doesn't work in the society, and that full human emancipation is to be reached.

In a stricter sense, the specific difference of a CTT may depend on its conception of the core of society – i.e. institutional, linguistic, economic, repressive, globalized, communicational, ideological, affective, imaginary –, or on its key-disciplines – i.e. Frankfurt School, with philosophy, psychoanalysis, Marxism; Structuralism, with anthropology, semiology, linguistics; Post-structuralism, with cultural, gender and media studies; Globalization Theories, with geopolitics, economics, bio-sciences.¹

But, Plato and Hegel would say, we should not miss the forest for the trees: CTT highlights anyway that there is a problematic relation between individuals and social structure, which has to be pointed out, to indicate actual and possible transformations.

I propose here a general heuristic distinction between two main

paradigms of CTT: the modern one (*m*CTT) and the postmodern one (*pm*CTT).² Such a contraposition may seem too “Manichaeic” or even “straw”, but it can both show some important limits of *m*CTT and explain how *pm*CTT represents a development of its instances.

The Modernism-Postmodernism debate is still lively, but here I intend to stress two basic aspects. *Firstly*, the modern conviction that the (only one) truth does or could exist is substituted by the postmodern (dis)belief that such a “one and only” truth does not and could not exist (the problem of “the end of the grand narratives”). *Secondly*, this shift has important consequences on how CTT is, *and not* just in the sense that – as for instance Jameson notoriously suggests – Postmodernism is the cultural logic of late capitalism, something that closes the possibility of any kind of criticism (the problem of the “unfinished project of emancipation”).

Here, I take as both a state of case (*quid facti*) and something to enquire into (*quid juri*) the fact that the tasks of intellectuals change from being *legislators* to being interpreters along with the transition from modernity to post-modernity:³ intellectuals can no more “educate” and “cure” but can still “comprehend” and “throw into crisis”. As Spinoza *docet*, «not to deride, bewail, or execrate human actions, but to understand them»:⁴ that's the Northern Star of the critical attitude. Interpreting, or understanding, does

not mean – as I will explain – to be simply “indifferent” or “descriptive”; rather, it means being careful to the specific difference you are facing, by *problematizing* it.

Hence, my key claim can be resumed with the saying *we should not throw the baby out with the bathwater*. If a *certain way* of conceiving and practicing CTT has *nowadays* become partial and unfit and we have to “update” CTT’s key-authors (going beyond the “classical” Adorno, Arendt, Benjamin, Habermas, Horkheimer, Marcuse, etc.), then it’s not true that CTT *qua tale* is useless, old-fashioned, or dead.

I will discuss three main aspects, separated but intertwined: one that is more strictly *philosophical*, involving the problem of the transcendent or immanent position of the critique (§ 1); one more strictly *anthropological*, dealing with the problem of human nature and alienation (§ 2); one more strictly *sociological*, posing the question of ways and forms of life (§ 3).

I will not do so much use of direct quotations, hoping to help in circumscribing better the conceptual issue at stake; nevertheless, I start by declaring two main kinds of general references as the background of my exposition. Concerning the postmodern thought’s side, I will refer mostly to the conceptual framework offered by French authors like Deleuze, Derrida, and Lyotard.⁵ Concerning the critical reflection’s side, I will take into account, above

all, some important recent developments of the CTT’s perspective,⁶ but also some moments of the Marxian tradition.⁷

Where to Stand? Transcendent and Immanent Position

Escape-strategy

In *m*CTT, criticizing, transcending, and opposing are all in one: you need to separate from the social reality in order to negate its cogency. Transcendence means not simply disengagement (staying nowhere), but *opposition* (staying somewhere else and thus against “this where”): society has to be faced frontally and attacked, criticizing is striking the present and the existent, refusing to coincide with it and making efforts to transform it.

But when you say that something doesn’t work, you also need to explain what (and why) could or should actually work instead. Any transcendence presupposes an *external position* to make the judgement possible, a place which is not merely different from the one you are blaming or disputing, but more radically *better* than it. There is, somewhere, something that makes the (suppression of the) contradiction between this *poor and inadequate* reality and *another better and adequate* possible reality.

This place could be metaphysical or physical (or both of them, or one could ground the other and vice

versa), but there must be, in order to distance from the reality and negate it. Exteriority entails superiority: the other place is a higher one, it's the "normative prop" for the critique. In addition, there is someone who is able to gain knowledge on how to live properly, on the best world and behaviors: one who can know what people want or should want better than themselves.

But, this is where *mCTT* came to,⁸ such a real "above place" cannot exist. Conceptually, you cannot refer to a universal Truth, an encompassing Concept, an incontrovertible Norm, or an exclusive Ought-Being (*no more Capitals are given*). *Historically*, after the unmasking of Real Socialism and the fall of the USSR, you cannot rely anymore on the concrete existence of another better world (*no more "Priests of the Truth" are given*). Finally, we shouldn't renounce to the passion for another better world, but it becomes the afflatus towards a utopia, the nostalgia for a completely other, or the disillusion with any kind of positivity.

If you start with the idea that a false condition must be substituted with the true condition, but finally you realize that this true condition does not or cannot exist anymore, then you can – at the best – claim that the fight against the false condition never ends, no matter if we don't know where it will lead.

You aspire to be a partisan, but you find yourself without no more "part(y)"; you aspire to criticize any

kind of onesidedness, but you find asking yourself if there could be any right side; you argue that one could criticize the system only standing outside it, but you find yourself with no more outside: critique becomes the generic refusal of the constitutively imperfect reality, or – even worse – critique is erased. Interested in blaming contradictions, you risk to get stuck in the contradictions produced by your own blaming.

Fold-strategy

So, *pmCTT* is an attempt to take charge of such a criticality, in order to save both the *mCTT*'s inspiration and try to resolve its ambiguities.⁹ In a general sense, while *mCTT* is more focused in "criticizing", *pmCTT* pays more attention to "critiquing": the first encompasses a negative and destructive gesture, that aims at finding fault with something, to discover and condemn lacks and defects; the second exhibits a positive and reconstructive gesture, that aims at looking at the structure of something in order to ask for clarification, and to find what and how is working and not working. Criticizing wants to judge. Critiquing wants to discuss.

Thus, in *pmCTT* critiquing is standing inside and raise problems: going deep into the social reality in order to individuate its own "critical points", its inner fractures and zones of tension. Here, immanence means not indifference or concurrence, but *problematization*: society is queried,

critiquing is questioning the intimate structure of the present and the existent, asking for its conditions and presuppositions, reconstructing its dynamics and possibilities of mutation.

In doing so, you cannot be outside and over the society: you are *in it* and you have actually no other society; you cannot judge in the name of another (real or imaged) better place. Nevertheless, you *can evaluate*: you should dive and see how the waters go, where the currents lead, and what kind of inherent crack you can testify. You cannot judge in the name of The Good and The Evil, but you can continue to evaluate what is good and bad each time: having no “transcendent prop” opens the space for the immanent comprehension and interrogation.

Questioning, as emblem of the problematization, is what *pmCTT*’s does: interrogating, not affirming, neither negating. To pose a question (to problematize) is to see the elements of a situation as challenges, as something that invite who is involved into the situation to transform it. When you raise a problem, you don’t know the answer, you are not supposed to know it at any cost: it’s firstly a matter of defamiliarization and demythicisation, leading to a draw back from what is taken for granted and to reevaluate it.

Before choosing the right answer, to pose a question provides the visibility of different possible answers; before the enlightening of the truth,

to present a problem marks the entrance in that zone of indiscernability that soften the edges of what is taken for true. A question operates as an inner factor of folding inside a system or a situation: it opens the initial phase of a work of re-enquiring and of a possible process of transformation, but it cannot predict its final destination or point at its inner goal.

A question is not a mere curiosity: it’s rather a *demand*, the expression of an impelling force, that allows a difference to emerge (from renewed consciousness to new actions). Thus, an evaluation is here at stake: asking for something in a problematic way means bringing out something like an inner “mismatching” of a given field, something whose value is now put under investigation.

Therefore, for *pmCTT*, if we want to claim the need for some standard in the critical work, we should keep in mind that the standards employed cannot but derive from the critiqued itself, namely, the society in question, and not from somewhere else. Critiquing doesn’t mean saying and giving an account of what is the (individual or social) right thing to do; neither allowing to derive what is to be done for all possible situations: instead, it means showing the inner potential of modification within a given situation.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind: We Are (Between) Aliens

For *pmCTT*, alienation, far from representing – as it’s in *mCTT* – a perversion of human essence and nature, should rather be conceived as a *revelation* of it: the human being is constitutively alien to himself (*zoon allotriomenon*).¹⁰ But all alienations aren’t the same, they don’t go in the same way: the human being’s in-itself is actually a for-itself, but not all the ways of “being out” are equal (I will discuss this further on).

Following the German Idealism’s tradition, *alienation* could be distinguished in such terms as *objectification*, *extrinsecation*, *reification*, *estrangement*, *externalization*; nevertheless, here it’s sufficient to highlight two big main senses of alienation, one proper of *mCTT* and the other of *pmCTT*: the *romantic* perspective [*RP*] and the *cynic* perspective [*CP*].

I know, such a distinction appears to encapsulate what postmodern thought claims to have laid to rest, that is, the characterization of the term “alienation” suggested in *RP* is provided by *CP* itself. Truly, it’s through the second that the first notion of alienation appears to depend on concepts like “presence”, “proper”, along with the semantic of “essence” and “origin”, which is purported to underpin them: it’s only in the impetus of the unmasking and debunking of any notion of an

unalienated condition that such a logic of the origins can be revealed.¹¹

But here I don’t consider so important if *RP* is really the one and only anthropological heart of *mCTT*, or if it completely exhausts how alienation is (explicitly or implicitly) meant in *mCTT*: I intend to distinguish sharply *RP* and *CP* as possible paradigms, as to show the intimate relation between *CP* and *pmCTT*.

Lost Paradise

For *RP*, alienation is the name of a teleological and eschatological grand narrative of fall and redemption, of the loss and hope for the restoration of a state of originary plenitude, a state of fullness. Here, we have the loss of something original and essential that could or should be regained in the future, entailing the belief in a lost and retrievable human essence – the authentic human nature: we refer to the simple unity of an originary human essence; a lost unity, that can be regained exactly because previously lost.

Alienation has to be overcome or suppressed: human history is the effort to restore origins, return to authentic life, repair corruption. *Reestablish*, *reintegrate*, *reconciliate*: if you exit and move away from an essential and predefined core, you have to go back to it and come back in it.

Then, for *RP* the truth, or the real content, lies in the origin: the true

human essence is “saved” or “enshrined” in the origin, which has to be *revealed* if not yet shown (as in any *teleological* view), or *recovered* if lost (as in the *original sin affair*). “Exteriority” is nothing but a manifestation of the “interiority” that keeps the real core: the first risks – at the best – to distort the second, and fail in fully restoring it; but – in the end – exteriority is always totally inadequate regarding the pristine origin or essential nucleus.

Thus, for *RP* a society is judged wrong or unjust by comparing it to an essential human nature and its own features (rationality, morality, goodness, equality, harmony, and so on, or *their opposite*): a society must correspond to this essence and reflect its characteristics, or – at least – it must realize its fundamental traits in the most possible adequate way – and this is always a lack if compared to the perfection of the original core.

It’s just like the projective movement of birth would have broken the comfort of womb’s life, conceived as the *real life* that should be desperately reconquered.

Purgatorial Life

For *CP*, in its turn, alienation *reveals* and *expresses* human nature; it *doesn’t* deform, pervert, corrupt, restore, recover, etc. it in its own essential features: human nature is at all effects entailed in a process of mediation, that is, in a work of

“passing through” otherness and alterity (from things to other animals, from social organizations to symbols, and so forth).

Thus, human being has not a unique specific determination, a pre-established set of qualities: there isn’t a substantial identity to be recovered or reflected, neither a bare abstract infinite determinability, independent from any determination. In fact, a process of mediation entails actually the immersion in a web of determinations, which are not the ultimate and definitive ones, which can be good and bad, and which offer some opportunities and keep some others closed – or unperceived. That’s where the critical attitude makes its own specificity works (I will return on this).

For *CP*, different modes and means of production, ways of social life, political structures, technologies, etc. represent the way human beings shape their life and express their needs: *every different mode* works in such a shaping and expression, and it’s exactly this difference that makes them not equivalent. They all satisfy *but not* in the same way, they are all expressive but not in the same way. How a mode should work is not pre-determined in advance and cannot be judged in the name of “the true human essence”.

So, for *CP*, to reflect *critically* on the society and its conditions, you have to avoid at least two mood-traps: *nostalgia/phobia*, and *hubris/mania*.¹²

The first is the trap of some primordial authenticity, pristine nature, or – in general – virgin phenomena: the beginning is the promised land, lost because of corruption, and hence it's progressively reclaimable only through the embankment or the containment (*katechon*) of the present situation. But this is just like saying that the plane could fly faster if there was no air.

The second is the trap of ultimate power, extreme self-confidence, or – in general – blind euphoria: we can in no way improve the present, or – even worse – improve it only going ahead in the same direction walked until now. But this is just like believing that the plane itself creates the air thanks to it and in which it flies.

Actually, both moods testifies a lack of sober reflective discernment, undermining the *in-between* of them: the locus of mediation, as of – literally – critique.

This sobriety is more accepted concerning the human being/technology relationship (technique *does not* pervert but do show and build humanity), but less in the relationship of human being with society, history, institutions, and modes of social production. In these cases, mediation appears to operate as a repressive or distorting factor, rather than an expressive or possibilating one.

But if – for instance – we take seriously the fact that we are humans because we want to live in a happy society and not because we

should correspond to some image of the ideal human being, we have to admit to all effects the plurality of ways of being and living. So, we have also to acknowledge that (free) market is not the devil, but a set of social practices through which it can be managed in various ways activities as property, production, labor, exchange, etc., and even a possible relational vector of emancipation – namely, that it's still possible to distinguish between “market economy” or “market societies” and “capitalism”.¹³

More in general, in *CP's* perspective, we thematise not just what prevents us from living according to the Good, but better what prevents us from asking ourselves how we want to live and how we are living at the moment. What is in question is not so much the what we are trying to reach in and through the process, but mostly the how of its course: if our attempt to appropriate (to comprehend, reconstruct, be all in one, make consistent, give account for, feel happiness and satisfaction for, etc.) our life is damaged or prevented, we are living a bad life. A society is good as long as it opens such a possibility to its members, namely, as it offers effective possibilities and not just abstract or hypothetical ones. It's not a matter of being part of a teleological process or of being protagonist of a recover of an essence already and, since the beginning, proper and determined: it's a question of being in the middle of a process, whose

proceeding and experiencing should not be arrested or paralyzed. Appropriate doesn't mean *reappropriate*.

Provokingly, a society is good as long as it allows alienation, for the alienation process doesn't ground itself in advance but only in its during: one cannot refer to something that one already is or was, but nevertheless endeavors to come and relate to oneself.

For *CP*, finally, something like a "not alienated life" could be nothing but the ability to pose problems, develop them, and react to them when they engender obstacles – whether this reaction culminate in a violent conflict, or in a peaceful discussion, cannot be determined in advance. Without exteriorization there cannot be nothing to "hack": alienation cannot be extinguished, it's a matter of learning the better

way to deal with it, and of building a society that makes this possible.

Attitudes Have Consequences

Taking into account all this, we can come closer to the relationship between CTT and society, asking:

1. What kind of attitudes towards social life could be considered typical of *mCTT* and *pmCTT*?
2. Then, what kind of social function can be carried out by the critical work?

Sense the Non-Sense

I suggest to distinguish two main attitudes, typical of *mCTT* and *pmCTT* respectively: *irony* and *humor*. The biggest differences can be summed as follows:

<i>Irony</i>	<i>Humor</i>
Judges.	Reverses.
Marks the distance of who has another place.	Indicates the involvement of who is questioning his own place.
Is the art of ascent at the height.	Is the art of descent towards the circumstances.
Has a well-established plan.	Has not an established project or system of reference.
Pretends to be its own contrary to lead to the truth and aimed goal in a safer way.	Has no sovereignty or original meaning to reestablish.
Is an edifying, pedantic, and pedagogical cunning.	Is a deviating, confusing, and deviant movement.
Derides, ridicules, and confutes ignorance and madness.	Plays from the within stupidity and folly.
Goes in search for the truth, the unmasking of what really lies underneath, the announcement of the right principle.	Asks where something can lead, which its prolongations could be, how it could be.

<i>Irony</i>	<i>Humor</i>
Defends a thesis from the beginning.	Engenders puzzlement first of all.
Wants to substitute a sense (the wrong one) with another sense (the right one).	Works on and with non-sense in order to open a crack within the sense.
Wants to discover, recognize and behold ideals.	Raises, poses and develops problems.

Whereas the ironist mocks in a sarcastic way the contradictions of a system in the name of what is “extra” or “outside” it, the humorist plays *with-in* a system provoking the manifestation of its own internal tensions. To problematize means actually producing literal confusion, suspension, virtualization, and so on – *folding*: a problem engenders a doubt, conceived as that *inner doubling*, the marks a split, an opening, an *intimate overture* within a system.

As it has been stressed, «whereas the ethics» – as *attitude* or *posture* – «of irony posits ideas and concepts towards which we ought to strive, or what we *must mean* when we use words like “justice”, humor allows all the repressed and meaningless drives of the body to disrupt sense».¹⁴ Disrupting is to all effects interrupting a process, by causing a disturbance and making it emerge: it’s making a system produces an internal resonance. Humor triggers a *wrong-foot effect* – quite close, so to say, to the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*.

The history of the relationship between irony and philosophy is as old as philosophy itself, and quite a lot of things have been written about it. Clearly, I cannot fully discuss it

here, but I want nevertheless to prevent a possible objection: *there’s nothing new in saying that philosophy has a critical attitude in a humoristic way; actually, traditional “irony” seems to coincides with what is here called “humor”*.

This objection entails very important issues: the essence of philosophy, the tension between the Socrates’ and Plato’s view of philosophy, etc. For instance, one could answer by saying that whereas Plato was ironical, Socrates was humoristic, or even that the foundation of philosophy in a strict sense consists in the transformation of the Socratic humor in a more consistent and grounded irony – before Aristotle came to say that such attitudes should be substituted with a sharper scientific detachment, and all its implications (i.e. *thauma* is no more just “perplexity”, neither “indignation”, but becomes “amazement”).

Besides, to explain how humor is different from traditional philosophical irony, I prefer to evoke – *once again* – another important philosophical figure: cynics. In the common sense, a cynic is a contemptuous person coveting for success and richness, or at least not caring about others: the emblem of a ruthless, pitiless, and cold person.

So, cynicism is the perfect example of an apolitical and non-empathic attitude towards society and others, to the point that «cynicism will never become an active measure; it will simply accept the order of things».¹⁵ But if we pay more attention, we can see the other side of the coin.¹⁶

A cynic attitude is in fact a humoristic attitude full of political meaning, and – more precisely – exactly owing to its capacity of folding.

Let's take one of the most famous cynic: Diogenes of Sinope. As the story tells, he slept in a large ceramic jar in the marketplace, carried a lamp in the daytime claiming to be looking for an honest man, publicly kidded Alexander the Great, distracted attendees by bringing food and eating during the discussions in philosophical lectures, etc. In such cases, he was to all effects playing a socio-critical role, by striving to make perceivable the zone of distinction and transition between *physis* and *nomos*. Moreover, he was doing this by assuming a clearly provoking, fun and weird (*humoristic*) attitude.

This is pretty well known, but it has to be understood more into depth. In fact, this kind of “embodied questioning” of the tension between nature-immediate and culture-mediate is the performing of an *act of problematization*, namely, of a practice of critique in the literal sense: an attempt to exhibit and engender together their inner ridge

and crack. On the one hand, the supposed *physis* of the naturalness of the social conduct is suspended and shown to be actually in the field of the *nomos*; on the other hand, the supposed *physis* of the naturalness of the life outside any kind of social influence or determination is baffled, to the extent that it appears totally weird, and as a different form of (provoking, shocking, individual, etc.) *nomos*.

So, even more deeply, a cynic is properly an example of that process of folding, through which a re-fold, namely, something like an intimate reverberation, can happen within a field, a system, or a situation. Cynicism is here a *vector of problematization*: a vehicle of the immanent critique. A cynic doesn't simply show the “bare truth” (*this is life, can't help it!*); rather, a cynic *bare the truth*, which is not to say that erases any kind of truth. On the contrary, the cynic attitude exposes the condition of possibility, foundations and development of the truth, of any truth in general, and mostly of the specific truth one is facing or is involved in. Such an exposure, finally, is exactly the humoristic exhibition-creation of a *paradox*.

Humor works on and with non-sense (sense is both how things are “sensed” and where things goes): it engenders paradoxes. Our daily experience teaches this (just think of humoristic comedians). A paradox is not the simply contradiction of the *doxa* (a counter-doxa, so to say); instead, it's the genesis of the shift

of the *doxa*. A paradox marks the increasing of doubt and the decreasing of confidence about something, not the mere affirmation of its contrary, neither of something different: it fends off security and increase perplexity within a structure.

Moreover, in doing so the paradox shows the source of the *doxa qua tale*: it forces a system both to show its own instability and to make its own virtual potential raise; and it's exactly this "tensor" that testifies of the fount of systematicity in itself. A paradox doesn't *ironically* provide a counter-sense, or presuppose an alter-sense; neither it's barely senseless: by exposing the inner non-sense within and of a given sense, it exhibits the non-sense as the spring of that specific sense and of sense itself – or, put in other words, it manifests the act of donation of sense *qua tale* (as the Derridian *hyperbole*, maybe).

The theater artist Carmelo Bene often told of Léon Bloy's definition of paradox: "a telescope for the stars and a microscope for the minimum bodies". This affirmation, albeit rhetorical, spots very well the specificity of paradox: it makes visible something that we are somehow already seeing or experiencing, or – even better – something that constitutes the condition, the framework, or the structure of our seeing and experiencing.

Lastly, the form of paradox for excellence is the question, the problem as questioning, and – at the

same time – the form of questioning and problematizing for excellence is the paradox. The connection between paradox, question and problem is often technically stressed and debated,¹⁷ but here I just want to underline that as the question tells us about the "looping effect" engendered by the paradox, the paradox tells us about the "puzzlingness" proper of a question which is not merely the search for an information, a data, a state of case, a fact, etc. Briefly, a paradox-problem-question makes visible something undecidable, intractable and resistant: in this way, it determines a change of the intensity within a system, that is, the demand for its rediscussion or transformation.¹⁸

As it should be clear, this is not a pure logical fact or only an abstract issue: the social role played by the critique it's here at stake. Thus, two different socio-critical roles and behaviors may correspond to the two attitudes presented above.

Reconstruct How, not Prescribe What

Shortly, *mCTT* aims at transforming the present society in a correct society, it's motivated by a practical interest in emancipation, it's engaged in the struggle for the future: the society is a sick patient that needs an urgent cure. In its turn, *pmCTT* tries to enlighten the conditions of possibility, formation, and genesis of the society, or – more precisely – the relationship between

the individual and society, because the second affects and constitutes the first, while the first reproduces and nourishes the second.

Hence, *pmCTT* doesn't lose potential of effective transformation, because its critique comes to *put in crisis or in strain* actions whose effects are in no way neutral or weak. Shortly, *pmCTT* *problematizes* the society: it both gathers and builds its inner paradoxes.

Using medical terms, critical work provides a sort of *symptomatology* for *pmCTT*: it dissociates symptoms that were previously grouped together and juxtaposes them with others that were previously dissociated, creating one concept that becomes the name of a *syndrome*, which marks the meeting place, point of coincidence or convergence of the signs and components of the problem, namely the *symptoms*. This is not the same task of etiology, the search for causes, or of therapy, the development and application of a treatment; it's rather what underpins them, what makes the search for causes and solutions possible. Besides, this task cannot rely on a pre-given model of illness with which the situation should be compared: the pathology's symptoms and syndrome are to be sought and found within the situation itself. That is to say: it's not the pathological deformation of a(n ideal or real) state of sanity, but it's a pathology proper of the present state itself – *its own crisis*, exactly.

For instance, it's exactly in a society supposed to work for guaranteeing or producing freedom that can acquire meaning and visibility questions as: are we really free then? What is freedom for us? How can I deal with a society that seems to ask me to relate with myself and others as a free being? Can we appropriate of our freedom only in an economic way? Etc. The work of immanent critique is to make such problems fully raising.

Moreover, *this is not a matter of contradictions*, but of demands: when we ask ourselves if we are really free, we are not simply marking a contradiction between a promise and its realization; rather we are making a problem that asks for solutions to emerge. As mentioned, this is one of the deepest concept proper of *pmCTT*'s conceptuality: a "mismatching" is not a contradiction, it's an internal difference, a potential for transformation.

Under this regard, *pmCTT* can provide not a functional or a moral analysis and society critique, but rather an ethical one, namely, it points not simply at the mechanisms, dynamics, and performances of its own functioning, neither at its correspondence with some standard of justice, goodness, humanity, etc. *Instead*, it looks at the way and form of life that the society entails, focusing on how relations with oneself, others, and the world are experienced or could be experienced inside of it, as well as on the conditions of possibility and formation

of such relations, and the grade of facility of the work of social self-reflection itself – that is, the measure in which the society is able to put itself in question.

Otherwise said, *pmCTT* starts from the idea that people are not always deliberately engaged in or explicitly reflecting upon what they are living: they might participate in *their own* forms of life without planning, intending, or even knowing exactly what they are doing and why they are doing it. What makes us act is not by itself actively acted, even when it's actually acted. A way of life sets limits to what we can do as well as enables us to do things in a certain way: it's given as well as created, but it might also develop a certain dynamic of its own. Nevertheless, it's something that human beings do, and therefore could do otherwise.

That's where critique plays its role: as soon as a form of life hits its limits, things no longer run smoothly and are interrupted, so that this *criticality* doesn't go unnoticed anymore. The moment of crisis forces reflection on and adjustments of practices that were previously taken for granted – their re-creation: the task of critique is actually to make this criticality notable and remarkable, by at the same time *shaping* and *marking* it.

Hence, to be critical requires *not* to be the partisan or defender of a specific position, neither the herald of a renewed political-cultural and socio-economical manifest, but the

effort to render the field of visibility visible, to make what makes possible specific social concepts conceivable. So, the fundamental task of *pmCTT* is not to simply elaborate a true counter-society that should take the place of the false present one, in the name of some kind of superior truth, but to reconstruct how this society has come to its own configuration, how it works, and what it presupposes.

Besides, *pmCTT* attempts to make the problem of a society emerge, a problem that the society both poses and tries to answer; thus *pmCTT* attempts to make such a problem reemerge, so that it can be again for the first time seen as a problem – the goal, let me say, is not to correct, but to show what does “rect”, namely, what holds and sustains a society. To make visible the invisible, perceivable the unperceivable, conceivable the unconceivable, thinkable the unthinkable, imaginable the unimaginable, and so forth, means not merely to render visible, perceivable, conceivable, etc. another thing, another possibility, and so on, in addition to the ones already done. More deeply, it means to bring to the surface what makes those specific regimes of visibility, perceptibility, etc. possible.

As seen, this is the specificity of the immanent critique: evaluating the forms of life in question according to criteria that have been posited by themselves or that are implicit in them, namely, insisting exactly on the problematic link

between explicit and implicit levels – on the inner fold of a form of life.

In this sense, we could say that *pmCTT* points at the social unconscious of a society, where “unconscious” should mean a *virtuality*: a potential that animated and still animates, a further demand for integration, rather than something that should be finally unmasked in order to be removed and suppressed. Reconstruct means here to not simply demystify a failure and invoke the (past or future) Golden Age, but to understand a process and a dynamic, so that the signs of a future to construct become graspable, and the question about if and how individuals are able to relate to themselves and the process becomes possible. To thematise a crisis is both to show something that was already there, and to force to take into account something that *now becomes* “already there”, and thus is actively produced: then, you have to ask yourself how to deal with it, how to tackle it, etc.

It's the double meaning proper of every “invention”: together to *find and to create*. Thus, critique is a laborious creative practice, and this does not implicate its «domestication»¹⁹ in any way: on the contrary, it means to let it free to give its contribution.

In sum, *pmCTT* insists on the fact that a good life can be lived only within good institutions, in almost three ways.

i) It deals with the social unconscious of a given society, that

is, with the *reciprocal relationship* between individuals and society, reconstructing its web and knots. If it could be true that there is no such thing as society, it's also true that the society as process does exist, act and be acted: in critiquing it, we cannot refer to an external ideal or alter social reference in order to give a metaphysical authorization or a moral imperative, but we can still examine it as a peculiar instance of problem posing-solving.

ii) On the individual side, this implies that critique doesn't prescribe behaviors or recommend manners to individuals. Rather, it raises questions as: are we able to appropriate of ourselves and our own life? Can we really put our individual mark on, and insert our own ends and qualities into what we live? Do we have ourselves at our command? To what extent can we affect our society? Can we also impose our meaningful mark on it? Do we have the possibility to put it in question? Are we first of all able to perceive such a need? Etc.

iii) On the social side, this implies that critique doesn't provide to society and its institutions its own telos, the opportunity for a reconciliation between norm and fact. Rather, it poses problems as: can they enable individuals to appropriate themselves and their own life? To what extent are they going by themselves, that is, is their functioning becoming autonomous, no matter if and how individuals accept it, feel good in it, participate in it,

etc.? Are they once for all solidified and ossified, unquestionable, and thus unexpressive (even before that repressive)? Etc.

Conclusion. Unity Makes Strength

The distinction around which I developed my ideas is not to say that all we need is *pm*CTT. Actually, this would contradict one of the ideas which shape such an approach, namely, taking seriously *human being's plurality* – in the widest meaning.

In society, under this regard, it happens the same as in individuals' life: depending on the phase of the process that one is living, different resources need to be activated and mobilized. In other words, sometimes an energetic "no!" may be the best strategy, some others a laboring work of immersive problematization may be more opportune: what counts is to avoid in the critical undertaking that kind of unilaterality which appears so reductive and choking in individual and social life. You cannot be critical if you are not at the same time self- and *meta-critical*

Note

¹ See more in detail A. Elliott, *Contemporary Social Theory: An Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York, 2014.

² This may be also brought back to the paradigms of *German Philosophy* and *French Theory*, about which see R. Esposito, *Da fuori. Una filosofia per l'Europa*, Einaudi, Torino, 2016, pp. 64-145.

³ As formulated by Z. Bauman, *Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987.

⁴ B. Spinoza, *Political Treatise* (1677), in Id., *Complete Works*, M. L. Morgan (ed.), trans. S. Shirley, Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, pp. 676-754: 681.

⁵ Particularly: G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (1969), trans. M. Lester, Athlone Press, London, 1990; Id.,

Difference and Repetition (1968), trans. P. Patton, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994; Id., *The Fold* – *Leibniz and the Baroque* (1989), trans. T. Conley, Continuum, London, 2006; J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967), trans. G.C. Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1976; Id., *Margins of Philosophy* (1972), trans. A. Bass, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1982; J.-F. Lyotard, *Rudiments païens. Genre dissertatif*, Christian Bourgois, Paris, 1977; Id., *Postmodern Fables* (1993), trans. G. Van Den Abbeele, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1997.

⁶ Namely: R. Jaeggi, *Der Standpunkt der Kritischen Theorie. Überlegungen zum Objektivitätsanspruch Kritischer Theorie*, in «Sonderheft», n. 50,

- 2010, pp. 478-493; Id., *Alienation* (2005), trans. F. Neuhouser and A.E. Smith, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014; Id., *Kritik von Lebensformen*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2014; T. Stahl, *Immanente Kritik. Elemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken*, Campus, Frankfurt a.M., 2013.
- ⁷ Mostly L. Althusser, *For Marx* (1965), tr. by B. Brewster, Verso, London 1996.
- ⁸ Or – one could stress – it was already the *original and explicit destination* of the CTT's project: see, as emblematic example, M. Horkheimer, *The Social Function of Philosophy*, in «Studies in Philosophy and Social Science», n. 8, 1939.
- ⁹ T. Stahl (*Immanente Kritik. Elemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken*, cit.), claims that immanent critique is already at the core of what here I call *mCTT*, which originally intended to avoid the traps of both external and internal critique.
- ¹⁰ For further discussion and references, see: G. Pezzano, *Debitori (e creditori) a vita. Per una morfologia del debito (e del credito)*, in «Lessico di Etica pubblica», IV, n. 1, 2013, pp. 1-20; Id., *Marxismo e natura umana*, in A. Monchietto (ed.), *Invito allo straniamento. II. Costanzo Preve marxiano*, Petite Plaisance, Pistoia, 2016, pp. 115-129.
- ¹¹ About this, see the important S. Skempton, *Alienation After Derrida*, Continuum, London-New York, 2010.
- ¹² I take into account the distinction, more strictly concerning the *physis/techne* affair, made by L. Floridi, *Harmonising Physis and Techne: the Mediating Role of Philosophy*, in «Philosophy & Technology», XXIV, n. 1, 2011, pp. 1-3, but see also G. Pezzano, *Oltre la tecno-fobia/mania: prospettive di "tecno-realismo" a partire dall' antropologia filosofica*, in «Etica & Politica», XIV, n. 1, 2012, pp. 125-173.
- ¹³ See the recent A. Honneth, *Die Idee des Sozialismus*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2015.
- ¹⁴ C. Colebrook, *Irony*, Routledge, London and New York 2004, p. 148.
- ¹⁵ M. Gutas, *Truth*, in G. Chiurazzi, D. Sisto and S. Tinning (eds.), *Philosophical Paths in the Public Sphere*, LIT, Zürich and Berlin, 2014, pp. 239-249: 243.
- ¹⁶ See more broadly the relevant P. Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1983), trans. M. Eldred, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988.
- ¹⁷ See for instance R. Sorensen, *A Brief History of the Paradox: Philosophy and the Labyrinths of the Mind*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.
- ¹⁸ On the connection between paradox, transformation, and humor see also the relevant P. Watzlawick, J. H. Weakland and R. Fisch, *Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Solution*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1974.
- ¹⁹ See: M.J. Thompson, *The Domestication of Critical Theory*, Rowman & Littlefield, London, 2016.

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ITALIAN SECTION

Sollevarsi dallo stagno afferrandosi per il codino. L'attualità della metacritica di Theodor W. Adorno

**(Pulling oneself out of the bog by one's own pigtail.
The legacy of Theodor W. Adorno's metacritique)**

Luca BALDASSARRE

Abstract: *In this article the author highlights some issues about Adorno's thought that are fundamental to be acquired in the present age. It focuses on the questions most criticized in the postwar period: cultural industry, managed world, presumed snobbery about mass society, decline of aura, end of individuality, post-individual or pseudo-individuality, ticket mentality. Therefore, the author suggests to explain contemporary age starting from the Adornian model, an important interpretive antecedent to understand new media and the world that they produce. So this article underscores the similarity about many causes for reflection in Theodor W. Adorno and also H. Marcuse: in spite of outstanding differences, both theorists persist on the "power of negative thinking" and on the "feeling of the contrary". This persistence lays the foundations of critical thought in Adorno, who shows parodying art such as the critical model par excellence. Finally, last pages are directed to remark the importance of Adorno's thought such as metacritical philosophy, surely more fruitful than the paradigm of the "second generation" in the following decades.*

Keywords: *Cultural Industry, Ticket Mentality, Personality, Aura, Alienation, Fragmentation.*

«Era questo il nostro principio: pessimisti in teoria e ottimisti nella pratica!»¹

Così Max Horkheimer chiuse la conferenza tenutasi a Venezia il 10

settembre 1969, appena un mese dopo la morte dell'amico e collega Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. Questo principio, all'apparenza banalmente contraddittorio, contiene invece il

nocciolo di ciò che si è configurato, nella metà del secolo scorso, come la teoria critica della prima generazione della Scuola di Francoforte. Esso sorregge l'intero impianto di *Dialektik der Aufklärung*: se lo si interroga fino in fondo, permette di interpretare l'opera scritta a quattro mani come un interessante tentativo di leggere allegoricamente la storia della civiltà occidentale, non solo: esso consente – ed è ciò che qui è precipuamente sotto esame – di proiettare quell'opera ai nostri giorni attualizzandone il valore euristico. In cosa consiste dunque il pessimismo della teoria? È la coscienza che il percorso storico si dirige unidirezionalmente verso il “mondo amministrato” e che questo movimento, definito come progresso, si compie quale scarto delle capacità teoretiche e pratiche dei singoli rispetto alla loro totalità e al prodotto della loro attività – ciò che un altro pensatore vicino all'ambiente francofortese, ma purtroppo finora ancora troppo poco studiato, Günther Anders, qualificò come *prometheisches Gefälle*. È in questa prospettiva che il concetto di *verwaltete Welt* acquista connotati abbastanza definiti: come un panorama inanimato, ovvero in-animato, di uomini quali cose fra cose, il cui andirivieni caotico è la manifestazione di un ordine senza alcuna connessione fra il tutto e i particolari.² Più volte si è tentato di assimilare l'impostazione di Horkheimer e Adorno – spesso nell'ossequiosa e cocciuta devozione all'ortodossia marxista piuttosto che

come esito di una analisi effettiva dell'opera francofortese – all'etichetta storiografica della “*Kulturkritik*”, allo snobismo nei confronti della avanzante società di massa, ad un aristocraticismo in ritardo. Tale equiparazione si ferma alla superficie, e dimostra le disoneste intenzioni di chi la propone. Al contrario, l'equidistanza rispetto ai due poli opposti dell'anticonformismo elitario e del conformismo di massa, della filosofia come vezzo intellettuale e della filosofia come espressione di una nuova cultura di massa, è esattamente ciò che contraddistingue la posizione dei due teorici dell'Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale e che causa all'interprete numerosi problemi di natura ermeneutica. Il filosofo critico deve elaborare il proprio pensiero non di certo a favore del mondo amministrato, in linea con una realtà che liquida l'individuo nella misura in cui lo libera dalle necessità naturali, da ciò che Marcuse in *Eros e civiltà* avrebbe concettualizzato nei termini di una *Lebensnot*, ma nemmeno *contro* il mondo amministrato: prendendo coscienza di esser parte di questo mondo – cui bisogna peraltro riconoscere il raggiungimento di importanti obiettivi: la parziale eliminazione, appunto, della *Lebensnot* – il filosofo critico deve pensare *nonostante* esso, nel senso che deve orientare paradossalmente il proprio pensiero verso il recupero di una individualità entro un orizzonte che non permette più non solo la realizzazione, ma nemmeno la

pensabilità dell'individuo. Solo in quest'ottica è possibile comprendere la stima (quasi) incondizionata – caso assai raro nella produzione critica adorniana – che l'autore dei *Minima Moralia* riservò a Samuel Beckett: è possibile salvare l'eredità del moderno solo nella prospettiva di un fallimento dello stesso, e non nell'apologia di una sua anticipata realizzazione. Il progetto storico della modernità non è riuscito a portare a compimento il suo fine, una società di individui liberi ed eguali: ridestarne la spinta utopica è possibile solo a patto di non cadere nell'errore di manipolare, ipostatizzandola, la categoria moderna di individuo – o altrimenti: di libertà – e di applicarla in maniera posticcia al presente, ovvero al mondo amministrato. Dio non può risorgere dalle proprie ceneri, come Nietzsche aveva profetizzato auspicando la *Überwindung*, l'oltrepassamento del mondo amministrato ch'egli aveva già preannunciato. La salvezza dell'individuo passa dalla coscienza del non-ancora-individuo di essere un non-più-individuo; in altri termini, richiamandoci alle categorie logiche hegeliane: dalla coscienza dell'avvenuta conversione della quantità in qualità.

Occorre pertanto tener saldo un primo punto fondamentale, per configurare il ruolo dell'intellettuale nella prima generazione della Scuola di Francoforte e per metterne in risalto gli elementi di attualità: se si ammette l'elitarismo quale atteggiamento privilegiato dell'intellettuale

nella teoresi di Horkheimer e Adorno, non è in alcun modo da intendersi come il risultato della polarizzazione fra la massa e pochi individui eletti. L'affinità del ruolo dell'intellettuale francofortese con la *Vornehmheit* di matrice nietzscheana trova riscontro solo nella misura in cui l'autore dello *Zarathustra* dimostra di essere un pensatore profondamente inattuale e di vivere la distanza dal proprio tempo non con signorile disprezzo, ma con la nostalgia per una situazione pacificata e con il dolore per una ferita non rimarginata.

Lo sviluppo adorniano del concetto di industria culturale può fornire ulteriori decisive indicazioni a tal proposito. A costo di apparire monotoni, nodale è soffermarsi sulla morte dell'individuo e sulla critica adorniana alla pseudo-individualità, giacché si tratta di un assunto che è alla base dell'opportunità, sostenuta da Adorno, della lettura – dai più accusata di blasfemia – di una sostanziale affinità fra la struttura sociale degli USA e quella nazional-socialista, fra sistema fordista americano e sistema totalitario europeo e più specificamente tedesco.³

Se ci si attiene all'ipotesi di Horkheimer e Adorno secondo cui la diffusione su scala globale della standardizzazione e della produzione in serie tipica dell'industria culturale «non si deve addebitare a una presunta legge di sviluppo della mera tecnica come tale, ma alla funzione che essa svolge nell'economia attuale»,⁴ confondere la radi-

calità della critica francofortese con un catastrofismo di maniera equivarrebbe a gettar via il bambino con l'acqua sporca.⁵ Per meglio comprendere la critica adorniana al concetto di individuo nel secolo XX, essenziale si rivela il confronto con le posizioni dell'amico Walter Benjamin, espresse in *L'oeuvre d'art à l'époque de sa re production mécanisée*, con specifico riferimento alla teorizzazione circa la perdita dell'aura da parte dell'opera d'arte riproducibile tecnicamente.

Com'è noto, con aura si intende lo «*hic et nunc* dell'opera d'arte – la sua esistenza irripetibile nel luogo in cui si trova», «il concetto della sua autenticità».⁶ Secondo Benjamin, «*la tecnica della riproduzione [...] sottrae il prodotto all'ambito della tradizione*»,⁷ effettuando così una traslazione dal valore culturale al valore espositivo dell'opera d'arte. Ciò che Adorno non condivide di tale impostazione, come già accennato, non sono tanto i presupposti della conversione della quantità in qualità,⁸ ovvero l'attestazione di un processo di secolarizzazione che ha prodotto un mutamento qualitativo della stessa opera d'arte, quanto l'ottimismo di fondo – facilmente deducibile dalla postilla⁹ – che sembra peraltro essere poi rinnegato dallo *Angelus Novus* delle stesse benjaminiane tesi di filosofia della storia. È in fin dei conti vero che il potere dell'aura, grazie al processo di riproduzione seriale dell'opera d'arte, viene finalmente debellato, aprendo così la strada alla intro-

nizzazione del soggetto e alla sua liberazione rispetto alla ciclicità mitica, o piuttosto questa liquidazione conduce paradossalmente ad un suo rafforzamento? È lo stesso Benjamin, d'altronde, a rettificare in qualche modo, affermando che non si tratta propriamente di perdita, quanto di «declino dell'aura», cui il cinema risponde «con la costruzione artificiosa della *personality* al di fuori degli studi cinematografici».¹⁰ Per Adorno, tale artificio non è un piccolo ostacolo al processo di progressiva democratizzazione dell'arte, ma è consustanziale alla tendenza espansiva dell'economia e del dominio della società occidentale. Perfino Herbert Marcuse, nella prefazione politica del 1966, ammise l'incauto ottimismo della prima edizione di *Eros e civiltà* in merito alla possibilità di trasformazione della società opulenta ed al passaggio ad un nuovo principio di realtà, avvicinandosi – nonostante la divergenza di giudizio sul movimento studentesco e la seppur fragile speranza nei diseredati – alle posizioni critiche adorniane nei confronti dello *Aktionismus*, la ribellione al sistema configurantesi come prassi irriflessa e mera protesta.

Come ribadì Adorno in una conferenza radiofonica del 1963,¹¹ l'insistenza dell'industria culturale nel conservare coartatamente il principio dell'aura anziché contrapporre ad esso – come si sarebbe augurato Benjamin – un nuovo principio, in linea con l'aspirazione alla rottura rispetto alla tradizione, rappresenta

l'essenza ideologica della stessa industria culturale, la cui attività di rimozione/conservazione, di rimozione permanente di un patrimonio culturale tramandato è l'ultima figura della *Verblendungs-zusammenhang* della civiltà occidentale. L'industria culturale quale gestione della riproducibilità tecnica – che in essa si rispecchia – procede tramite un concetto di tecnica esterno rispetto all'opera che propina. Attraverso questa gestione programmata, che plasma ogni prodotto prima ancora che esso possa realizzarsi, appunto, come prodotto, tramite l'ipostatizzazione della dicotomia fra arte seria e *amusement*, fra tragedia e commedia, fra consumo d'élite e consumo di massa, la civiltà crede di poter raggiungere anticipatamente il suo scopo, la definitiva conciliazione fra universale e particolare per mezzo dell'accanimento *ad infinitum sul principium individuationis*. Si crede di poter eliminare l'angoscia per il mancato raggiungimento di una definitiva realizzazione dell'io, das *Urphänomen der Angst*, ovvero per l'ineludibile rapporto contraddittorio fra l'io e l'altro, reprimendola, o meglio inglobandola nel sistema come una sua appendice manipolabile a piacimento. Confinando l'angoscia entro precisi limiti, il sistema si manifestatesi nell'organizzazione totale dell'industria culturale, anticipa forzatamente le conquiste dell'io, che però può sperare di realizzarsi come tale solo nel rapporto con l'altro, con il non-identico, che è

alla base stessa dell'angoscia, dell'orrore per l'indeterminato. Il contenimento dell'angoscia, la sua degradazione ad un'emozione fra le altre di cui si può disporre ad libitum, non ponendo più il soggetto, che vuol divenire un io, al cospetto dell'altro da sé, eterna l'angoscia e mette fine alla speranza di una definitiva conciliazione. La pre-determinazione degli enti – uomini, cose, emozioni – sopprime l'individuo proprio nella misura in cui esalta il *principium individuationis*.

L'industria è interessata agli individui solo come a suoi clienti e a suoi impiegati, ed è riuscita effettivamente a ridurre l'umanità nel suo complesso, e ciascuno dei suoi elementi, a questa formula esauriente. A seconda dell'aspetto che prevale di volta in volta, si sottolinea e si mette in rilievo, nell'ideologia, il piano o il caso, la tecnica o la vita, la civiltà o la natura. Come dipendenti, vengono richiamati all'organizzazione razionale della produzione e tenuti ad inserirvisi dando prova di sano buon senso. Come clienti, invece, si vedono illustrare, sullo schermo o sulla stampa, in una serie di episodi umani e privati, la libertà della scelta individuale e il fascino di ciò che non è stato ancora inquadrato. Essi restano in ogni caso oggetti.¹²

Per Adorno si assiste ad una vera e propria inoculazione dell'aura: il sempre uguale è vestito da novità, e questa novità, questa originalità ostentata non è che il marchio impresso dall'esterno ai prodotti

tutti fra loro identici. L'industria culturale vende ai propri clienti futili speranze di felicità, sfrutta la stendhaliana *promesse de bonheur* propagandando contenuti che la dialettica storica ha definitivamente abbandonato nella fase socio-economica del tardo capitalismo. Più la realtà storica si muove verso la direzione di un sostanziale livellamento fra gli uomini – livellamento quale eguaglianza repressiva, che non elimina ma nasconde, a sua volta, il contrasto sfruttati/sfruttatori, servi/padroni, nella forma di un *beherrschtes Ganze*, di una totalità autodominantesi – in maggior misura l'industria culturale, il volto ideologico di questa civiltà, insiste nel reclamizzare falsi miti di realizzazione individuale.

Il centro nevralgico del discorso adorniano è sempre dunque il rapporto fra l'io e l'altro, fra soggetto e oggetto, fra Spirito e Natura. L'intero *opus* adorniano è rivolto a riattivare in forma paradossale questo rapporto dialettico in un mondo che, assoggettata la Natura ai disegni dello Spirito e alle sue logiche di dominio, ha mutato il secondo nella prima.

Chi meglio ha ereditato la teoresi adorniana nel mondo contemporaneo è stato indubbiamente Fredric Jameson, che nel suo *Postmodernism* ha espressamente radicalizzato la posizione teorica della fine del soggetto in seguito alla liquidazione della Natura, nella forma del dissolvimento del referente.¹³ Non entro nel merito delle elabo-

razioni del filosofo americano, ma mi limito in questa sede a sottolineare come la sua opera agevoli a comprendere l'attualità del pensiero adorniano: il teorico francofortese è forse più attuale oggi di ieri, e proprio per questo, nel suo significato nietzscheano, anche profondamente inattuale.

Alfred Schmidt, tra i critici più benevoli di Adorno, ha rimproverato al maestro il «ripiegamento teoreticistico»¹⁴ rispetto ai cardini di un pensiero rivoluzionario – individuazione di un Soggetto collettivo nell'antagonismo sociale e ricerca empirica. È d'altro canto lo stesso Schmidt ad ammettere indirettamente come tale interpretazione sia troppo poco leale: «reificazione è l'autonomizzarsi, dinanzi al soggetto, dei processi sociali in forma di cose, che si ripercuote nell'autonomizzarsi dei processi conoscitivi nel soggetto conoscente stesso».¹⁵ Si può pertanto intuire come il proposito adorniano sia tutt'altro che stoico, alla ricerca di una ἀπάθεια quale gesto snobistico nei confronti del corso del mondo. Adorno indugia sul particolare perché proprio da esso trapela la cattiva essenza dell'universale, e in modo tale da poter rimettere in luce la duplicità dell'essente tramite la categoria *Wesen/Unwesen*. Mediante lo studio micrologico è possibile pervenire – pur nella fragilità di un modello gnoseologico per costellazioni in contrapposizione al modello della totalità del sistema – alla conoscenza dello stato di lacerazione dell'indi-

viduale nel mondo tardo capitalistico, che Jameson, ancor più radicale dello stesso Adorno, interpreterà nei termini non più di *alienation of the subject*, bensì di *fragmentation*.¹⁶

Occorre dunque, per cercare di penetrare l'universale, mettere in risalto le modificazioni che subisce l'individuo in termini di relazione con l'ambiente, ovvero di sensazioni, percezioni, emozioni – al livello, quindi, della coscienza. La riproducibilità tecnica e la standardizzazione dei prodotti dell'industria culturale offrono al consumatore – Adorno si riferiva in particolar modo al consumo musicale – una mole talmente elevata di prodotti, una dose talmente concentrata di stimoli ad una velocità talmente accelerata, che le modalità di fruizione da parte degli ascoltatori si appiattiscono nel senso di un calo di attenzione: si ascolta senza ascoltare.

A proposito dell'appercezione del film, Walter Benjamin ha detto che essa avviene in uno stato di distrazione: ciò vale anche per la musica leggera.¹⁷

Oggi, potremmo dire: ciò vale anche – anzi, *a fortiori* – per il web 2.0 e per le infinite e variegata possibilità e modalità di ricezione/rielaborazione che esso apparentemente offre. Dato questo scarto fra i singoli e la moltitudine dei prodotti, è lesa il rapporto di conoscenza caratterizzante l'epoca moderna: nel mondo dell'industria culturale, la conoscenza si riduce a mero riconoscimento di un'identità coatta,

determinata in quanto tale *a priori* proprio per favorire la ricezione immediata – acritica e irriflessa – dei consumatori. In ciò che Adorno definiva il rovesciamento del puro valore d'uso in puro valore di scambio, ciò che conta è unicamente *Dabei sein e Bescheid wissen*, partecipare ed essere al corrente.¹⁸ Ciò che già nel giovane Adorno prendeva la forma di una fenomenologia del consumo culturale è perciò mirato a svelare il fondamento teorico del sistema dell'industria culturale: il *Ticket denken*. In questo nodo cruciale, la lezione francofortese è unanime: Marcuse, nel suo *One-Dimensional Man* parla di «chiusura dell'universo di discorso» e di «linguaggio dell'amministrazione totale».¹⁹ Si è determinato un «nuovo conformismo»²⁰ che ha prodotto una reificazione del pensiero tale che il linguaggio non esprime più il pensiero stesso, ma lo priva del suo imprescindibile elemento critico-negativo, riducendolo a mera funzione di un sistema eternamente autoproducentesi. Ancora una volta, i meccanismi posti in essere dal modello internauta dimostrano la lungimiranza delle intuizioni francofortesi. La comune e globale pratica degli *hashtags*, tipica degli odierni *social networks*, realizza, a prescindere dai contenuti veicolati, quanto i sistemi propagandistici nazionalsocialista e hollywoodiano riuscirono soltanto ad inaugurare:

Antisemita non è solo il ticket antisemita, ma la mentalità dei *tickets* in generale [...] Ma se il

ticket progressista tende a ciò che è peggiore del suo contenuto, il contenuto del *ticket* fascista è così vano che può essere ancora tenuto in piedi – al posto del meglio – solo a prezzo di uno sforzo disperato degli stessi ingannati. Il suo orrore è quello della menzogna manifesta e che pure continua a vivere.²¹

È accaduto proprio ciò che *Dialettica dell'illuminismo* sperava di esorcizzare: maggiori sono le possibilità di comunicazione fra gli uomini, tanto più questa comunicazione diventa pura, fine a se stessa, senza effettivo rapporto ai contenuti. Così oggi il web offre agli internauti svariati modi di interrelazione, con la apparente possibilità che servano da mezzo, ma imponendosi, tramite la propria struttura rizomatica, come fine: ciò che conta è esser connessi.

Non è per niente casuale che, quasi in concomitanza con la diffusione di tali pratiche relazionali, si sia assistito in questi ultimi anni ad una rapidissima ed esponenziale crescita della produzione e distribuzione di ciò che va sotto il nome di serie TV. L'aumento e la pluridirezionalità dei canali di distribuzione non son certo esterni alle logiche di produzione e alla qualità dei prodotti, ma, al contrario, ne esprimono esattamente la logica immanente: l'autoriproduzione e il flusso continuo; ma, anziché elaborare i propri contenuti dall'interno, mettendo per così dire in scena la serialità stessa, somministrano narrazioni di eventi, storie strappa-

lacrime o commedie divertenti spacciandole per prodotti di ottima fattura agli spettatori che, pur non facendo più, nella loro vita, esperienza di quei contenuti, reagiscono come se assistessero a tragedie puramente shakespeariane. Nei prodotti dell'attuale industria culturale, oggi ancor più di ieri, la forma tradisce il contenuto, che non riesce a starle al passo. Tragedie e commedie, drammi e gags rappresentati diventano così la pura occasione per veicolare, come unico vero contenuto, l'onnipotenza del sistema stesso, che oggi si esprime nella convulsa e spasmodica connessione. «Perché questa commedia tutti i santi giorni?»²² chiede Nell a Nagg nel beckettiano *Fin de partie*. In ciò consiste per Adorno il modello critico *par excellence* nel mondo amministrato: il metateatro di Samuel Beckett illumina il teorico critico circa l'esigenza della pratica metacritica, dettata dalla consapevolezza che la critica non può più rivolgersi verso i contenuti – che, in quanto reificati, sono facilmente manipolabili dall'industria culturale – bensì verso gli stessi mezzi espressivi e comunicativi che veicolano quei contenuti e di cui lo stesso soggetto della critica, nolens volens, partecipa.

A volersi esprimere enfaticamente, parodia significa impiego delle forme nell'epoca della loro impossibilità. La parodia dimostra tale impossibilità e modifica così le forme.²³

Il pensiero critico deve rendersi conto, pertanto, di non poter aderire

perfettamente al proprio oggetto, ma deve piuttosto rivolgersi anche contro se stesso. Su un piano prettamente politico, nonostante le notevoli differenze, è possibile rinvenire una sorprendente analogia rispetto alle posizioni espresse da Marcuse già negli anni Trenta, all'epoca della monumentale opera collettanea dal titolo *Studien über Autorität und Familie*, dove il pensiero anarchico di matrice soreliana – antiautoritarismo alla base della fortunata diffusione della figura del ribelle – è considerato come facilmente succube della tendenza di un rovesciamento in «autoritarismo formalistico»,²⁴ e più tardi negli anni Sessanta, tramite la denuncia del pericolo di un potere acefalo.²⁵ Non c'è che dire: anche sotto questo peculiare aspetto, ancora una volta i maestri francofortesi sono stati lungimiranti, se si osserva l'attuale panorama socio-politico internazionale e in particolar modo europeo, dominato da populismi d'ogni sorta.

Qual è dunque il lascito adorniano al pensiero contemporaneo? Una delle possibili risposte può essere rinvenuta nella comprensione di quanto sopra è stato chiamato metacritica. Un mondo che liquida il potenziale critico del pensiero semplicemente inglobandolo, rendendolo così innocuo e funzionale alla affermazione del potere stesso, può essere ricondotto su nuovi binari di bidimensionalità – utilizzando il lessico marcusiano – recuperando, non senza sforzo, una delle facoltà

cognitive primarie dell'umano: la memoria. Il pensiero che voglia rimanere fedele alla propria funzione critica deve divenire metacritico strutturandosi quale *Eingedenken der Natur im Subjekt*. Occorre, cioè, rapportarsi all'oggetto del pensiero non tramite l'occhio del dominio che ha caratterizzato i dualismi della modernità – che Adorno non aveva timore a definire tutti, nel complesso, come idealisti – bensì attraverso la rammemorazione di quanto è stato perduto ed è stato lasciato indietro rispetto al movimento livellatore della storia occidentale. La coscienza individuale può salvare paradossalmente l'individuo solo ricordandolo, nella consapevolezza che non è più tale.

C'è chi, come Habermas, ha aspramente contestato tale impostazione, non tanto nei termini di una sua sostanziale equiparazione al pensiero tardoromantico, ma più lecitamente criticandone l'assenza di criteri normativi in base a cui svolgere l'attività critica del pensiero. Se il soggetto della critica è ineluttabilmente legato all'oggetto, qual è il parametro in base a cui si può esser certi che la critica venga indirizzata nella giusta direzione? La risposta forse è la più fragile, ma anche la più onesta: il pensiero rimane critico nella misura in cui mira alla *Versöhnung*, alla conciliazione fra universale e particolari e alla pacificazione dell'esistente.

Questa tesi risulterà senza dubbio assai debole a chi ritiene che il pensiero debba attenersi ai fatti, e si aspetti da esso piccole soluzioni a

singoli problemi. Ma nel mondo globalizzato, in misura di gran lunga maggiore rispetto a ieri, non esistono più singoli problemi, se con ciò si intende la possibilità di soluzioni ad hoc senza che ciò interferisca con l'altro capo del mondo. In questa prospettiva, il ruolo dell'intellettuale rimane fondamentale: la sua condizione borderline non è un vezzo intellettualistico, bensì – come sottolineato in maniera interessante anche da Axel Honneth nel suo saggio *Idiosynkrasie als Erkenntnismittel*²⁶ – rappresenta il punto di prospettiva a lui più congeniale, in quanto consente all'intellettuale di non vivere confinato all'esterno della propria società, ma abbastanza distante da poter essere, ad un tempo, dentro e fuori, e da poter così focalizzare i punti critici e le crepe del reale, ponendo la realtà incompiuta di fronte alla propria idea, che l'intellettuale può dunque richiamare solo *ex negativo*. Nella figura del teorico critico, il mondo come dovrebbe essere – il mondo conciliato e pacificato –

protesta non contro il mondo così com'è, ma contro un mondo che, nascondendo le proprie contraddizioni, si spaccia come ciò che, secondo la propria idea, dovrebbe essere: come il migliore dei mondi possibili. Con le parole di Adorno, al pensatore odierno non si chiede niente di meno che questo: essere nello stesso momento nelle cose e al di fuori delle cose; e il gesto del barone di Münchhausen, che si solleva dallo stagno afferrandosi per il codino, diventa lo schema di ogni conoscenza che vuol essere qualcosa di più che constatazione o progetto. E poi vengono i filosofi di professione a rimproverarci di non avere un solido e stabile punto di vista.²⁷

Se la filosofia, così intesa, appare nelle vesti della provocazione, essa è in realtà, ancora oggi, qualcosa in più: l'ostinata e caparbia attitudine a pensare in favore di un mondo finalmente conciliato, pur nella realistica consapevolezza dell'impossibilità di appianarne, una volta per tutte, le profonde contraddizioni.

Note

- ¹ M. Horkheimer, *La teoria critica ieri e oggi*, in E. Donaggio (cura), *La Scuola di Francoforte. La storia e i testi*, Einaudi, Torino 2005, p. 386 («Und so war unser Grundsatz: theoretischer Pessimismus und praktischer Optimismus!»).
- ² Nel suo *From Caligari to Hitler. A Psychological History of the German Film*, Princeton University

Press, Princeton, 1947, superlativo saggio di fenomenologia cinematografica, Siegfried Kracauer, caro amico di Adorno e anch'egli, oltre che francofortese di nascita, legato allo *Institut für Sozialforschung*, nota ripetutamente come il cinema espressionista tedesco degli anni Venti tematizzi, più o meno consciamente,

- l'alternativa senza scampo fra dominio tirannico e caos istintuale, fra ordine imposto e anarchia, senza alcuno spazio per l'esperienza della libertà.
- ³ Ai fini del discorso adorniano, le differenze fra i due sistemi politici e socio-economici sono secondarie, sebbene mai negate. Si pensi che la stessa *Dialettica dell'illuminismo* fu dedicata a Friedrich Pollock, che pochi anni prima, nel saggio *State Capitalism: Its Possibilities and Limitations*, aveva teorizzato il concetto di capitalismo di Stato, preparando così il terreno per le successive speculazioni dei colleghi dell'Istituto, ma che aveva comunque posto alcune distinzioni fra la forma totalitaria e la forma democratica del nuovo sistema socio-economico globale.
- ⁴ M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialettica dell'illuminismo*, Einaudi, Torino 1997, p. 128 («Das aber ist keinem Bewegungsgesetz der Technik als solcher aufzubürden, sondern ihrer Funktion in der Wirtschaftheute»).
- ⁵ Come si evince nello stesso Th. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Meditazioni della vita offesa*, Einaudi, Torino 1994, dall'aforisma *Kind mit dem Bade*, pp. 40-41.
- ⁶ W. Benjamin, *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, Einaudi, Torino 2011, pp. 6-7 («son *hic et nunc*, son existence unique au lieu où elle se trouve [...] le contenu de la notion de l'authenticité»).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8 («La technique de reproduction [...] détache la chose reproduite du domaine de la tradition»).
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22 («À cette nouvelle angoisse correspond, comme de juste, un triomphe nouveau: celui de la star»).
- ¹¹ Th. W. Adorno, *Ricapitolazione sull'industria culturale*, in Id., *Parva Aesthetica*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1979, pp. 58-68.
- ¹² M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialettica dell'illuminismo*, cit., p. 157 («Die Industrie ist an den Menschen bloß als an ihren Kunden und Angestellten interessiert und hat in der Tat die Menschheit als ganze wie jedes ihrer Elemente auf dieseer schöpfende Formel gebracht. Je nachdem, welcher Aspektgerademaßgebendist, wird in der Ideologie Plan oder Zufall, Techniko der Leben, Zivilisationo der Naturbetont. Als Angestellte werden sie an die rationale Organisation erinnert und dazugehalten, ihrmit gesun dem Menschen verstandsichezuzufügen. Als Kunden wird ihnen Freiheit der Wahl, der Anreiz des Unerfaßten, an menschlich-privaten Ereignissensei's auf der Leinwandsei's in der Presse demonstriert. Objekte bleiben sie in jedem Fall»).
- ¹³ F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1991, *passim*.
- ¹⁴ A. Schmidt, G.E. Rusconi, *La Scuola di Francoforte. Origini e significato attuale*, De Donato, Bari 1972, p. 154.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- ¹⁶ F. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, cit., p. 14.
- ¹⁷ Th. W. Adorno, *Il carattere di feticcio in musica e il regresso*

- dell'ascolto, in E. Donaggio (cura), *La Scuola di Francoforte. La storia e i testi*, cit., p. 142 («Benjamins Hinweisauf die Apperzeption des Films im Zustand der Zerstreuung gilt ebensowohl für die leichte Musik»).
- ¹⁸ M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialettica dell'illuminismo*, cit., p. 170.
- ¹⁹ H. Marcuse, *L'uomo a una dimensione*, Einaudi, Torino 1999 pp. 96-97.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 96.
- ²¹ M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialettica dell'illuminismo*, cit., pp. 222-223 («Nicht erst das antisemitische Ticket ist antisemitisch, sondern die Ticketmentalität überhaupt [...] Wenn aber das fortschrittliche Ticket demzustrebt, was schlechter ist als se in Inhalt, so ist der Inhalt des faschistischen so wichtig, daßerals Ersatz des Besser ennurnoch durch verzweifelte Anstrengung der Betrogenenaufrichter halt en warden kann. Sein Grauenist das der offenkundigen und doch fort bestehen den Lüge»).
- ²² S. Beckett, *Finale di partita*, in Id., *Teatro*, Einaudi, Torino, 2002, p. 112.
- ²³ Th. W. Adorno, *Tentativo di capire il «Finale di partita»*, in Id., *Note per la letteratura*, Einaudi, Torino, 2012, p. 114 («Emphatisch heißt Parodie die Verwendung von Formennim Zeitalter ihrer Unmöglichkeit. Sie demonstriert diese Unmöglichkeit und verändert dadurch die Formen»).
- ²⁴ H. Marcuse, *L'autorità e la famiglia. Introduzione storica al problema*, Einaudi, Torino, 2008, p. 107.
- ²⁵ Id., *L'uomo a una dimensione*, cit., p. 255. Si tratta, a ben vedere, di un problema assai dibattuto da oltre cento anni, ovvero almeno a partire dagli attriti all'interno della Prima Internazionale, benché progressivamente accentuatosi.
- ²⁶ *L'idiosincrasia come mezzo di conoscenza. La critica sociale nell'epoca dell'intellettuale normalizzato*, in Id., *Patologie della ragione. Storia e attualità della teoria critica*, Pensa Multimedia Editore, Lecce, 2012, p. 231.
- ²⁷ Th. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia. Meditazioni della vita offesa*, cit., p. 78 («Vom Denken denn heute wird nicht weniger verlangt, als daßer in jedem Augenblick in den Sachen und außerdem Sachenseinsoll – der Gestus Münchhausens, der sich an dem Zopfaus dem Sumpf zieht, wird zum Schema einer jeden Erkenntnis, die mehr sein willalsent weder Feststellung der Entwurf. Und dann kommen noch die angestellten Philosophen und machen uns zum Vorwurf, daß wirkeinenfesten Standpunkt hätten»).

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La società del paradosso e il paradosso della società. Una riflessione Adorniana

(The society of paradox and the paradox of society:
an Adornian reflection)

Valeria FERRARETTO

Abstract: *Critical Theory offers a new way to understand not only the society, but also the individual. In particular, I will focus on the thought of Adorno and his conception of society.*

First, I want to investigate the Adornian description of society in its totalitarian face and in its paradoxical relationship with the individual. The individual, first element of society, without which any society cannot be imaged, paradoxically finds – in the society – its liquidation and destruction.

Secondly, I want to consider the Adornian revolutionary statement in a conversation with Horkheimer of a need of a “New Manifesto”. Do we need it even today? Would be really possible a new Marxian society in our world? The attempt to answer to those questions will conclude my paper.

Keywords: *Adorno, Critical Theory, Individual, New Manifesto.*

Introduzione

È noto e acquisito da tempo che nella tradizione classica della teoria critica dei grandi maestri Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer e Herbert Marcuse, l'opera del loro “erede” Jürgen Habermas abbia impresso una svolta cruciale da un ambito antropologico sostanziale ad uno formale con implicazioni politiche assai rimarchevoli legate all'idea di una sfera pubblica iper-razionale. Risulta non facile individuare con

esattezza il carattere di questa svolta, che si può inquadrare come una sorta di trasformazione, definizione che tuttavia non è del tutto lineare e priva di potenziali questioni critiche. In questa sede, si intende riesaminare questa svolta e valutarla con più attenzione grazie al confronto che Jacques Derrida ha sviluppato con Habermas proprio in riferimento alle questioni politiche che caratterizzano la società globale.

Tra società e teoria critica vi è – da sempre – un grosso legame. Fin

dalla nomina di Horkheimer a direttore della Scuola di Francoforte (1931), ci si propone di elaborare una “teoria critica della società”: le due nozioni non possono essere divise, ma anzi fin dalle origini la teoria è finalizzata alla comprensione sociale del primo dopoguerra. Il presente saggio vuole concentrarsi sul contributo di Adorno alla teoria critica e, in particolar modo, riflettere sul portato per la società della sua particolare teoria critica. Una società che – con Adorno – ha conosciuto la seconda guerra mondiale, gli orrori dello stalinismo e gli albori della società di massa.

Per provare a far ciò dobbiamo capire prima di tutto che cosa viene inteso per società da Adorno. Scopriremo quindi un concetto funzionale e dinamico di società, che non può mai essere trattato senza un'altra nozione, quella di individuo. Ci concentreremo infine su un desiderio condiviso da Adorno e Horkheimer di scrivere – o meglio ri-scrivere – un nuovo manifesto, come base per una nuova e futura società.

Società: tra funzionalità e dinamicità

Cosa intende Adorno per società? Innanzitutto egli afferma più volte l'impossibilità di definire tale termine, intendendolo come una

[...] sorta di compagine integrata di esseri umani al cui interno tutto e tutti dipendono da tutti; in cui il tutto si ottiene soltanto dall'unità

*delle funzioni svolte da ciascuno dei membri e dove a ogni singolo individuo spetta in linea di principio una di queste funzioni*¹.

Nell'*Einleitungsvortrag* del 1953, *Individuum und Organisation*, la società è descritta come strutturata da un «potere onniavvolgente» e da una «potenza onnipotente»: quello dell'organizzazione.² Rifiutandosi anche per quest'ultimo concetto di fornire una definizione, Adorno procede all'esposizione e alla critica dei significati unilaterali, nella loro interconnessione dialettica, di ciò che significa organizzazione. Essa è delineata come «complesso di scopi coscientemente istituito e diretto», distinto «tanto dai gruppi quasi-naturali, come la tribù o la famiglia, quanto, all'opposto, dalla totalità non pianificata del processo sociale». È «razionalità conforme allo scopo», una «associazione razionale di scopi», ovvero finalizzata all'autoconservazione dell'individuo, che esclude tutti coloro che non ne fanno parte:

Il nome organizzazione ricorda l'organo, lo strumento. In ciò risuona il fatto che coloro che vengono compresi nell'organizzazione non le appartengono in primo luogo per se stessi, bensì come strumenti per la realizzazione di quello scopo che l'organizzazione persegue e che in modo innanzitutto mediato – daccapo, se volete, come «strumento» – si serve nuovamente di essi.³

L'organizzazione è il *medium* delle relazioni umane ed è «qualcosa di completamente storico».⁴ Dieci

anni più tardi, nel 1965, in *Società*, Adorno, oltre a ribadire nuovamente l'indefinibilità del concetto di società, afferma che: «Essa è essenzialmente processo; su di essa dicono di più le sue leggi di movimento che invarianti astratte ed esteriori».⁵

Non si può identificare la società con alcunché, sia perché è un termine che muta nel tempo, quindi non può essere intesa come un «concetto classificatorio», sia perché non è la somma dei suoi componenti: «Non è neanche l'universo dei suoi elementi; non è una categoria solo dinamica, ma funzionale».⁶

La società è un «concetto funzionale» (*Funktionsbegriff*).⁷ Questa determinazione del concetto di *Gesellschaft* non è tuttavia da intendere «funzionalisticamente», come se fosse la «quintessenza della connessione di singole funzioni reciprocamente riferite le une alle altre»,⁸ non è riassumibile dalla somma dei singoli fenomeni, come fosse un «atlante sociale» (*Sozialatlas*),⁹ in cui tutto avrebbe un suo posto preciso.

Né si può cogliere immediatamente, né è sottoposta a ferree leggi naturali, come vorrebbe ridurla quella branca della sociologia positivista, bandendola come «relitto filosofico»:

Poiché, mentre la società non è un concetto che possa essere astratto dai singoli fatti, né è a sua volta un fatto che possa essere tratto in arresto come tale, non c'è un solo fatto sociale che non sia determinato attraverso la società. Nelle situazioni sociali fattuali appare la società.¹⁰

La vera funzione della società consiste nel designare i «rapporti che vigono tra gli elementi e le leggi che regolano questi rapporti piuttosto che gli elementi stessi, o la mera descrizione dei rapporti come tali»,¹¹ ed è quindi un «concetto essenzialmente dinamico».¹²

La dialettica di società e individuo

Società è «essenzialmente la sostanza dell'individuo».¹³ Eppure si rivela essere una sostanza paradossale. Per un verso, la totalità sociale è funzionale nel senso che è dipendente dai singoli elementi, dai quali è riassunta, è il risultato di azioni individuali, quindi prodotto dell'agire umano. Senza gli individui non vi sarebbe. In ciò Adorno risente molto della lezione di Weber sulla «sociologia comprendente». Per Weber, le scienze storico-sociali originano da scelte individualizzanti, compiute esclusivamente da un soggetto agente, sulla base di determinati valori. La scienza può solo giudicare l'efficienza delle scelte rispetto alle mete che si vogliono raggiungere, ma la scelta di queste mete esula dalla scienza.

Adorno concorda con Weber che la società debba essere riconosciuta come prodotto umano, quindi ricondotta agli uomini che la compongono. Tuttavia, nello stesso tempo, ammette anche che per quanto le azioni individuali siano riconducibili a una posizione di scopo individuale, esse si compongono di una

struttura oggettiva che trascende le singole posizioni di scopo:

Quando gli uomini, sotto la pressione delle circostanze, sono stati effettivamente ridotti a «reagire come anfibi», ad esempio quali consumatori coatti di mass media e altri piaceri regolamentati, l'inchiesta demoscopica di cui si indigna un umanesimo passato al bucato è più appropriata che, ad esempio, una sociologia della «comprensione»: poiché il sostrato del comprendere, il comportamento umano in sé coerente e dotato di senso, è già stato sostituito dal semplice riflesso condizionato dei soggetti stessi.¹⁴

In altre parole, se per Weber l'agire umano è un agire razionale, orientato a uno scopo (*Zweckrationales Sichverhalten*), per Adorno i fenomeni sociali non sono razionali o trasparenti al soggetto conoscente. Qui sta il vero motivo di dissidio con la «sociologia comprendente». La società è dal suo interno conoscibile e inconoscibile al tempo stesso.

Ed ecco infatti l'altro polo della questione, le dinamiche sociali hanno loro regole autonome, non riducibili alle azioni singole degli individui, che non sono sostanze ultime, ma anch'esse dipendono dal tutto, dal quale sono riassunte. Qui si gioca il ruolo di Durkheim, «il più influente sociologo francese di ogni generazione»,¹⁵ per il quale la società è un ambito distinto del reale, irriducibile agli individui e ai loro rapporti.

Durkheim è l'interprete di una sociologia funzionalista e orga-

nicistica, che considera i fenomeni sociali disgiunti dai soggetti che li rappresentano e funzionali all'ordine sociale. Questa sociologia predilige nella spiegazione dei fenomeni sociali le cause super-individuali che trascendono la volontà degli individui, riducendo quest'ultima a mero epifenomeno. Fulcro della sociologia durkheimiana è, quindi, il dominio della società sull'individuo, sull'«autonomia delle tendenze sociali rispetto a quelle psicologico-individuali»¹⁶ e sul carattere vincolante delle prime per le seconde. È la società ad avere gli strumenti di coercizione ed è essa il tutto che guida le parti. Tale tesi è riconosciuta da Adorno come descrittiva di uno stato di fatto derivante da una dinamica storica: «La società viene prima del soggetto. Che egli si figuri di anteporsi alla società è la sua illusione necessaria».¹⁷

Tuttavia, come quella di Weber, anche la sociologia di Durkheim è solo un momento della sua riflessione. Durkheim presenta il predominio della società sull'individuo come un disciplinamento positivo dell'individualità e le manifestazioni patologiche della borghesia anziché venir criticate vengono assunte a norma sociale. Suo fine è «glorificare il dato in quanto sensato», tanto che arriva a trasformare la seconda natura della società in prima natura.

Certo Durkheim [...] ha riconosciuto che l'individuo è una categoria sociale, che è mediato dalla società. Però nega spasmodicamente

che questa mediazione [*Vermittlung*] abbia bisogno anche di ciò che è mediato [*Vermittelt*], che le creazioni collettive senza antipolo individuale sarebbero così poche come quelle senza universalità sociale.¹⁸

Durkheim ipostatizza l'individuo come «fenomeno originario» (*Urphänomen*) ed equipara «l'estraniamento sociale alla socializzazione, invece di riconoscerla come qualcosa di sorto (*als Entsprungenes*) e, nella sua possibilità, di transitorio (*Vergängliches*)».¹⁹

Per Adorno che la società sia «concetto funzionale» significa proprio che è dialettica tra le due posizioni, tra quella che la riduce a mero riassunto di azioni individuali e quella che la vuole autonoma e indipendente, come un mero fatto naturale.

*[...] bisognerebbe mostrare come quei rapporti che sono diventati indipendenti dagli uomini e per loro impenetrabili derivino da rapporti fra gli uomini.*²⁰

La sociologia dovrebbe dialettizzare tra di loro la comprensibilità weberiana con la non-comprensibilità durkheimeriana. «La società è entrambe le cose, è insieme conoscibile e non conoscibile dall'interno».²¹

Questa «reciprocità» del rapporto tra il generale della totalità sociale e il particolare dei suoi momenti singoli, vuole distaccarsi dall'ipostatizzazione sia del concetto di comprensione, che pesa ad «atti singoli o tipi ideali, senza considerare la totalità della società», sia dal concetto di incomprensibile che «si

limita ad accettare la realtà non conciliata, e infine si esalta ciò che è stato accettato, la società come meccanismo collettivo di costrizione». Bisogna andare «oltre la banalità che tutto è connesso con tutto» e giungere ad un concetto di società «critico».²²

Autonomizzazione della società e liquidazione dell'individuo

Ci troviamo di fronte ad una costruzione umana, la società, che si colloca oggettivamente di fronte ai soggetti che l'hanno costituita: l'individuo diviene nient'altro che prodotto della divisione capitalistica del lavoro e della concorrenza.

*La società è insieme comprensibile e incomprensibile. Comprensibile in quanto quel fatto dello scambio che le detta oggettivamente le sue regole è esso stesso un'astrazione, implica, nella sua oggettività, un atto soggettivo: in esso il soggetto riconosce e ritrova veramente se stesso. [...] Ma la razionalità oggettiva della società, la razionalità dello scambio, si allontana sempre più, per la propria dinamica, dal modello della ragione logica. Perciò la società – ciò che ha assunto esistenza propria, autonoma – non è più comprensibile; è solo la legge di questa autonomizzazione. Oltre ad essere prodotto della società, l'individuo è anche proiezione delle sue contraddizioni.*²³

La società è «sin dall'inizio, unita a privilegi, all'irrigidimento di

*determinate funzioni degli organi sociali, al dominio».*²⁴ Prodotta degli individui, si rende autonoma, con la conseguente cancellazione di quelle condizioni che favorivano l'autonomia individuale. Diventa così una totalità, un universale, che tende a reificare il proprio oggetto, considerandolo come entità isolabile.

In primo luogo, è basata sullo scambio:

*Il dominio universale del valore di scambio sugli uomini, che a priori nega ai soggetti di essere tali e che umilia pure la soggettività facendone un mero oggetto, relega alla non verità quel principio universale che afferma di istituire il predominio del soggetto.*²⁵

Il rapporto di scambio non solo nega l'individuo come tale, ma assume lui stesso come il ruolo di soggetto della società: il soggetto diviene «nemico del soggetto».²⁶

In secondo luogo, scopo della società capitalistica non è altro che la «produzione come fine in sé», ovvero un «produrre per la produzione».²⁷

Sotto queste condizioni l'individuo non può più agire in modo autonomo, ma viene completamente determinato dalla società, tanto che la legge individuale diviene «crittografia dello scambio di equivalenti».²⁸ Proprio dal suo legame con la società borghese, quindi, matura la crisi dell'individuo. Le qualità, che il singolo aveva conquistato proprio entrando nella modernità – quali l'autonomia, l'identità e il carattere – diventano superflue e

vengono superate da nuovi elementi che le svuotano di significato.

*[...] Il fatto che ogni uomo sia sostituibile con ogni altro uomo e in fondo perciò sostituibile senz'altro; la sensazione perciò della superfluità e, se volete, della nullità di ognuno di noi per il tutto: questo è il fondamento, dato oggi nello sviluppo sociale oggettivo, di quella sensazione, anche nelle condizioni della libertà formale.*²⁹

Gli individui, così, da autonomi diventano «esecutori involontari delle leggi del mondo», tanto che quella presunta loro autonomia già alla loro nascita è «legata al funzionamento del sistema economico».³⁰

Che nella totalità sociale tutto sia mediato da tutto e reciprocamente dipendente, si manifesta allo stesso tempo come il negativo, il carattere costrittivo della totalità sociale come di una connessione funzionale universale [*Funktionszusammenhang*]³¹.

Nella totalità sociale, qualcosa può esistere e conservarsi solo come funzione di e per qualcos'altro. «In generale, per poter campare ogni singolo deve assumersi una funzione, e gli si insegna a ringraziare, finché ne ha una».³²

Si svela così la «proprietà specifica della socialità»: il «predominio sugli uomini di rapporti di cui essi sono diventati, alla fine, i prodotti privi di qualsiasi potere»,³³ «funzioni del proprio apparato produttivo».³⁴

La vita viene abbassata a manifestazione della produzione, «quella che un tempo i filosofi chiamavano

vita, si è ridotta alla sfera del privato, e poi del puro e semplice consumo». ³⁵ Ma la decadenza dell'individuo, afferma Adorno nell'aforisma 97 di *Minima moralia*, «non va spiegata individualisticamente, ma dedotta dalla tendenza sociale». ³⁶

Anche l'interpretazione reazionaria si rende conto della «decadenza dell'individuo e della crisi della società», ma addossa la «responsabilità ontologica di tutto questo all'individuo in sé, concepito come del tutto libero e interiore» e così preferisce «sacrificare l'individuo» invece di criticare il *principium individuationis* sociale. Condizione dell'uomo diventa l'«inumanità» e «il vivente in quanto vivente si è trasformato in cosa, in equipaggiamento». Concepire l'«uomo come un ente statico, sottoposto a certe deformazioni ad opera di un "influsso" esterno», aggiunge Adorno nell'aforisma 147, è ingannevole, perché

In realtà, non c'è nessun sostrato di queste «deformazioni», non c'è un'interiorità sostanziale, su cui opererebbero – dall'esterno – determinati meccanismi sociali: la deformazione non è una malattia che colpisce gli uomini, ma è la malattia della società. ³⁷

Una nuova società per un nuovo individuo

Da un lato, la società è inesorabile, «altrimenti non si sarebbe costruito nemmeno un pontile

primitivo e nessun fuoco da campo si sarebbe mai potuto tenere acceso», necessaria e razionale, poiché «si mescola con i compiti dell'autoconservazione collettiva e del dominio della natura». ³⁸ Dall'altro lato, le forme sociali diventano feticci e vengono rese tanto autonome da schiacciare e dominare l'uomo in una «connessione d'accecamento»

(Verblendungszusammenhang).

Noi siamo costretti, volenti o nolenti, a collaborare come ingranaggi del meccanismo e [...] la nostra individualità è ristretta sempre più alla nostra vita privata e alla nostra riflessione ed è perciò atrofizzata. ⁴⁰

La società «mantiene in vita e insieme minaccia di morte se stessa e i suoi membri». ⁴¹ È quindi in sé contraddittoria: nata da atti liberi degli individui, conduce alla costruzione di un sistema autonomo auto-determinantesi, che si oppone alle soggettività agenti.

In altre parole, la sua totalità non è identica ai singoli momenti sociali, senza i quali tuttavia non ci sarebbe nulla, ma dall'altra parte quegli stessi momenti necessitano della totalità sociale. Nessuna delle due parti, né l'universalità della totalità sociale, né la particolarità dei suoi singoli momenti potrebbe esistere senza la sua identità con l'altra, con la quale è allo stesso tempo non identica, in forza di una mediazione simile.

In particolar modo, è nello scambio e nel mercato che si esplica

la sua contraddittorietà: da momento di mediazione diventa momento di costrizione.

*L'astrattezza del valore di scambio coincide [...] con il dominio dell'universale sul particolare, della società sui suoi membri coatti. Esso non è socialmente neutrale [...] Nella riduzione degli uomini ad agenti e portatori dello scambio della merce si cela il dominio degli uomini sugli uomini.*⁴²

Adorno riconosce così, nell'analisi del processo di scambio, la possibilità di concepire quel processo di autonomizzazione che costituisce il tratto caratteristico della società capitalistica. Nello scambio la totalità sociale, che è il «principio della relazione sociale degli individui tra loro»,⁴³ si rende indipendente rispetto ai singoli. «Il processo di autonomizzazione [*Verselbständigung*] dell'individuo, funzione della società di scambio, culmina nella sua eliminazione tramite integrazione».

I moderni processi di razionalizzazione si autonomizzano dall'agire sociale individuale.

Gli uomini sono ancor sempre ciò che secondo l'analisi marxista erano intorno alla metà del secolo XIX: appendici della macchina, non soltanto i lavoratori sono tali in senso letterale, perché devono conformarsi alla natura delle macchine a cui attendono, ma lo sono, ben più, metaforicamente, poiché sono costretti, fin nei loro impulsi più intimi, a inserirsi nel meccanismo sociale, come portatori di un deter-

*minato ruolo, e a modellarsi senza riserve su di esso.*⁴⁵

È la massa benjaminiana, a cui è precluso ogni giudizio critico, vittima di quella «prima tecnica» che è finalizzata al dominio della natura e al sacrificio dell'uomo.⁴⁶ Anche per Benjamin l'uomo nella società Novecentesca della riproducibilità tecnica diventa merce amorfa, indistinta e alienata.

Tale scissione tra individuo e società non consiste in una totale diversità, bensì nella continua e reiterata non realizzazione delle promesse fatte dalla società stessa agli individui.

Come realizzare tali promesse? In una conversazione con Horkheimer, Adorno esprime il suo desiderio di scrivere un nuovo manifesto, che però per questioni contingenti e per l'impegno nella stesura di *Dialettica dell'illuminismo*, rimane solo allo stato di idea comune. Questo manifesto deve essere di stampo «fortemente leninista» (*streng leninistisches Manifest*), per giungere alla terza fase del leninismo medesimo.⁴⁷

Di fronte a un mondo basato su un «rapporto sociale che si palesa attraverso il principio di scambio, come se fosse una cosa in sé»,⁴⁸ Adorno afferma chiaramente che:

*È nostro compito chiarirlo in modo speculativo e protostorico [urgeschichtlich], per inferirlo dal principio della società, così che vada oltre Marx.*⁴⁹

In particolar modo, tale manifesto deve porre l'accento sul rapporto tra teoria e prassi. Adorno è

convinto che la prassi non possa essere separata dalla teoria. La pretesa che la teoria debba essere qualcosa di puro, slegato dall'azione, ha qualcosa di deludente, così come è deludente considerare la prassi come la realizzazione di quella promessa di apertura e azione.

Ecco, quindi, come la teoria critica – che è appunto teoria – può dire molto riguardo alla società – e quindi alla prassi da adottare in essa.

Una prassi impaziente che cerca di trasformare il mondo prima di interpretarlo è debole, fallisce e, soprattutto, porta alla riproduzione dello *status quo*. Come cieca pseudo-attività, l'attivismo non ha alcun effetto trasformativo: l'unico suo effetto è la riproduzione conformista delle sue condizioni. Si giunge così ad un'antinomia:

Da un lato la teoria esiste per dire cosa si può fare in riferimento alla realizzazione del comunismo all'interno di una determinata costellazione di poteri. Dall'altro lato è proprio la costrizione a pensare tali alternative che oggi rende il pensiero uno sproloquio. Questa è un'antinomia.⁵⁰

La teoria deve far luce sulle possibili alternative del potere, perché un cambiamento sociale di-

pende da una comprensione della società e quindi la prassi, se vuole essere significativa, deve basarsi su una teoria. Tuttavia, proprio il sentirsi costretti a riflettere sulle alternative possibili può avere come effetto una ricaduta del pensiero nello sproloquio, come se – in ultima analisi – una teoria equivalesse all'altra, senza alcuna distinzione pratico-effettuale. Da questa antinomia si può uscire tornando a Marx, ma superandolo. Ciò significa scrivere un nuovo manifesto, che possa mostrare lo stato attuale della società, ovvero di una società divenuta totale, impregnante ogni dettaglio della vita.

Non si dovrebbe oggi pensare veramente qualcosa di totalmente nuovo: scrivere un manifesto, che renda giustizia a come è l'oggi? Al tempo di Marx non si poteva ancora vedere che l'immanenza della società è diventata totale. Ciò significa, per un verso, che ci si deve spogliare solo dalla scorza esterna, per l'altro verso, che nessuno vuole più avere altro.⁵¹

Note

¹ Th. W. Adorno, *Gesellschaft. Erste Fassung eines Soziologischen*

Excurses, in Id., *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter VIII*, a cura di R. Tiedemann,

- Edition Text+Kritik, München, 2003, pp. 143-150, qui p. 143 (trad. it. di F. Peri, *Società. Prima stesura di una delle Lezioni di sociologia*, in Th. W. Adorno, *La crisi dell'individuo*, a cura di I. Testa, Diabasis, Reggio Emilia, 2010, pp. 149-159, qui pp. 149-150).
- ² Id., *Individuum und Organisation*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften* 8, a cura di Rolf Tiedemann, con la coll. di Gretel Adorno, Susan Buck-Morss e Klaus Schultz, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1972, pp. 440-456, qui p. 443 (trad. it. di A. Bellan, *Individuo e organizzazione*, in «La società degli individui», III, 9, 2000, pp. 125-139, qui p. 128).
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 441; trad. it. p. 126.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 443; trad. it. p. 128. «[...] il concetto di società non è separabile dalla storia [...] Una sociologia che facesse astrazione dall'elemento storico immanente alla stessa società per andare alla ricerca di strutture sovratemporali o limitarsi a registrar stati di fatto momentanei, però, mancherebbe *a priori* il proprio oggetto» (Th. W. Adorno, *Gesellschaft*, cit., p. 150; trad. it., *Società*, cit., p. 158).
- ⁵ Th. W. Adorno, *Gesellschaft (I)*, in Id., *Soziologische Schriften I*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften* 8, cit., pp. 9-19, qui p. 9 (trad. it. di A. Marietti Solmi, *Società*, in Th. W. Adorno, *Scritti sociologici*, Einaudi, Torino, 1976, pp. 3-13, qui p. 3).
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10; trad. it. p. 4.
- ⁷ Th. W. Adorno, *Gesellschaft*, cit., p. 143 (trad. it., *Società*, cit., p. 150).
- ⁸ J. F. Schmucker, *Adorno. Logik des Zerfalls*, Frommann/Holzboog, Stuttgart, 1977, p. 43 (trad. mia).
- ⁹ Th. W. Adorno, *Soziologie und empirische Forschung*, in Id., *Soziologische Schriften I*, cit., pp. 196-216, qui p. 210 (trad. it. di A. Marietti Solmi, *Sociologia e ricerca empirica*, in Th. W. Adorno, *Scritti sociologici*, cit., pp. 189-209, qui p. 204).
- ¹⁰ Th. W. Adorno, *Gesellschaft (I)*, cit., p. 10 (trad. it., *Società*, cit., p. 4).
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143 (trad. it., *Società*, cit., p. 150).
- ¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 143 e 146; trad. it. pp. 150 e 153.
- ¹³ Id., *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften* 4, cit., 1980, p. 16 (trad. it. di R. Solmi, *Minima moralia. Meditazioni della vita offesa*, Einaudi, Torino, 1994, p. 6).
- ¹⁴ Id., *Soziologie und empirische Forschung*, cit., p. 202 (trad. it., *Sociologia e ricerca empirica*, cit., pp. 195-196).
- ¹⁵ Id., *Einleitung zu Emile Durkheim, «Soziologie und Philosophie»*, in Id., *Soziologische Schriften I*, cit., pp. 245-279, qui p. 245. Saggio del 1965, scritto come introduzione all'edizione tedesca di *Sociologia e filosofia* di Durkheim. È l'unico fra quelli della prima parte delle *Soziologische Schriften I* a non essere stato ancora tradotto in italiano.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 246.
- ¹⁷ Id., *Negative Dialektik*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften* 6, cit., 1973, pp. 7-412, qui p. 132 (trad. it. di P. Lauro, *Dialettica negativa*, Einaudi, Torino, 2004, p. 116).
- ¹⁸ Id., *Einleitung zu Emile Durkheim, «Soziologie und Philosophie»*, cit., p. 251 (trad. mia).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Id., *Gesellschaft (I)*, cit., p. 12 (trad. it. *Società*, cit., p. 6). «[...] La dinamica autonoma che caratterizza i

- processi sociali (si pensi, per citare un esempio non casuale, alle crisi economiche) non può far dimenticare il fatto che essi restano comunque, in ultima istanza, il risultato di azioni teleologiche degli individui» (S. Petrucciani, *Il mitico nel moderno: figure del feticismo in Adorno*, in S. Mistura, *Figure del feticismo*, Einaudi, Torino, 2001, pp. 197-224, qui p. 209).
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13 (trad. it. *Società*, cit., p. 7).
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 12 e 13; trad. it. pp. 6 e 7.
- ²³ Id., *Einleitung zum «Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie»*, in Id., *Soziologische Schriften I*, cit., pp. 280-352, qui pp. 295-296 (trad. it. di A. Marietti Solmi, *Introduzione a «Dialettica e Positivismo in sociologia»*, in Id., *Scritti sociologici*, cit., pp. 239-313, qui p. 255).
- ²⁴ Id., *Individuum und Staat*, in Id., *Gesellschaft, Unterricht, Politik*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften 20.1*, cit., 1986, pp. 287-292, qui p. 287 (trad. it. di I. Testa, *Individuo e stato*, in «La società degli individui», III, 9, 2000/3, pp. 119-124, qui p. 119).
- ²⁵ Id., *Negative Dialektik*, cit., p. 180; trad. it., *Dialettica negativa*, cit., p. 161.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22; trad. it. p. 12. «[...] sotto il rapporto di scambio tutto viene ridotto a mezzo per altro e gli uomini vengono defraudati del valore d'uso. Il principio di scambio conformemente a ciò diventerebbe totalità e causa del degrado del soggetto: totalità, in quanto abbraccia il mondo intero, causa del degrado, in quanto costringe gli uomini in rapporti di scambio e li rende dei mezzi» (J. Weyand, *Adornos Kritische Theorie des Subjekts*, Klampen, Lüneburg, 2011, p. 65, trad. mia).
- ²⁷ Id., *Negative Dialektik*, cit., pp. 302, 301; trad. it., *Dialettica negativa*, cit., p. 274.
- ²⁸ Id., *Minima Moralia*, cit., p. 184 (trad. it., *Minima moralia*, cit., p. 190).
- ²⁹ Id., *Metaphysik. Begriff und Probleme*, in Id., *Nachgelassene Schriften IV, Vorlesungen*, vol. 4, a cura di R. Tiedemann, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1998, p. 171 (trad. it. di L. Garzone, *Metafisica. Concetto e problemi*, a cura di S. Petrucciani, Einaudi, Torino, 2006, p. 132).
- ³⁰ H.-H. Kappner, *Adornos Reflexion über den Zerfall des bürgerlichen Individuums*, in H. L. Arnold (cura), *Th. W. Adorno, Sonderband, Text+Kritik GmbH, München*, 1977, pp. 44 -63, qui pp. 45-46 (trad. mia).
- ³¹ J. F. Schmucker, *Adorno. Logik des Zerfalls*, cit., p. 44 (trad. mia).
- ³² Th. W. Adorno, *Gesellschaft (I)*, cit., p. 10 (trad. it., *Società*, cit., p. 4).
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9; trad. it. p. 3.
- ³⁴ Id., *Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?*, in Id., *Soziologische Schriften I*, cit., pp. 354-370, qui p. 359 (trad. it. di A. Marietti Solmi, *Tardo capitalismo o società industriale?*, in Id., *Scritti sociologici*, cit., pp. 314-330, qui p. 320).
- ³⁵ Id., *Minima Moralia*, cit., p. 13 (trad. it., *Minima moralia*, cit., p. 3).
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 169; trad. it. p. 175.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 263, 262; trad. it. pp. 280, 279.
- ³⁸ Id., *Individuum und Organisation*, cit., pp. 444-445 (trad. it., *Individuo e organizzazione*, cit., p. 129).
- ³⁹ Id., M. Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften 3*, cit., 1981, p. 59 (trad. it.

- di R. Solmi, *Dialettica dell'illuminismo*, Einaudi, Torino, 2010, p. 49) e Th. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, cit., pp. 99, 236, 364, 399 (trad. it., *Dialettica negativa*, cit., pp. 85, 212, 333, 364).
- ⁴⁰ Id., *Individuum und Organisation*, cit., pp. 444 (trad. it., *Individuo e organizzazione*, cit., p. 129).
- ⁴¹ Id., *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften*, in Id., *Soziologische Schriften I*, cit., pp. 547-565, qui p. 551 (trad. it. di A. Marietti Solmi, *Sulla logica delle scienze sociali*, in Th. W. Adorno, K. R. Popper, R. Dahrendorf, J. Habermas, H. Albert, H. Pilot, *Dialettica e positivismo in sociologia*, Einaudi, Torino, 1972, pp. 125-143, qui 128).
- ⁴² Id., *Gesellschaft (I)*, cit., p. 14 (trad. it., *Società*, cit., p. 8). «In altri termini, la società non trova altra determinazione per se stessa se non quella del capitale. La coesione sociale è possibile soltanto grazie al mercato, alla reificazione, alla dissoluzione del sé nel ruolo e all'integrazione sistemica» (A. Bellan, *La possibilità dell'altrimenti. Adorno e la teoria della società*, in P. P. Poggio (cura), *L'Altronovecento. Comunismo eretico e pensiero critico*, vol. 2, JacaBook, Milano, 2011, pp. 471-489, qui p. 484).
- ⁴³ Id., *Einleitung zum «Positivismusstreit in der deutschen Soziologie»*, cit., p. 292 (trad. it. di, *Introduzione a «Dialettica e Positivismo in sociologia»*, cit., p. 251).
- ⁴⁴ Id., *Negative Dialektik*, cit., p. 259 (trad. it., *Dialettica negativa*, cit., p. 235).
- ⁴⁵ Id., *Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?*, cit., p. 361 (trad. it., *Tardo capitalismo o società industriale?*, cit., p. 321).
- ⁴⁶ Cfr. W. Benjamin, *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. Zweite Fassung*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften VII/1*, a cura di R. Tiedemann e H. Schweppenhäuser, con la coll. di Th.W. Adorno, G. Scholem, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1991, pp. 350-384 (trad. it. di E. Filippini, H. Riediger, *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica [prima stesura]*, in Id., *Opere complete VI*, a cura di E. Ganni, Einaudi, Torino, 2004, pp. 271-303). A differenza di Adorno, Benjamin – nella prima e seconda versione del saggio *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica* – parla anche di una «seconda tecnica», portatrice di una nuova consapevolezza. In particolare, è il cinema ad essere espressione di una tecnica che è «gioco combinato» (*Zusammenspiel*) tra natura e uomo, teso alla liberazione di quest'ultimo (ivi, p. 359; trad. It. pp. 279-280), come se riuscisse a mediare il risveglio, che trasforma lo *choc* in *chance*.
- ⁴⁷ Th. W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, *Diskussion über Theorie und Praxis*, in *Nachtrag zu Band 13: Nachgelassene Schriften 1949-1972.2. Gespräche*, in M. Horkheimer, *Nachträge, Verzeichnisse und Register*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften 19*, a cura di G. S. Noerr, in coll. con J. Baars, R. Clodius, F. v. Gelder e G. S. Noerr, Fischer, Frankfurt a. M., 1996, pp. 32-72, qui p. 66 (trad. mia).
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37 (trad. mia).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* (trad. e corsivo miei).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64 (trad. mia).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65 (trad. e corsivo miei).

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Trasformazione della teoria critica e questioni politiche: un confronto tra Jürgen Habermas e Jacques Derrida

**(Transformation of critical theory and political questions:
a comparison between Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida)**

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Abstract: *The evolution of Critical Theory in the thought of Jürgen Habermas has important consequences for political questions, influencing the actual intellectual debate. This paper examines the main works and studies of Habermas about the epistemology of social sciences, the critique of late capitalist society, the public sphere and democracy, and proposes a comparison with the positions of Jacques Derrida, to have a better comprehension of this evolution.*

Keywords: *Critical Theory, Politics, Democracy, Epistemology, Modernity.*

La teoria critica di Habermas

Cerchiamo in primo luogo di delineare la tipologia della teoria critica di Habermas e quali siano state le sue applicazioni al discorso politico. Naturalmente, la trattazione che qui sviluppiamo è volta a sintetizzare temi e concetti piuttosto complessi che sono sempre suscettibili di approfondimenti e precisazioni.

Essendosi formato nel contesto della Scuola di Francoforte,¹ Habermas muove da una prospettiva sociologica critica della società

tardo capitalista, toccando questioni epistemologiche trattate tra gli anni Sessanta e Settanta: infatti, i francofortesi avevano concepito per le scienze sociali, in ultima analisi, il compito di liberare gli individui, di permettere lo sviluppo di una società in cui ciascun individuo è autonomo e consapevole, di svelare le forme di oppressione e di dominio e di correggere, ove siano presenti, queste distorsioni, comprendendone origini e motivazioni profonde; se, invece, la riflessione su quel che sia la società perde di vista la distinzione tra istituzione e vita e cerca, per esempio, di risolvere il sociale nel

naturale, essa non conduce uno sforzo di liberazione dalle costrizioni delle istituzioni.² Lo studioso tedesco, allora, approfondisce il tema del rapporto tra scienze naturali e scienze sociali, per sviluppare una teoria finalizzata alla comprensione dei fenomeni sociali che superi il riduttivismo di tipo positivista. Nel celebre dibattito su queste problematiche, svoltosi negli anni Sessanta tra dialettici (Adorno e appunto Habermas, suo allievo) e neopositivisti (Popper e Albert), Habermas rifiutava³ il realismo ingenuo del primo positivismo e l'induttivismo della tradizione empirista. Lo studioso tedesco, infatti, sostiene⁴ che ogni discorso scientifico parte necessariamente da presupposti teorici che non riproducono fatti in sé, ma dipendono dall'organizzazione della nostra esperienza rispetto a quello che egli chiama agire strumentale, cioè un agire determinato da situazioni particolari e orientato verso fini individuali, considerato dal sociologo come meramente "tecnico" e "non sociale". A questo "agire strumentale" Habermas verrà contrapponendo l'"agire comunicativo". Questa interpretazione critica della società del tardo-capitalismo⁵ è alla base della necessità di una dimensione di "razionalità sostanziale" da contrapporre a una "razionalità strumentale" di tipo tecnologico. In tal senso, egli esplicitamente condivide la tesi fondamentale espressa da Marcuse per cui «scienza e tecnica assumono oggi anche la funzione di

legittimazioni del dominio».⁶ Habermas vuole, quindi, mostrare che esistono limiti a questa riduzione dell'organizzazione della nostra esperienza in un problema strumentale e che, anzi, la stessa soluzione di problemi tecnici presuppone non solo lo sviluppo delle forze produttive, ma anche lo sviluppo della coscienza sociale dei soggetti, ossia il primato della politica. Questo spiega perché egli, in questo contesto, conferisca grande importanza al ruolo giocato dall'opinione pubblica.⁷ Per evitare che il sistema-scienza diventi ideologico rispetto alla società, ossia per superare la tecnocrazia, Habermas propone un rapporto tra politici ed esperti-scienziati, in cui al posto di una separazione tra le funzioni dell'esperto e del politico, vi sia reciproca comunicazione critica.

È a questo punto che matura la svolta che allontana Habermas dalla tradizione classica della teoria critica, portandolo a un impianto di riflessione più strettamente formale. Nella riflessione habermasiana il punto cruciale diventa, negli anni Ottanta, il concetto-programma di una comunicazione senza limiti e non autoritaria. Tale concetto è alla base di quella che si può forse considerare l'opera maggiore di Habermas, *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo*, in cui si delinea una situazione linguistica ideale propria di un modello di società in cui il consenso è prodotto in modo argomentato, con la partecipazione di tutti, senza distorsioni o condizio-

namenti esterni.⁸ La comunicazione, dunque, nella prospettiva habermasiana, non è soltanto un processo di comprensione e intesa; tramite essa, si costituiscono anche appartenenze e identità.⁹ In quest'orizzonte, il tema della crisi dell'agire politico, che caratterizza spesso il dibattito sulle società complesse, può essere affrontata e superata solo fondando la politica su una democrazia deliberativa, al cui interno la dimensione etica e quella normativa restino centrali e si ribadisca il valore permanente della "modernità" e delle sue idee ispiratrici (come la razionalità, il progresso, ecc.)¹⁰.

Il modello deliberativo di democrazia, si fonda su una concezione deliberativa della politica, ossia su un procedimento che crea una connessione tra trattative, discorsi di autochiarimento e discorsi di giustizia. La politica deliberativa punta a un superiore livello di intersoggettività sia nella forma istituzionalizzata dei dibattimenti parlamentari, sia nella rete comunicativa delle sfere pubbliche politiche.¹¹ Si tratta qui di una idea di democrazia che si distingue da quella delle tradizioni sia liberali che repubblicane. Nel modello liberale, il processo democratico ha un ruolo di intermediazione tra il potere dello Stato e la regolazione del mercato; nel modello repubblicano, invece, la politica non ha solo questa funzione di intermediazione, ma diventa costitutiva dell'intero processo di socializzazione. Per il modello repubblicano si tratta di rivitalizzare la

sfera pubblica politica contro il privatismo civico. Diversamente, nel modello liberale, l'obiettivo è la «normazione costituzionale»¹² di una società mercantile. Habermas sviluppa un modello democratico che cerca di superare i limiti sia di quello liberale che di quello repubblicano.

L'interpretazione della politica in chiave deliberativa determina l'idea habermasiana per cui il rapporto tra nazione, Stato di diritto e democrazia, sia teorizzabile in una versione comunicativa e non nella versione etno-nazionalistica.¹³ Habermas, infatti, conferisce al diritto nella società della modernità un ruolo fondamentale, poiché il diritto costituisce un meccanismo insostituibile di regolazione e coordinamento delle azioni delle società moderne e differenziate.¹⁴ Habermas, di conseguenza, pensa che il concetto di *Staatsvolk* (popolo) non vada considerato come una fattualità prepolitica, ma come il prodotto del contratto sociale e propone una specifica interpretazione, in chiave cosmopolitica, del rapporto tra lo Stato nazione e i processi della globalizzazione.¹⁵ Egli quindi ritiene che solidarietà dei cittadini si può costituire attraverso un *patriottismo costituzionale*, che indirizzi la fedeltà e l'obbedienza dei cittadini verso la nazione, intesa come comunità che si autodetermina¹⁶ attraverso le leggi e lo Stato, creando una nuova e più astratta forma di integrazione sociale. Nel complesso, il diritto è considerato il solo mezzo

per salvaguardare la solidarietà e sviluppare la giustizia, ossia, appunto, è il solo mezzo che determini una cittadinanza democratica pluralistica che *includa l'altro senza assimilarlo*.¹⁷ Ne deriva, in ultima analisi, una particolare applicazione della teoria critica habermasiana anche alla questione del multiculturalismo.¹⁸ Come è noto, il fulcro del dibattito contemporaneo sul multiculturalismo risiede nella distinzione tra liberal e comunitaristi.¹⁹ Secondo le posizioni assimilabili al pensiero *liberal*, la politica si deve fondare sull'universalismo delle norme giuridiche, a prescindere dalla diversità culturale. Per i comunitaristi, invece, la politica si fonda sulla differenza dei valori etici. Nel primo modello esistono soltanto diritti giuridici, nel secondo, invece, esistono anche diritti culturali collettivi da far valere in sede politica. Anche rispetto a questo dibattito, Habermas sembra cercare una mediazione formale, per cui l'integrazione socio-politica dell'insieme dei cittadini nelle società complesse non dipenda da un consenso sostanziale sui valori, ma soltanto da un consenso sulle procedure relative alla legittima produzione giuridica e al legittimo uso del potere.

Epistemologia e politica in Derrida

Sulle posizioni politiche habermasiane espresse nei decenni più recenti, come già accennato, il dibattito è stato sempre molto ampio

e articolato. Tra i tanti confronti critici che si sono sviluppati, molto indicativo è quello con il post-strutturalismo, in particolare nelle formulazioni di Derrida, che permette interessanti valutazioni sia epistemologiche, sul senso delle teoria critica in Habermas, sia teorico-politiche, legate alle conseguenze del formalismo habermasiano su dimensioni politiche contemporanee e attinenti alla sfera pubblica, alla democrazia, alla sovranità, al diritto e al multiculturalismo.

Habermas e Derrida avevano dibattuto già negli anni Ottanta su questioni epistemologiche. Habermas, infatti, riteneva che l'impostazione teorica decostruzionistica di Derrida comportasse, in ultima analisi, l'estendere la sovranità della *retorica* sul territorio del *logico*.²⁰ Habermas era orientato a pensare che Derrida presupponesse già nell'argomento ciò che vorrebbe dimostrare, ossia che ogni convenzione, che consente la ripetizione di azioni esemplari, non abbia soltanto carattere simbolico, ma, fin dal principio, anche fittizio. Nel post-strutturalismo di Derrida, ci sarebbe, in definitiva, una sorta di estetizzazione universale, mediante la quale la verità stessa è infine ridotta a effetto stilistico dell'articolazione discorsiva.²¹ Tuttavia, questi assunti non sono stati accolti da Derrida, che ha, infatti, esplicitamente replicato²² che la decostruzione che egli ha praticato è sempre stata estranea al retoricismo (quest'ultimo considerato, dal filosofo francese, un'altra

forma di logocentrismo). Egli rilancia e riversa l'accusa di irresponsabilità e oscurantismo: sono i filosofi e teorici della comunicazione, del dialogo, del consenso, dell'univocità o della trasparenza, a dispensarsi dalla volontà di ascoltare e comprendere l'altro, mentre la decostruzione è da lui intesa come una nuova forma di Illuminismo. In questa concezione, ogni comunicazione, anche la più banale e quotidiana, *dissemina* da sé un residuo ineliminabile che non è propriamente detto, ma che pure ne costituisce essenzialmente la possibilità e la fisionomia. In definitiva, la decostruzione «non è una teoria postmoderna»,²³ e non è «contro il senso»,²⁴ piuttosto essa apre il senso, dal momento che essa eccede i limiti dell'interpretazione e dell'ermeneutica filosofica in direzione di una pratica di scrittura che trasforma le cose a più livelli. In uno dei suoi primi e più noti testi, Derrida, assai emblematicamente, afferma: «Il senso deve attendere di essere detto o scritto per abitare se stesso e diventare quello che è differendo da sé: il senso».²⁵

Su queste basi epistemologiche Derrida ha fornito, sostanzialmente a partire dagli anni Novanta, una analisi delle categorie filosofico-politiche²⁶ che hanno maggiore rilevanza rispetto all'evoluzione della società tardo moderna. Il filosofo francese mette in discussione il rapporto tra Stato e politica e si sforza di ripensarlo, fornendo così un contraltare alla teoria haber-

masiana. Infatti, l'obiettivo della decostruzione è di smontare ogni tipo di discorso in quanto costruzione: ciò che è decostruito è la maniera in cui idee, credenze e valori sono sistemati all'interno di uno schema. Se, per Habermas, come in genere è per le scienze politiche contemporanee, la democrazia è considerata come un punto di approdo imprescindibile per una autentica società libera, per Derrida, quello della democrazia è un concetto meno lineare e più articolato di quanto si possa ritenere. Di fronte all'estensione, nella tarda modernità, del modello politico democratico, nella prospettiva del filosofo francese la radice della democrazia (intesa, va precisato con attenzione, come *democrazia a venire*²⁷, non ancora realizzata) andrebbe individuata in «un'alterità senza differenza gerarchica»²⁸, ossia richiederebbe una forma di uguaglianza che si sottrae allo schema tipico della società occidentale e della sua tradizione che si fonda sul razionalismo, sulla preminenza dell'elemento maschile, dell'autoctonia, della nascita e della nazione.

Il discorso derrideano, in ultima analisi, va al di là della tradizione segnico-simbolica e filosofico-politica dell'occidente, cui invece Habermas resta fedele. La democrazia appare come una forza che oscilla tra le dimensioni dell'uguaglianza e della libertà,²⁹ poiché la democrazia non è né un regime, né una costituzione in senso stretto, come testimonia la pluralità di

concretizzazioni in forme politiche differenti del concetto di democrazia: democrazia parlamentare, monarchica, popolare, diretta, indiretta, liberale, autoritaria, socialista, ecc. Pertanto, il concetto di democrazia, da una parte, si lega alla sovranità statale-nazionale, all'autoctonia, al diritto di cittadinanza per nascita. D'altra parte, si lega pure, e qui sta il suo rinvio, al cosmopolitismo e al suo al di là, all'avvenire del diritto internazionale e alla distinzione tra Stati legittimi e Stati "canaglia".³⁰

Questo concetto di "democrazia a venire" assume alcune implicazioni rilevanti in chiave giuridico-politica che pongono evidentemente in discussione la prospettiva di Habermas sul diritto. La giustizia, nell'analisi di Derrida,³¹ non ha una sede, non può essere circoscritta all'interno di una qualsiasi delimitazione spazio-temporale, tant'è che essa si realizza con l'atto finale, con il nome di chi emette la sentenza. La giustizia come diritto non è giustizia, le leggi non sono giuste in quanto leggi, non si obbedisce loro perché sono giuste ma perché hanno autorità e l'autorità delle leggi si fonda esclusivamente sul credito che si accorda loro. Il percorso di lettura derridiano, insomma, spingendosi fino al limite in cui la fondazione del giuridico-politico è sospesa sull'abisso dell'anomia, mette in luce l'essenziale decostruttibilità del diritto e di ogni assetto istituzionale. Ne risulta influenzato, quindi, il modo in cui valutare concetti come decisione, fondazione e limite della

sovranità. La decisione giurisdizionale, infatti, appare al contempo normale e d'eccezione, perché se, da una parte, si ispira a una norma di riferimento, dall'altra, nel momento in cui pone in essere tale norma, la interpreta e la adatta al caso specifico. A sua volta, il momento della fondazione di uno Stato non può essere pensato come un'origine pura, poiché esso eccede la norma che lo fonda. Tutte queste ipotesi teoriche si richiamano evidentemente alla dottrina densa e controversa del filosofo del diritto Carl Schmitt, che aveva compreso lo sconvolgimento del campo storico, dello spazio politico, delle frontiere dei concetti e dei Paesi, dell'assiomatica del diritto europeo, dei legami tra tecnica e politica. In conseguenza di ciò, Derrida ritiene quindi che sia sempre più difficile continuare a pensare che la politica coincida con la dimensione dello Stato, che sia legata irrimediabilmente alla territorialità, a una comunità nazionale, poiché «è proprio questo che oggi viene a essere dislocato e che delocalizzato, in particolare in relazione alle trasformazioni tecnico-scientifiche e tecnico-economiche della scena mondiale».³²

In tale ottica, valutando con attenzione, il pensiero di Derrida appare più illuminista di quanto una diffusa *vulgata* intellettuale, soprattutto negli anni Ottanta, sia portata a ritenere. Secondo Derrida, molti dei principi ai quali la filosofia occidentale ha attribuito validità universale, impongono in realtà una

serie di valori che avvantaggiano alcuni e portano svantaggi ad altri, a seconda del contesto. Demarcare i confini storici di tali principi è la premessa necessaria e imprescindibile per poter perseguire l'ideale illuministico di giustizia e libertà per tutti. L'approccio derridiano alla politica, però, implica la messa in discussione del significato e della portata dei contenuti di questo ideale: per Derrida giustizia e libertà richiedono un senso di responsabilità incondizionata davanti all'altro e alla sua differenza.³³ È nel momento in cui Derrida accentua la sua attenzione sul valore pratico e giuridico della filosofia che egli toglie il decostruzionismo alla sua aura poetizzante, mettendo in chiaro il ruolo delle istituzioni nella costruzione delle teorie.³⁴

Il discorso di Derrida si può considerare una risposta alla domanda di senso, autonomia soggettiva e giustificazione morale che emerge con prepotenza dal pluralismo culturale delle società complesse, ossia, a questioni analoghe a quelle cui si rivolge Habermas, senza però l'impostazione normativa e formale del sociologo tedesco.

Considerazioni finali

La teoria critica nella formulazione habermasiana, soprattutto rispetto alle implicazioni politiche che essa comporta, come si è visto, si costituisce su una speculazione non più nella stessa linea dei maestri Adorno e Horkheimer: Habermas

porta la teoria critica ad avvicinarsi al mondo delle istituzioni politiche che, generalmente, nella prospettiva adorniana e horkheimeriana erano guardate con una certa diffidenza. È difatti indicativo che la sociologia di Habermas sia progressivamente scivolata in una filosofia politica (e una filosofia del diritto) sistematica, cosa che invece non sembra potersi riscontrare in Horkheimer, Adorno. Per quanto Habermas sia ritenuto il capofila della seconda generazione della Scuola di Francoforte, ovvero il prosecutore con altri mezzi dell'impresa scientifica della teoria critica,³⁵ di fatto, il rapporto di Habermas con Horkheimer e Adorno (come quello con altri esponenti del pensiero politico, filosofico e sociologico occidentale), si caratterizza attraverso una complessa strategia di assimilazione critica, che porta Habermas a sempre a rielaborare le loro teorie; va peraltro segnalato che, in un certo senso, Horkheimer stesso squalificasse Habermas come proprio erede: scrivendo ad Adorno, esprimeva un giudizio fortemente critico³⁶ su Habermas, tacciandolo di inattendibilità teoretica, di modalità dilettantesche e non di rado irresponsabili, nel trattare il materiale empirico e, in generale, di conservare un legame troppo stretto con l'opera del giovane Marx.

Le ermeneutiche di Derrida ci permettono di cogliere come il modo habermasiano di trattare pensiero critico, diritto, sovranità, Stato, democrazia, cultura politica e sfera

pubblica sembri non tener conto di alcune aporie del mondo contemporaneo e della modernità stessa. È tuttavia interessante notare che sebbene le epistemologie di fondo di Habermas e Derrida abbiano una diversa impostazione, esse conservino un rapporto profondo con l'Illuminismo e forse è per questo che le finalità del loro pensiero politico sono risultate sorprendentemente convergenti su alcune questioni fondamentali della politica degli anni Duemila: l'idea di Europa, la visione cosmopolitica, l'apertura della sfera pubblica, sono tutti temi cruciali su cui i due grandi studiosi sono stati vicini.

Dunque, la prospettiva di Habermas, anche alla luce delle teorie di Derrida, si può considerare una trasformazione della teoria

critica, che non può più essere quella di Adorno e Horkheimer e che in qualche modo cerca tuttavia di adattarsi a un mondo post-ideologico e globalizzato: in questo, forse, perde il mordente dei maestri perché scivola in una connotazione a volte troppo normativa. In tal senso, l'eredità della Scuola di Francoforte in Habermas resta qualcosa di problematico e per questo molti critici non riescono più a vedere in Habermas, dal punto di vista politico, una continuità con quel pensiero. In definitiva, è oggi difficile capire quale studioso possa raccogliere del tutto quella difficile eredità e, soprattutto, se la cultura politica contemporanea osi ancora pensare di iscriversi in quella eredità o, quantomeno, desideri ancora averci a che fare.

Note

- ¹ Per un riferimento generale sulla Scuola di Francoforte, si rimanda al ricchissimo R. Wiggershaus, *La Scuola di Francoforte. Storia, sviluppo storico, significato politico*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1992. Per un primo confronto tra Habermas e i classici della teoria critica, cfr. F. Giacomantonio, R. D'Alessandro, *Nostalgie francofortesi*, Mimesis, Milano, 2013.
- ² Cfr. M. Horkheimer, T. W. Adorno (cura) *Lezioni di sociologia*, Einaudi, Torino, 1966, p. 36.
- ³ Cfr. T. W. Adorno, K. R. Popper, R. Dahrendorf, J. Habermas, H. Albert,

H. Pilot, *Dialettica e positivismo in sociologia*, Einaudi, Torino, 1972, p. 257.

- ⁴ *Idem*, *Conoscenza e interesse*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1990.
- ⁵ *Idem*, *Teoria e prassi nella società tecnologica*, Laterza, Bari, 1978, e *Id.*, *La crisi della razionalità nel capitalismo maturo*, Laterza, Bari, 1975.
- ⁶ *Idem*, *Tecnica e scienza come ideologia*, in *Id.*, *Teoria e prassi nella società tecnologica*, cit., p. 214.
- ⁷ Proprio all'opinione pubblica, non a caso, Habermas dedica i propri studi iniziali: cfr., tra i più noti, J.

- Habermas, *Storia e critica dell'opinione pubblica*, Laterza, Bari, 1977.
- ⁸ *Idem*, *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo*, 2 voll., Il Mulino, Bologna, 1997. Si veda anche il più recente *Id.*, *La condizione intersoggettiva*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2007.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*, *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo*, cit., vol. II, p. 732.
- ¹⁰ *Idem.*, *Il discorso filosofico della modernità*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2003. Indicativi possono anche considerarsi: *Id.*, *Testi filosofici e contesti storici*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1993 e *Id.*, *Profili politico filosofici*, Guerini e Associati, Milano, 2000.
- ¹¹ Cfr. A. Ferrara, *Democrazia e giustizia nelle società complesse: per una lettura di Habermas*, in "Filosofia e questioni pubbliche", n. 1, 1996, pp. 67-117, in particolare pp. 99-112.
- ¹² *Ibidem*, p. 352.
- ¹³ Cfr. in particolare J. Habermas, *L'inclusione dell'altro. Studi di teoria politica*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1998.
- ¹⁴ Cfr. S. Petrucciani, *Introduzione a Habermas*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2000, specialmente p. 142.
- ¹⁵ Cfr. J. Habermas, *La costellazione postnazionale*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1999.
- ¹⁶ Cfr. per approfondire criticamente il concetto: P. Markell, *Making Affect Safe for Democracy? On "Constitutional Patriotism"*, in "Political Theory", vol. 28, n. 1, 2000, pp. 38-63.
- ¹⁷ Cfr. J. Habermas, *Solidarietà fra estranei*, Guerini e Associati, Milano, 1997.
- ¹⁸ *Idem*, C. Taylor, *Multiculturalismo. Lotte per il riconoscimento*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1998.
- ¹⁹ Per una panoramica si veda A. Ferrara (cura), *Comunitarismo e Liberalismo*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 2000.
- ²⁰ Cfr. J. Habermas, *Il sopravanzamento della filosofia temporalizzata dell'originario: la critica di Derrida al fonocentrismo*, in *Id.*, *Il discorso filosofico della modernità*, cit.
- ²¹ Cfr. S. Žižek, *L'oggetto sublime dell'ideologia*, Ponte alle Grazie, Milano, 2014, specialmente pp. 187-190. Žižek, riprendendo le critiche di Habermas a Derrida, afferma che la posizione da cui il decostruzionista assicura che non c'è alcun metalinguaggio, che nessun discorso può dire esattamente quello che intendeva dire, che il processo di enunciazione sovverte sempre il discorso, è la posizione del metalinguaggio nella sua forma più pura e radicale.
- ²² Cfr. J. Derrida, *Verso un'etica della discussione*, in *Id.*, *Limited Inc.*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano, 1997, p. 242, nota.
- ²³ A. De Simone, "Oltre il possibile". *Hostis/Hospes: Jacques Derrida e la "democrazia a venire"*, in *Id.*, *Dislocazioni del politico. Tra responsabilità e democrazia. Simmel, Weber, Habermas, Derrida*, Morlacchi, Perugia, 2010, p. 157.
- ²⁴ S. Regazzoni, *La decostruzione del politico. Undici tesi su Derrida*, Il Melangolo, Genova, 2006, p. 58.
- ²⁵ J. Derrida, *Forza e significazione*, in *Id.*, *La scrittura e la differenza*, Einaudi, Torino, 2002, p. 14.
- ²⁶ Ho cercato di approfondire questi aspetti in R. D'Alessandro, F. Giacomantonio, *Post-strutturalismo e politica. Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida*, Morlacchi, Perugia, 2015.

- ²⁷ Questo concetto è rintracciabile anche in J. Derrida, *Oggi l'Europa*, Garzanti, Milano, 1991.
- ²⁸ J. Derrida, «In lingua d'uomo, la fraternità», in Id., *Politiche dell'amicizia*, Cortina, Milano, 1995, p. 271.
- ²⁹ Cfr. J. Derrida, *Licenza e libertà: lo spregiudicato (rouè)*, in Id., *Stati canaglia*, Cortina, Milano, 2003.
- ³⁰ Cfr. J. Derrida, *Libertà, eguaglianza, fraternità*, in Id., *Stati canaglia*, cit.
- ³¹ Cfr. J. Derrida, *Forza di legge*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2003.
- ³² Cfr. J. Derrida-E. Roudinesco, *Lo spirito della rivoluzione*, in Idd., *Quale domani?*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2004, p. 137.
- ³³ Cfr. G. Borradori, *Filosofia del terrore. Dialoghi con Jürgen Habermas e Jacques Derrida*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 2003, spec. p. 18.
- ³⁴ Cfr. M. Ferraris, *1980- Oggetti sociali*, in Id., *Introduzione a Derrida*, Laterza, Roma- Bari, 2003, spec. pp. 97-98.
- ³⁵ Per un raffronto aggiornato tra la tradizione della teoria critica e il pensiero di Habermas, si rimanda a A. De Simone, *Passaggio per Francoforte. Attraverso Habermas*, Morlacchi, Perugia, 2011, pp. 147-160. Cfr. anche R. Wiggershaus, *La Scuola di Francoforte*, cit., 551-580.
- ³⁶ Cfr. ancora A. De Simone, *Passaggio per Francoforte*, cit., p. 148, e R. Wiggershaus, *La Scuola di Francoforte*, cit., p. 568.

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L'antropotecnica e le sue declinazioni in Sloterdijk

(Anthropotechnics and its declinations in Sloterdijk)

Maria Teresa PANSERA

Abstract: *Sloterdijk considers human beings to be the only beings that have succeeded in detaching themselves from the evolutionary development of their own species by means of a new way of relating with the environment that surrounds them. This process, which allows them to pass from a natural environment to a cultural society, is expressed by the term “anthropotecnichs”, a concept that can be considered the leitmotif that is present in all of his work and is fundamental for the understanding of his thinking.*

The way in which the relation is carried out between the technique and the world involves not only an enslavement of nature, but also a possible use of the human being as an available “base” on which to operate with the most modern technological procedures. From here the disquieting panoramas that could conceivably result from the development of an anthropotechnology, which could reach the point of an ecological catastrophe or a genetic mutation for our species. In his last works Sloterdijk entrusts to human beings, considered in their ability to act upon themselves by means of philosophical practices and “athletic” exercise, the hope of passing beyond the abyss and thus opening a new horizon, which should allow them to confront the challenges presented by our disquieting times, by means of procedures capable of actualizing the potentialities of nature without forcing or modifying it.

Keywords: *Anthropotechnics, Globalization, Production, Provocation.*

Peter Sloterdijk è uno degli studiosi più interessanti e poliedrici nell'ambito del panorama culturale contemporaneo. Le sue riflessioni si articolano sulla possibilità di una nuova filosofia critica che, ponendosi nel filone della Teoria critica classica,¹ vada oltre e getti le basi per una nuova impostazione delle proble-

matiche inerenti la costituzione del soggetto singolo e collettivo, analizzi le diverse immagini del mondo che si sono storicamente succedute e infine descriva approfonditamente, a livello storico, sociale e psicologico, il processo di globalizzazione e la successiva costellazione post-storica, espressa nel concetto di schiuma,

entità interconnessa e multifaccettata di microindividualità instabili e residuali rispetto a un'epoca irrimediabilmente giunta al suo termine.²

Per Sloterdijk l'intera storia dell'Occidente può essere vista come una lunga sequenza di ondate di globalizzazione. Nel momento in cui la Terra ha svelato la sua sfericità, ha cessato di essere bella e perfetta, ma è sicuramente divenuta più interessante ed è per questo che

*nell'età moderna non sono più i metafisici, bensì i geografi e i marinai coloro ai quali tocca il decisivo compito di fornire un'immagine del mondo: la loro missione è quella di presentare in immagine l'ultima sfera.*³

Il passaggio da una visione aurorale del mondo ad una pragmatica e calcolante si afferma quando «la globalizzazione terrestre costituisce proprio la vittoria dell'interessante sull'ideale»⁴ cioè quando la Terra di cui si constata la rotondità non è più bella, liscia e perfetta ma interessante, sia pure contaminata da crepe, cicatrici, irregolarità. Il globo esplorato e conosciuto in ogni angolo diventa «come un segreto orologio che in uno spazio lontano, sotto le immagini dei mari, delle isole e dei continenti, batte le ore del profitto».⁵

Il mercato globale ha avuto origine proprio con le scoperte geografiche, quando il denaro inizia a girare intorno alla Terra e l'allargarsi degli orizzonti diviene ragione di profitto. In questo panorama di spaesamento e di crescente sfruttamento, l'uomo non può far altro che

sentirsi disorientato per la perdita di contatto con un mondo che gli appare completamente diverso da quello che gli è stato tramandato e con la perdita del legame con la Terra e con il mondo l'essere umano perde drammaticamente anche la sua consistenza. La contingenza è la cifra della moderna condizione umana, esposta sull'orlo dell'abisso (cosmologico) che è perdita di mondo e di centro. L'uomo diviene così un para-soggetto incerto e frantumato di una storia universale della contingenza.⁶ Il mondo moderno, dunque, è un luogo dove l'assoluta esterioresità ed estraneità hanno preso il sopravvento sulla familiarità e la vicinanza; nell'era post-metafisica gli uomini non possono più costruire nulla a partire dalla loro esigenza di intimità e debbono fare i conti col fatto che, ovunque siamo o ci troviamo, ci viene incontro l'estraneo.

Questo scenario dell'età moderna, i cui simboli sono mappamondi e planisferi, spazza via modelli, visioni del mondo, credenze, barriere, confini e protezioni e muta con insolita radicalità la posizione dell'uomo nel mondo. L'epoca del globo – sostiene Sloterdijk – è un'epoca di assoluto spaesamento degli uomini che non riescono più a sentirsi a casa negli “spazi interiori del mondo” che sono stati loro tramandati. La mutazione antropologica è senza precedenti e si ricollega alla realizzazione di una antropotecnica, una nuova tecnologia che potrebbe arrivare a pianificare e a progettare le caratteristiche dell'umanità futura, fino a

cancellare il fatalismo e la casualità nella nascita e sostituirli con la scelta predeterminata e la conseguente selezione dei caratteri ereditari. Le nuove tecnologie, dunque, non sono più rivolte soltanto verso il dominio della natura esterna, ma anche verso la manipolazione della natura umana, della stessa sfera del *bios*.

Sloterdijk considera l'uomo come l'unico essere che sia riuscito a staccarsi dalla linea evolutiva seguita dalla propria specie per mezzo di un nuovo modo di rapportarsi con l'ambiente che lo circonda. Questo procedimento, attraverso cui si passa da un ambiente naturale ad una società culturale è espresso dal termine "antropotecnica". Questo concetto può essere considerato come una cifra che percorre tutto il suo pensiero e che è fondamentale per la sua comprensione.

L'espressione antropotecnica spiega quello che è un semplice teorema dell'antropologia storica, secondo il quale "l'uomo" è da capo a piedi un prodotto e, nei limiti del sapere odierno, può essere compreso solo seguendo in maniera analitica il suo processo produttivo e i suoi rapporti di produzione. [...] Difatti "l'uomo" in quanto specie, e in quanto matrice degli individui possibili, è una grandezza che non può mai darsi nella semplice natura, e che si è potuta formare solo come effetto di ritorno di prototecniche spontanee nelle "comunità abitative" con cose e animali, in processi di formazione lunghissimi, in cui ben presto si mostra una tendenza paranaturale.⁷

Il concetto di *humanitas* sarebbe quindi il prodotto di tecniche di addomesticamento, di addestramento e di educazione altamente selettive, come ad esempio la lettura, la scrittura, il contare, il prestare attenzione e tutti quegli altri aspetti che rientrano nel concetto generale di cultura e che permettono l'istituzione della società civile.

Delle tecniche di formazione dell'uomo che agiscono a livello culturale fanno parte le istituzioni simboliche come le lingue, le storie di fondazione, le regole matrimoniali, le logiche di parentela, le tecniche educative, la codificazione dei ruoli per sesso ed età e, non ultimi, i preparativi per la guerra, così come i calendari e la divisione del lavoro; tutti quegli ordinamenti, tecniche, rituali e abitudini insomma con cui i gruppi umani hanno preso "in mano" da soli la propria formazione simbolica e disciplinare. E con questa mano, potremmo dire più esattamente, essi stessi sono diventati per la prima volta degli uomini appartenenti a una cultura concreta. Questi ordinamenti e forze formative vengono indicati in modo appropriato con l'espressione di antropotecniche.⁸

A partire dalla mano che afferra la pietra, l'uomo ha sempre cercato di superare i limiti imposti dall'ambiente naturale e, attraverso l'uso delle più moderne tecnologie, ha avviato quel processo di "domesticazione" che lo ha portato a far parte del "parco umano". «Se 'c'è' un

uomo è solo perché una tecnica l'ha prodotto a partire dalla preumanità»,⁹ egli, quindi, non si dà mai come semplice essere naturale, ma, al contrario, è sempre il risultato di un artificio, per cui l'agire tecnico è, come sostiene anche Gehlen,¹⁰ la vera essenza dell'uomo, in quanto gli permette di superare i suoi inadattamenti, primitivismi e carenze grazie alla sua capacità di creare un modo culturale.

Se la tecnica è secondo Heidegger un «modo del disvelamento»,¹¹ intendendo così un produrre e rendere presente l'ente attraverso l'uso di strumenti adeguati, per Sloterdijk la storia della civiltà è rappresentata da un susseguirsi di forme diverse di antropotecnica. Nel suo saggio *La questione della tecnica* Heidegger aveva sottolineato come per l'uomo «essere nel mondo» significhi prendersi cura delle cose, manipolarle trasformarle ed essere così in relazione con l'ambiente che lo circonda. Ciò che qualifica l'esistenza umana consiste proprio in questa capacità di progettare, di trascendersi, di superare la propria singolarità e di procedere verso il mondo, facendo di esso il progetto delle proprie azioni e delle proprie possibilità.

Quindi, per Heidegger, l'uomo è provocato dall'essere a ricercare le diverse forme dell'ente o, in altri termini, a rivelare gli enti nel loro essere, sperimentandosi egli stesso come esserci (*Dasein*). Pur essendo per sua natura ciò che vi è di più inquietante, non prende l'iniziativa

in prima persona e sarebbe costretto a rimanere nella sfera dell'inautenticità e della banalità, se non avesse ricevuto quell'iniziale provocazione. Il mezzo attraverso cui l'uomo realizza questa ricerca è la tecnica, nel senso della *techne*, intesa come produzione o *poiesis*. Essa può prendere la forma dell'arte o della conoscenza, resta comunque un modo dello svelamento, è *aletheia*. La tecnica appartiene, dunque, al campo ontologico ed è quindi inseparabile dall'essere e dal suo manifestarsi nella storia.

Per Heidegger la tecnica moderna, dunque, non è una produzione di tipo «poietico», ma è una provocazione, la quale pretende dalla natura che fornisca energia che possa essere estratta e accumulata. L'attuale tecnologia rappresenta così il compimento, la conseguenza della volontà di potenza che provoca l'essente e lo mette al proprio servizio. È il regno dello strapotere del soggetto che riduce l'oggetto al suo dominio; l'ente è completamente sopraffatto dalla volontà di potenza del soggetto che lo utilizza per accrescere il suo potere. Se anticamente il contadino «nel seminare il grano affidava le sementi alla forza di crescita della natura che veglia sul loro sviluppo», oggi la scienza meccanizzata dell'alimentazione «è presa nel vortice di un diverso tipo di coltivazione che richiede la natura. Essa richiede la natura nel senso della provocazione».¹²

La natura provocata dalla tecnica moderna viene aperta e da essa

viene estratto quanto l'uomo richiede secondo il principio della «massima utilizzazione con il minimo sforzo».¹³ La provocazione implica il trarre fuori le energie richieste e trovare il modo di utilizzarle in base alle necessità. La differenza che c'è tra l'antico ponte di legno che unisce le due opposte rive del Reno e la centrale elettrica, impiantata nelle acque dello stesso fiume, mette chiaramente in luce la differenza tra disvelamento pro-ducente e disvelamento pro-vocante. Il ponte si inserisce in un contesto naturale e sembra quasi venir a completare il paesaggio, come se l'opera dell'uomo agisse di concerto con quella della natura; la centrale elettrica, invece, «è impiantata»¹⁴ nelle acque del Reno, a cui si richiede di fornire la pressione idrica necessaria per far girare le turbine che producono la corrente elettrica. In questo caso il fiume è impiegato al fine di produrre una certa quantità di energia elettrica occorrente per soddisfare il fabbisogno di una certa regione.

*Il disvelamento che governa la tecnica moderna ha il carattere dello Stellen, del "richiedere" nel senso della provocazione. Questa provocazione accade nel fatto che l'energia nascosta nella natura viene messa allo scoperto, ciò che così è messo allo scoperto viene trasformato, il trasformato immagazzinato, e ciò che è immagazzinato viene a sua volta ripartito e il ripartito diviene oggetto di nuove trasformazioni.*¹⁵

Si evidenzia così la differenza tra disvelamento pro-ducente e disve-

lamento pro-vocante, tra l'antica e la moderna concezione della tecnica. La prima asseconda la natura, di cui seguiva la forza, che impiegava dopo averla estratta, senza accumularla. La seconda tratta la natura come fondo a disposizione (Bestand), dove l'energia es-tratta è accumulata e disposta in modo da poter essere commissionata in qualsiasi momento si decida di farlo. Questo disvelamento aggressivo che spinge a considerare la natura come un fondo, un deposito di energie da sfruttare, impedisce a qualsiasi altra forma di disvelamento di tipo poetico di venire ad utilizzarlo, rendendo, quindi, impossibile accogliere un altro messaggio, mettere in atto un diverso tipo di approccio.

L'uomo è colui che compie il richiedere provocante, che svela il reale come «fondo» e tuttavia «solo nella misura in cui l'uomo è già, da parte sua provocato a mettere allo scoperto le energie della natura, questo disvelamento impiegante può verificarsi».¹⁶ Tutto ciò non può significare un semplice ridurre l'uomo stesso a fondo, cioè ad un suo utilizzo passivo al pari di ogni altra realtà fisica. L'uomo che provoca la natura compie tale azione non perché è egli stesso un "fondo" da impiegare, ma perché vive nella dimensione della provocazione. Questa provocazione rivolta all'uomo è diversa da quella che la natura riceve dall'uomo stesso; in quanto quest'ultimo è provocato in modo più originario, non diventa mai un puro fondo, ma prende parte

all'impiego come modo del disvelamento.

La tecnica moderna non è, quindi, soltanto un operare umano, una dimensione esclusivamente antropologica, ma un elemento essenziale della civiltà moderna, capace di ridefinire lo stesso concetto di ente. L'uomo impiega il reale come fondo da utilizzare, ma non diviene a sua volta fondo, la sua azione si compie sempre in risposta ad un appello. A questo punto l'analisi heideggeriana supera ed abbandona la concezione esclusivamente antropologico-strumentale della tecnica, in quanto l'essenza della tecnologia definisce storicamente il destino dell'uomo. Si tratta di scoprire, all'interno del rischio e del pericolo che la tecnologia rappresenta per l'umanità, il principio della salvezza.

Vi è, infatti, un'ambiguità nella provocazione tecnico-scientifica, che la fa essere contemporaneamente pericolosa, ma anche aperta ad assumere il suo ruolo di guida verso l'autentico destino dell'uomo. Il pericolo insito nel disvelamento, che diventa massimo nel dominio dell'imposizione, è che l'uomo, precludendosi ogni altra possibilità, rimanga chiuso nell'alienazione tecnica. La vera minaccia per l'uomo non è costituita dagli apparati e dalle macchine, che possono esporre a danni anche mortali, ma dal dominio dell'imposizione su cui si fonda «la possibilità che all'uomo possa esser negato di raccogliersi ritornando in un disvelamento più originario e di esperire così l'appello di una verità più principale».¹⁷

*Nell'essenza del pericolo si cela dunque la possibilità di una svolta (Kehre) nella quale la dimenticanza dell'essere si rivolta in modo tale che con questa svolta la verità dell'essenza dell'essere si raccoglie (einkehrt) espressamente nell'ente.*¹⁸

La tecnica, nella sua essenza, è un "conoscere" che porta l'uomo a prender parte al disvelamento; ed è proprio in questa partecipazione che egli viene adoperato, salvaguardato e, così, "traspropriato all'evento della verità". Ciò che salva, quindi, si annuncia nella tecnica, ma solo come ciò che profondamente si nasconde e, insieme, si sottrae. L'uomo deve cercare, quindi, di penetrare nel mistero della tecnica per comprendere la «costellazione in cui accade disvelamento e nascondimento, in cui accade ciò che costituisce l'essere della verità».¹⁹

*L'impianto è il pericolo non in quanto tecnica bensì in quanto essere. L'elemento essenziale del pericolo è l'essere stesso, nella misura in cui dà la caccia alla verità della sua essenza con la dimenticanza di questa essenza. L'essenza della tecnica è chiamata con lo strano nome di Ge-stell, "impianto", proprio perché tale essenza non è niente di meno che l'essere stesso.*²⁰

L'abbandono e il mistero permettono all'uomo di rapportarsi in modo diverso agli sviluppi della tecnica. «Quando nella svolta del pericolo lampeggia la verità dell'essere, l'essenza dell'essere si apre nella radura, e la verità dell'essenza dell'essere si raccoglie».²¹ Ebbene l'essenza

della tecnica risiede in ciò che tecnico non è, in quanto «tutto ciò che è soltanto tecnico non giunge mai a penetrare nell'essenza della tecnica»;²² infatti mentre avverte la dimensione alienante, reificante e oggettivante della civiltà tecnologica, l'uomo è già trasportato in una dimensione «altra» e si concentra, attraverso un «pensiero incessante e appassionato», sulla verità dell'essere che si annuncia come «mistero» e che si può ascoltare soltanto in un atteggiamento di essenziale abbandono (*Gelassenheit*).²³

Riprendendo la concezione heideggeriana secondo cui l'uomo come essere-nel-mondo, pur relazionandosi con l'esterno, mantiene sempre la sua essenza ontologica, Sloterdijk approfondisce gli aspetti del venir al mondo dell'umano esaminandoli, per così dire, dal basso. Se la venuta al mondo dell'uomo ha il carattere della *Lichtung*, di un'apertura verso la luce proveniente dalla radura dopo il fitto buio del bosco, tutto ciò non è un segno della priorità ontologica dell'essere-uomo, ma diviene per l'autore di Karlsruhe la condizione fisica, neurologica e tecnica della specie umana, che per costituzione sperimenta il suo venir al mondo come un'irruzione fuori dal grembo materno.²⁴

Bisogna ora chiedersi attraverso quali processi ci si può liberare dalle pastoie del mondo naturale per andare verso il mondo culturale, in che modo “qualcosa di preumano”, “qualcosa di premondano”, “qualcosa di animale” si supera come tale e

si apre verso l'uomo? Per Sloterdijk, diversamente da Heidegger, il fenomeno umano non può essere declinato in senso ontologico o ermeneutico, ma va inteso esclusivamente in senso antropologico, come risultato di cause concrete, di azioni e situazioni gestite in modo tecnico. Da tutto ciò deriva «il principio secondo cui l'uomo è un prodotto, naturalmente non un prodotto finito, ma aperto a ulteriori elaborazioni»²⁵ e quindi il concetto di antropotecnica emerge in tutta la sua importanza. Al suo interno si distinguono le antropotecniche primarie e le antropotecniche secondarie.

Possiamo collocare le antropotecniche primarie all'interno delle allotecniche, inserendo in questa categoria sia il relazionarsi dell'uomo sia con se stesso che con il mondo circostante attraverso meccanismi tecnologici di modificazione trasformazione del dato naturale. Tutti questi procedimenti tecnici sono caratterizzati dall'esigenza di modificare quanto è stato dato dalla natura in qualcosa di artificiale più consono alle proprie esigenze e necessità. Se queste esigenze riguardano esclusivamente l'uomo abbiamo l'antropotecnica primaria.

Le antropotecniche primarie compensano ed elaborano la plasticità dell'uomo, nata attraverso la ridefinizione dell'essere vivente “uomo” nell'evoluzione nelle serre. Tali tecniche possono chiamarsi così poiché indicano il modellamento diretto dell'uomo attraverso una messa in forma civilizzante:

*esse raccolgono ciò che tradizionalmente, ma anche nella modernità, viene reso con espressioni come educazione, allevamento, disciplinamento, formazione.*²⁶

Mentre, quando ci riferiamo ad una tecnica più generale che si serve della natura come un fondo a sua disposizione, come un materiale pronto ad essere usato e sfruttato, intendiamo l'allotecnica, questo termine corrisponde a quello di disvelamento provocante usato da Heidegger. Si riscontra qui una profonda consonanza tra i due autori, in quanto per entrambi non è possibile impedire il divenire della tecnica, non è possibile evitare il dispiegarsi dell'allotecnica, in tal senso in essa è implicito il destino dell'uomo, ma anche il pericolo che essa comporta. Nella volontà di dominio e nel furioso movimento dell'impiegare che caratterizzano la realizzazione dei manufatti tecnologici risiede il nucleo distruttivo della tecnica che «traspone il mondo delle cose in una condizione di schiavismo ontologico».²⁷

Mentre Heidegger vede la possibilità di salvezza dell'uomo nel recupero di quella dimensione di mistero e di abbandono che lo "traspropria" all'evento della verità, Sloterdijk sostiene la necessità di una riforma dell'ontologia, che permetta il superamento del dualismo tra una natura-oggetto e un uomo-soggetto, che la usava come un Bestand, un fondo a disposizione. La modalità di questo rapporto tra la tecnica e il mondo comporta non solo un asservimento

della natura, ma anche un possibile uso dell'uomo come fondo a disposizione su cui operare con i più moderni procedimenti tecnologici. Di qui l'antropotecnica secondaria e gli inquietanti scenari da essa ipotizzati.

*Se poi lo sviluppo a lungo termine condurrà anche alla riforma genetica dei caratteri della specie, se una futura antropotecnologia giungerà fino a un'esplicita pianificazione delle caratteristiche umane, e se l'umanità, dal punto di vista della specie, potrà compiere il sovvertimento dal fatalismo della nascita in una nascita opzionale e in una selezione prenatale, tutte queste sono questioni nelle quali inizia ad albeggiare l'orizzonte dell'evoluzione, anche se in modo ancora confuso e inquietante.*²⁸

Queste antropotecniche secondarie si basano sullo sviluppo delle biotecnologie e sulle moderne conquiste dell'ingegneria genetica, le quali, per la prima volta nella storia, permetteranno all'uomo di collaborare alla sua stessa evoluzione. Ora egli è in grado di affrontare il tema di una selezione genetica dei caratteri umani, che potrebbe addirittura portare ad un "parco" uomini progettato con determinate caratteristiche. Infatti «non è poi così sorprendente che questa traccia si sviluppi in particolare come un discorso sulla custodia dell'uomo e sul suo allevamento».²⁹

Una tale provocazione deriva direttamente dalla costituzione antropotecnica dell'essere umano che lo ha portato fin sulla soglia del peri-

colo maggiore: mettere a rischio la sua stessa vita. Il progresso della tecnica sembra non essere più controllabile, cresce lo spazio dell'estraneo, l'estensione dell'inabitabile, aspetti che anche Heidegger ha evidenziato come spossatezza, assenza di patria, epoca della metafisica compiuta.³⁰ In questo difficile momento ciò che può salvarci è ancora la tecnica, che Sloterdijk identifica come "omeotecnica" in contrapposizione all'"allotecnica", una tecnica in grado di utilizzare le cose senza provarle, senza assumere nei loro confronti un atteggiamento provocante e violento.

In antitesi con il concetto di tecnica come allotecnica Sloterdijk introduce come possibilità alternativa l'omeotecnica. Quest'ultima,

*poiché ha a che fare con un'informazione realmente esistente, procede solo sulla via del non fare violenza a ciò che ha davanti. Essa apprende intelligentemente l'intelligenza e produce nuove occasioni di intelligenza: difatti è solo come non-ignoranza che essa può avere successo di fronte all'informazione incarnata. L'omeotecnica deve rifarsi alle strategie co-intelligenti e co-informative anche là dove viene applicata in modo così egoistico e regionale come in ogni tecnica convenzionale; dunque ha più il carattere di una cooperazione che della signoria, anche nei rapporti asimmetrici.*³¹

Anche se l'autore non chiarisce quali siano effettivamente le omeotecniche, possiamo dire che essa è costituita da

*un insieme di pratiche che vanno dalla biologia all'ecologia e rappresenta l'orizzonte di un nuovo umanesimo, in cui la (co)scienza della complessità del vivere-insieme nel medesimo Umwelt potrebbe fare da molla per il cambiamento delle modalità di comprensione dei rapporti uomo-ambiente in direzione di prassi che non vedano più nelle possibilità di asservimento del mondo della cosalità (natura/animale/alterità) la via per il futuro umano.*³²

Sviluppare l'omeotecnica diviene una necessità per noi che viviamo quotidianamente nel rischio di una catastrofe ecologica per il nostro pianeta e di un mutamento genetico per la nostra specie; in questa direzione si colloca il testo di Sloterdijk del 2009 *Devi cambiare la tua vita*³³ dove l'antropotecnica assorbe le istanze omeotecniche attraverso una nuova prospettiva che non considera più gli individui nella loro costituzione psico-biologica e sociale, ma nella loro capacità di agire su se stessi attraverso le pratiche filosofiche e l'esercizio atletico.

*Con un concetto di esercizio ben fondato dal punto di vista antropologico acquistiamo finalmente uno strumento idoneo per oltrepassare il baratro, che si presume metodologicamente insuperabile, tra i fenomeni immunitari di origine biologica e quelli di origine culturale, quindi tra i processi naturali da un lato e le azioni dall'altro.*³⁴

Al concetto di esercizio sono connessi quello di asceti e quello di

acrobatica; l'inserimento dell'esercizio nell'ambito dell'antropotecnica porta il superamento di quelle primarie e secondarie in quelle terziarie. Le antropotecniche terziarie sono le pratiche per mezzo delle quali

*l'uomo produce l'uomo attraverso una vita di esercizi. Definisco "esercizio" ogni operazione mediante la quale la qualificazione di chi agisce viene mantenuta o migliorata in vista della successiva esecuzione della medesima operazione, anche qualora essa non venga dichiarata esercizio.*³⁵

Il concetto di antropotecnica va sempre declinato in accordo con quello di esercizio, in quanto gli uomini non possono fare a meno di esercitarsi in quanto «l'essere umano è un animale che si esercita».³⁶ Le pratiche attraverso cui gli uomini agiranno su se stessi porteranno cambiamenti nella loro esistenza, nella mentalità del loro tempo, nelle strutture sociali di cui fanno parte. L'esercizio diviene così la costante antropologica dell'essere umano, di un soggetto al contempo singolare e plurale, sempre alla ricerca di un difficile equilibrio tra singolarità e collettività, tra unità e molteplicità. Al centro di questa pluralità di differenze vi è l'antropotecnica, come una corda che l'essere umano deve percorrere conservando a fatica l'equilibrio. «In qualunque luogo si incontrino membri del genere umano, essi rivelano ovunque i tratti di un essere condannato a compiere

una fatica surreale. Chi cerca esseri umani troverà acrobati».³⁷

Le antropotecniche terziarie assorbono così le omeotecniche e aprono un nuovo orizzonte che, partendo da un complesso lavoro su se stessi, dovrebbe permetterci di affrontare le sfide che il nostro inquieto tempo ci pone, di agire con procedimenti in grado di attualizzare le potenzialità della natura senza forzarla o modificarla. Con questo nuovo tipo di approccio Sloterdijk sostiene l'impossibilità di piegare la natura ai propri fini, come l'uomo faceva in precedenza, mentre favorisce la possibilità di usare i mezzi naturali solo per quegli scopi che essi sono capaci di produrre. Tuttavia ipotizzare questa svolta è comunque utopistico, l'orizzonte in cui si delinea il concetto di omeotecnica è indubbiamente incerto e inquietante, in quanto permangono i pericoli dovuti alla tecnica intesa come prevaricazione e aggressione, ma questa prospettiva deve essere superata se vogliamo sperare che gli uomini di domani abbiano un mondo in cui vivere e anche nella tecnica possano trovare una via di salvezza.

*Dopo che la modernità, con il suo illimitato sperimentare, ha fatto esplodere i sistemi di misura della vecchia Europa, la saggezza del futuro sarà nel contemperare l'uno con l'altra l'eccesso e l'avvedutezza. La società mondiale sarà una società dell'avvedutezza o non ci sarà affatto.*³⁸

Note

- ¹ Vogliamo inoltre ricordare la polemica che sorse tra uno dei più importanti rappresentanti della Teoria critica, Jürgen Habermas, e Sloterdijk dopo che quest'ultimo pubblicò nel 1999 *Regole per il parco umano. Una risposta alla Lettera sull'umanesimo di Heidegger* (in Id., *Nichtgerettet. Versuche nach Heidegger*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, trad. it. *Non siamo ancora stati salvati. Saggi dopo Heidegger*, Bompiani, Milano, 2004). Nella sua opera *Il futuro della natura umana. I rischi di una genetica liberale (Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur: Auf dem Weg zu einer liberalen Eugenik?)*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, trad. it. *Il futuro della natura umana. I rischi di una genetica liberale*, Einaudi, Torino, 2002) Habermas si interroga sui problemi che una pianificazione delle nascite potrà creare in una società futura e sui rischi che le pratiche relative all'ingegneria genetica potrebbero avere sia sul piano etico che politico. A suo parere l'intervento sul patrimonio genetico di un individuo può essere condivisibile solo nella prospettiva di eliminare tare ereditarie con il possibile consenso della persona interessata, mentre per Sloterdijk l'uomo è interamente un prodotto, è quindi impossibile considerare l'esistenza di una natura umana indipendente dalle determinazioni antropotecniche che la modificano fin dalla sua origine e la programmano per il futuro.
- ² Cfr. P. Sloterdijk, *Sphären I – Blasen, Mikrosphärologie*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1993, trad. it. *Sfere I. Bolle*, Meltemi, Roma, 2009; Id., *Sphären II – Globen, Makrosphärologie*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1999; Id., *Sphären III – Schäume, Plurale Sphärologie*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2004.
- ³ P. Sloterdijk, *Die letzte Kugel. Zu einer philosophischen Geschichte der terrestrischen Globalisierung*, in Id., *Sphären II, Globen*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, trad. it. *L'ultima sfera. Breve storia della globalizzazione*, Carocci, Roma, 2005, p. 17.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.
- ⁶ Cfr. G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie*, éd. de Minuit, Paris, 1980, trad. it. *Millepiani. Capitalismo e schizofrenia*, Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, Roma, 1987.
- ⁷ P. Sloterdijk, *Non siamo ancora stati salvati*, cit., p. 121.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.
- ¹⁰ Cfr. A. Gehlen, *Die Seele im technischen Zeitalter*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 1957, trad. it. *L'uomo nell'era della tecnica*, Armando, Roma, 2003.
- ¹¹ M. Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, in Id., *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Neske, Pfullingen, 1954, trad. it. *La questione della tecnica*, in Id., *Saggi e discorsi*, Mursia, Milano, 1976, p. 9.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

- ¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Die Kehre* (1949), trad. it. *La svolta*, in Id., *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, trad. it. *Conferenze di Brema e Friburgo*, Adelphi, Milano, 2002, p. 101.
- ¹⁹ M. Heidegger, *La questione della tecnica*, cit., p. 25.
- ²⁰ Id., *Die Gefahr* (1949), trad. it. *Il pericolo*, in Id., *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, cit., trad. it. *Conferenze di Brema e Friburgo*, cit., p. 90.
- ²¹ Id., *Die Kehre* (1949), trad. it. *La svolta*, in Id., *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, cit., trad. it. *Conferenze di Brema e Friburgo*, cit., p. 104.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 107.
- ²³ Id., *Gelassenheit* (1955), Neske, Pfullingen, 1959, trad. it. *L'abbandono*, Il Melangolo, Genova, 1998, p. 40.
- ²⁴ P. Sloterdijk, *Non siamo ancora stati salvati*, cit. p. 218.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 260.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 261.
- ³⁰ Cfr. M. Heidegger, *Brief über den "Humanismus"* (1947), Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1976, trad. it. *Lettera sull'"umanismo"*, Adelphi, Milano, 2005.
- ³¹ P. Sloterdijk, *Non siamo ancora stati salvati*, cit. p. 179.
- ³² A. Lucci, *Un'acrobatica del pensiero. La filosofia dell'esercizio di Peter Sloterdijk*, Aracne, Roma, 2014, p. 107.
- ³³ P. Sloterdijk, *Du mußt dein Leben ändern. Über anthropotechnik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2009, trad. it. *Devi cambiare la tua vita*, Cortina, Milano, 2010.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ³⁶ A. Lucci, *Un'acrobatica del pensiero*, cit., p. 148.
- ³⁷ P. Sloterdijk, *Devi cambiare la tua vita*, cit., p. 19.
- ³⁸ P. Sloterdijk, *Non siamo ancora stati salvati*, cit., p. 238.

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Corpi differenti. Per la ripresa di un approccio teorico-critico

(Different bodies. Going back to a theoretical critical approach)

Ubaldo FADINI

Abstract: *In order to think at best today's consequences of technological progress, at least in some of its components, on the human psycho-physical structure, the author of this contribution considers important to reflect on some transformations of the complex of labor activities, understood as exceeding in respect to the effective economical "expense". This indicates that from the complication of the relation between man and technology, so crucial for example in the philosophical discussion of the twentieth century, it can also derive a displacement of the same relation in favor of a renewed centrality of the constitutive sociality of human being, which does not have thus to be considered as unavoidably resolved in the modalities given by its private appropriation to the aim of the earning of wealth.*

Keywords: *Work, Body, Technology, Alienation, Web.*

Alcuni articoli degli ultimi mesi di un giornale – «il manifesto» – abitualmente attento alle questioni dell'uso intensivo delle "macchine" nel loro rapporto con il nostro quotidiano "cognitivo" e "sensoriale", mi aiutano a delineare uno scenario di interesse specifico che vorrei tenere ben presente: ad esempio, *Intelletti al servizio delle macchine* (a proposito di N. Carr), *Internet è un feudalesimo in salsa digitale* (in riferimento ad A. Keen), *La fine della storia e il cigno nero* (su P. Domingos). Accanto a ciò, segnalo

anche il recente *Anime elettriche*, del collettivo "Ippolita", che sottolinea un carattere della nostra condizione di utenti, soprattutto dei social network, nel momento in cui si legge: «Quando condividiamo via web ci sentiamo al contempo più gratificati e più informati. Sempre presenti e al contempo proiettati in un altrove, siamo come anime elettriche in estasi permanente.»¹

Si sa ormai come questa condizione sia stimolata all'eccesso per via della sua appetibilità rispetto ai meccanismi "pubblico"-informativi

utilizzabili per la produzione di profitto e la sua indagine vuole proprio spendersi – per “Ippolita” – nel senso di una ricerca di “vie di fuga”, di “strategie di autodifesa” da opporre a tale sovradeterminazione. Altri studiosi possono aiutarci a tentare una sorta di smarcamento dal controllo asfissiante dei dispositivi di predazione che costellano la nostra esistenza, in particolare allorché sviluppano critiche acute alle varie utopie tecnologiche della rivoluzione digitale: penso qui a E. Morozov,² il quale insiste sull’ordine di causazione della rivoluzione in atto da individuare nel complesso delle crisi economiche e politiche («forze ben più maligne della digitalizzazione o della connettività»³), anche se poi si tratta di afferrare con precisione il legame tra «il vangelo urlante dell’innovazione»⁴ e le dinamiche accelerate del digitale e – appunto – dell’economico-politico. E se si parla di Silicon Valley non si può non parlare – oltre che di Wall Street – anche del Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), di Boston, da cui provengono ulteriori stimoli di ricerca, alcuni dei quali si sono concretizzati in un testo importante di E. Brynjolfsson e A. McAfee (tradotto in italiano un anno dopo l’edizione in lingua inglese).⁵ Come indica il sottotitolo, *Lavoro e prosperità nell’era della tecnologia trionfante*, si tratta di un testo che si concentra sull’impatto sociale ed economico delle progressioni delle tecnologie digitali, attribuendo in definitiva alle “macchine” una

capacità di investimento rispetto al lavoro mentale, dopo che è stato investito – ormai da tempo – il lavoro manuale. In breve, si manifesta qui la convinzione che il digitale, nelle sue diverse manifestazioni, stia proponendo (ma è un modo “gentile” di dirlo) al lavoro mentale le soluzioni imposte storicamente al lavoro manuale dalla applicazione dell’invenzione del motore a vapore. Dopo che la prima rivoluzione industriale ha prodotto i suoi effetti positivi e negativi (che ci sono ben noti), la seconda rivoluzione, quella tecnologica e in pieno svolgimento, caratterizzata dalla convergenza a tutti gli effetti di hardware super-veloci, software iper-sofisticati e reti informatiche assai ampie, potrà condurre a soluzioni – di ordine digitale – degli accidenti/incidenti che sono specifici del nostro attuale modello economico e di vita. Ma Brynjolfsson e McAfee sono particolarmente attenti a segnalare anche le “devastazioni economiche” provocate dall’odierno cambiamento di “passo” della civiltà, indicando come il progresso tecnologico possa lasciare “a spasso”, “a piedi”, molte persone, nel senso che andrà sempre di più selezionando una tipologia “speciale” di lavoratore, fornito di conoscenze/saperi in grado di renderlo capace di «usare la tecnologia per creare e catturare valore», relegando ai margini la tipologia del lavoratore dotato di capacità per così dire “ordinarie”, destinato a retro-cedere di fronte al protagonismo sempre più accentuato delle tecnologie digitali

che assai velocemente stanno acquisendo e sviluppando ulteriormente contenuti di capacità e competenze del lavoro svolto in maniera “tradizionale”. Alla base di tutto questo sta una raffigurazione della rivoluzione industriale come “prima età delle macchine dell’umanità” (da non confondere con l’uso abituale della stessa formula per la definizione del rapido sviluppo tecnologico che va dalla fine dell’Ottocento ai primi del secolo scorso, da cogliersi invece come “seconda rivoluzione industriale”), nel senso di rilevare con nettezza come le invenzioni e le innovazioni della prima rivoluzione industriale abbiano avuto l’effetto di aumentare il controllo del soggetto umano sul proprio lavoro e sul lavoro in generale e anche sulle combinazioni/integrazioni delle macchine all’interno di quest’ultimo. Il lavoro e la macchina possono essere considerate, a partire da quel periodo preciso della storia dell’industria, come “prolungamenti” della natura dell’uomo, come sue proiezioni di fatto “esoneranti”, dipendenti in un qualche modo da una capacità decisionale variamente articolata. Con l’apertura della seconda età delle macchine inizia a venire meno tale effetto di proiezione ed il carattere complementare – per il soggetto umano – dei dispositivi tecnologici, in quanto si verifica una traduzione di compiti cognitivi e di sistematiche decisionali per il controllo di macchine artificiali governate da software capaci appunto di svolgere

progressivamente la funzione decisionale (in un’ottica di crescente sostituzione dei caratteri specifici dell’uomo). È particolarmente interessante, a questo punto, l’indicazione, da parte di Brynjolsson e McAfee, delle tre caratteristiche principali della progressione in atto nell’epoca dell’hardware e del software, delle reti digitali, restituita infine sotto veste «esponenziale, digitale e combinatoria». Il richiamo alla cosiddetta “legge di Moore”, a proposito del raddoppio continuo della potenza di calcolo computazionale delle macchine, della loro velocità in vista del miglioramento delle prestazioni in tempi sempre più ristretti (nei confronti di quelli “lungi” dell’età delle macchine a vapore), appare qui particolarmente opportuno in riferimento ai computer super-potenti o agli smartphone oggi a disposizione. Si prenda poi in esame anche il complesso degli sviluppi/avanzamenti digitali, l’imponente diffusione di Internet, che interessa, insieme, persone e cose, da vedere come fattore essenziale di scoperta e rilancio di ciò che funziona e di selezione di ciò che non va, contribuendo così alla realizzazione di modalità di condivisione e applicazione in tempi brevissimi di tutto quello che effettivamente fa progredire, andare avanti. Accanto a tali caratteristiche è da porre anche quella combinatoria, ben esemplificata da Google Maps insieme all’app per smartphone Waze, integrati operativamente in un sistema GPS che consente di guidare

un'auto nel modo più semplice e sicuro in virtù del monitoraggio efficace delle condizioni del traffico.

La questione è quindi quella delle macchine digitali che prendono progressivamente il posto della forza-lavoro in carne e ossa, in particolare, oggi sempre di più anche nei settori ad alta qualificazione professionale. Quest'ultimo aspetto risulta molto importante e di esso potevamo già trovare traccia nella analisi "classiche" di P. Lévy sull'"intelligenza collettiva", degli anni Novanta, e nelle rilevazioni di impronta sociologica di B. Latour, più vicine a noi, sul delinearsi, accanto al soggetto umano, di un "soggetto" non-umano. D'altra parte è di indubbia suggestione e potenza teorica la formulazione oggi di un processo che vede un "internet delle cose" subentrare parzialmente all'"internet delle persone".

È proprio nei confronti della riproposizione del tema del rapporto uomo-macchina (o uomo-tecnica) che trovo importante delineare una vicenda novecentesca che lo ha particolarmente meditato: penso all'antropologia filosofica che si fa anche antropologia della tecnica e filosofia della tecnica, proprio su base antropologica, a certe progressioni "destinali", di segno spesso negativo, della riflessione sulla "questione della tecnica", al rilievo della formula di G. Anders della "vergogna prometeica" ed alla presa d'atto del complicarsi di tale rapporto nella seconda metà del secolo scorso, realizzata anche attraverso la sua

traduzione nella figura del cyborg come espressione significativa delle trasformazioni dell'immaginario contemporaneo sollecitate dalla progressione tecnologica. Su tutto questo ho insistito nei miei lavori/studi progressivi, a partire da una particolare convinzione di fondo, dettata da una particolare lettura del presente, che si è proiettata sul passato, apprendendolo e ri/disegnandolo in vista della comprensione di quelle che sono avvertite come urgenze dell'oggi. Tale convinzione è che il rapporto tra l'uomo e la macchina si è fatto indiscutibilmente sempre più "stretto" e che però si assiste – nel "nostro" tempo – ad un fatto decisamente importante e originale, vale a dire l'introduzione della "macchina" sotto veste (variegata) immateriale nel corpo vivo del soggetto (soggetto di lavoro, che però non è altro: anche quando pensa di non lavorare).⁶

Progressione tecnologica e processo lavorativo, nei suoi straordinari e inquietanti cambiamenti: vale forse qui porre di nuovo l'interrogazione sulla desiderabilità o meno di modalità di appropriazione "privata" della ricchezza prodotta da tale coniugazione, anche nella prospettiva della migliore gestione possibile, oltre che delle sue "positività", anche delle sue "negatività". Insomma, a me appare sensato riflettere sui caratteri della progressione tecnologia soprattutto riferendo quest'ultima al quadro d'insieme dei processi lavorativi (anche per evitare l'ennesima riproposizione della chiacchiera sul buono o sul cattivo del fenomeno

“tecnica”), sulla base della convinzione di una sua costitutiva eccellenza rispetto alla “spesa” economica “e” politica che se ne può fare al momento, visto oltretutto che in tale progressione si esprime la forza della cooperazione produttiva, l’azione complessa su un numero elevatissimo di singolarità, al cui operato va rinviata la stessa formulazione e riarticolazione della questione economica. Molti studiosi sostengono che è la forza lavoro cognitiva a rivelarsi oggi come la più produttiva, apprendo – nei confronti della stessa struttura tecnica del capitalismo attuale – come più potente addirittura della forza lavoro dell’età cosiddetta industriale. A partire dalla letteratura critica sopra riportata, si può certamente sostenere che le tecnologie informatiche, sul piano proprio di delineazione di una informatica commerciale (che ben si esprime nel complesso delle piattaforme “social”, di massa), valgono come una sorta di seconda pelle del lavoro cognitivo “e” cooperativo e in modo particolare in quell’esercizio di estrazione di valore che si presenta come base ineludibile della modalità data di accumulazione di capitale e necessita di un rapporto ben coltivato con i saperi di coloro che assemblano e costruiscono gli algoritmi indispensabili per lo stesso processo estrattivo/predatorio.

A questo punto ritengo però opportuno ritornare su *Anime elettriche*, un testo che punta decisamente a sottolineare la possibilità di rilanciare

una informatica effettivamente libera, a scommettere sulla realizzazione di una “autonomia digitale”, sulla base dell’affermazione dei valori della convivialità (per dirla con I. Illich), di una cooperazione/condivisione che qui trova espressione sul piano della pratica di scrittura. Il collettivo di “Ippolita” sostiene come l’intento del libro non sia quello di «fare un giro nella salamacchine»⁷, di raffigurare ancora una volta con la maggiore precisione/nettezza possibile il complesso tecnologico al servizio del dominio, bensì di perlustrare il continente smisurato dell’interiorità/internità dell’utente, di orientarsi «nelle viscere delle emozioni esposte»⁸, laddove si concretizzano elementi decisivi di riconfigurazione delle identità, ad ogni livello (mente, corpo e “anima”). A me sembra un proposito condivisibile, soprattutto in quella mia ottica di ricerca che non si limita a sottolineare gli effetti – certo essenziali – di una relazione sempre più stretta tra il nostro assetto psico-fisico (la “corporeità”) e un determinato complesso di tecnologie, in particolare quelle digitali, ma punta a riscontrare ciò che accade nel momento in cui si assiste oggi sempre di più ad una specie di “introduzione” di funzioni produttive e significative (strumentali) all’interno del *corpo vivente* del soggetto-di-lavoro. È in tale prospettiva che riprendo/riassumo alcune articolazioni del testo di “Ippolita”, anche piegandole nel senso indicato da G. Deleuze e F. Guattari nel loro *Mille piani*.

Se le macchine motrici hanno costituito la seconda età della macchina tecnica, le macchine della cibernetica e dell'informatica costituiscono una terza età che ricomponesse un regime d'asservimento generalizzato: "sistemi uomo-macchine", reversibili e ricorrenti, sostituiscono le vecchie relazioni d'assoggettamento non reversibili e non ricorrenti tra i due elementi; il rapporto dell'uomo e della macchina si stabilisce in termini di comunicazione reciproca interna e non più d'uso o d'azione. Nella composizione organica del capitale, il capitale variabile definisce un regime d'assoggettamento del lavoratore (plusvalore umano) che ha come contesto principale l'impresa o la fabbrica; ma, quando il capitale costante cresce proporzionalmente sempre di più, nell'automazione, si trova un nuovo asservimento e, al tempo stesso, il regime del lavoro si trasforma, il plusvalore diventa macchinico e il quadro si estende a tutta la società.⁹

Si potrebbe aggiungere anche un richiamo più diretto a Marazzi, soprattutto quando quest'ultimo insiste sull'idea del corpo vivente della forza lavoro come contenitore anche di funzioni specifiche del capitale fisso, di marxiana memoria, di saperi codificati, conoscenze storicamente acquisite, grammatiche produttive, esperienze,¹⁰ il che vuol dire mettere in evidenza come il corpo vivente comprenda in sé funzioni di capitale fisso e di capitale variabile, materiali di lavoro passato ed es-

pressioni di lavoro presente, appunto vivo, in un senso che individua la forza lavoro odierna come combinazione/somma di capitale variabile e di capitale costante (meglio: della parte "fissa", opportunamente riformulata, di quest'ultimo).

È, in breve, sullo sfondo di tale complesso di indagini che ricerco gli stimoli necessari – nel testo di "Ippolita" – per gettare uno sguardo più avvertito su una modalità particolare di rappresentazione dell'interno del corpo vivente, quella che si concretizza nella traduzione di tale corpo sotto veste di "utente" delle piattaforme "sociali" di massa. Dell'utente interessano, per ragioni che sono di ordine commerciale/ economico, le viscere delle emozioni il più possibile esposte, quelle attraverso cui si riconfigurano incessantemente i modellamenti identitari e collettivi, i rapporti tra il corpo e la mente (e l'"anima"... aggiunge "Ippolita"). Il presupposto dell'indagine è che la qualificazione di ordine commerciale dell'informatica non sia l'unica possibile e che sia invece possibile, sia pure di difficile affermazione, una informatica libera, una autonomia digitale capace di organizzare pratiche alternative rispetto all'uso corrente degli oggetti tecnologici.

L'esempio, in "grande", di questo uso è quello che si manifesta nella relazione con le piattaforme "sociali" (si consideri la realtà di Facebook), quelle che hanno presa su tutti gli strati sociali e che prendono in custodia i nostri costrutti identitari.

Si legge in *Anime elettriche*:

Quando ci autenticiamo sulle piattaforme e accediamo ai nostri profili con un nome e una password stiamo, di fatto, accedendo a noi stessi. Tradizionalmente rivolgersi a sé significa volgere lo sguardo all'interno, verso il secretum del proprio essere. Oggi invece accediamo a una parte autenticata (in che misura autentica? Forse più di quanto immaginiamo...) di noi stessi tramite un contratto che raramente abbiamo letto e compreso, con cui cediamo ogni diritto a società private. Come vedremo, l'ideale di utente trasparente alle macchine implica l'azione diretta degli apparati tecnologici sulle emozioni, gli immaginari, i rituali inconsci e il sistema neuro-cognitivo. Ecco perché i due temi sottesi a questo testo sono la ricerca della verità e la cura di sé. Ovvero i motivi e i sistemi con cui i dispositivi commerciali pretendono di indicarci la via per conoscere la verità su noi stessi.¹¹

È a partire da questo, dalla comprensione del compito svolto da quelle tecniche, che si delinea una sorta di “copia” di noi stessi sulla base della raccolta dei “nostri” dati riversati sui social network commerciali (veri e propri “cooperanti” e “condivisorii” – si fa per dire – di segno “confessionale”), una sorta di nostro “gemello digitale”; copia che va infine però ben al di là delle nostre capacità di controllo e di gestione sul piano “emotivo e narrativo” in quanto risulta disegnata dalle logiche che presiedono

l'esercizio del particolare rapporto uomo-macchina in questione, quelle “regole” che si curano di noi e organizzano la nostra vita, prendendola in cura, fornendoci la “verità” di essa, supportata appunto da un dispositivo libidico/emotivo, che residua piacere, soddisfazione e “buone” abitudini. Si può quindi ribadire, come fa “Ippolita”, la centralità odierna del motivo della “pornografia emotiva” come tecnica di manifestazione/svelamento del sé, e poi l'importanza della cosiddetta “ipercoerenza narrativa”, intesa come modalità auto-promozionale nelle piattaforme social. In quest'ultima prospettiva, non si può non sottolineare l'utilizzo intrigante delle tesi del teorico della “metamorfosi” (antropologica), E. Canetti, nel momento in cui si indica il rapporto fondamentale tra determinate tecniche di comando (di potere) e la sollecitata riemersione nel presente individuale e collettivo di elementi ancestrali e simbolici che affondano le loro radici nel terreno appunto culturale delle prime fasi della storia dell'umanità. Accanto al rinvio a *Massa e potere*, di Canetti,¹² importante è senz'altro anche l'attenzione prestata alle analisi foucaultiane sugli esercizi di autonomizzazione (relativa) e di soggettivazione della verità, tradotte nelle forme della “confessione” all'interno del cristianesimo, che si sviluppano come scritture quotidiane della propria intimità/internità nella esposizione delle nostre viscere sui ripiani del Web.

Ritornando però al tema dell'“anima elettrica”: quello che più conta è la rilevazione delle pulsioni digitali che premono in direzione di una soddisfacente organizzazione fondata su ordini/comandi (per riprendere ancora Canetti) a cui si arriva ad obbedire meccanicamente (anche per via del loro carattere procedurale), in modo inconsapevole. “Ippolita” scrive che ci si sente così liberi quando in effetti tutto è delegato, a livello cognitivo, sociale, psichico, vitale:

*I servizi del web sociale si prendono cura di noi in vita, migliorano le nostre possibilità di lavoro, salute, interazione emotiva e sessuale; tendono a liberarci dal gesto del corpo e dalla fatica dell'organizzazione e, se vogliamo, lasceranno online il nostro profilo disponibile anche dopo la morte, così che una parte di noi viva per sempre, nel regno dei cieli digitale. E chissà, per incarnarsi un giorno in una carne inorganica, o diversamente organizzata da una tecnologia redentrice...*¹³

In breve, l'attenzione del collettivo “Ippolita” punta sulla realtà sempre più diffusa delle piattaforme social di massa, su come gli apparati tecnologici estremamente sofisticati investano il piano delle emozioni, delle fantasie e lo stesso sistema neuro-cognitivo degli utenti, consentendo di fatto una fuori-uscita dell'intimo privato che viene pubblicamente normalizzato. C'è in tutto questo qualcosa che sfugge all'intenzione del soggetto sotto

veste di utente, che si trova coinvolto nella produzione infinita di un di più, senza un vero e proprio scopo. Anzi, uno scopo c'è ed è quello che si ritrova nelle finalità commerciali, economiche, delle grandi corporazioni (a partire da Google) che di fatto gestiscono/governano il rapporto tra il corpo organico analogico (ciò che noi siamo) e i corpi tecnologici, vale a dire ciò con cui non smettiamo un momento di essere in relazione, trovandoci così, con essi, ai limiti della fusione/confusione. Molto concorre quindi, nel nostro presente, a raffigurare per noi, in termini di scoperta della “verità” di ciò che siamo, il processo di fuori-uscita come un movimento effettivamente in grado di soddisfare al meglio il bisogno di socializzazione, di solidarietà, di stare bene con gli altri e con noi stessi. Si tratta di un processo in cui quasi tutto viene realizzato, apparentemente “per” il soggetto, ma non ciò che effettivamente conta in una prospettiva di ampliamento dei suoi spazi di autonomia, di libertà, di raggiungimento cioè anche di una sorta di autonomia “digitale”.

È allora sensato definire questo processo di fuori-uscita, facendo ricorso agli ultimi sviluppi della tradizione della Teoria Critica, come un movimento di vera e propria alienazione in tempi di forte accelerazione sociale, con quella sua logica di/da regime temporale rigido che condiziona pesantemente e quindi in maniera negativa le strutture

del riconoscimento (A. Honneth) e della comunicazione (J. Habermas), alle quali si affida spesso il compito di supportare tutto ciò che può permettere un avanzamento del discorso democratico. Non voglio qui confrontarmi con tali effetti/sviluppi della Teoria Critica: desidero invece sottolineare l'importanza del contributo fornito da H. Rosa,¹⁴ che ripropone appunto la centralità, per affrontare significativamente il “nostro” tempo, del concetto di alienazione, così caro agli esponenti della prima Scuola di Francoforte. Quello che è certo è che il concetto di alienazione va qualificato storicamente per individuare delle qualificazioni della vita sociale (decisamente “accelerate”, oggi) da affrontare criticamente, sulla base dell'individuazione/indicazione della loro “negatività”. Ciò va però articolato a partire dall'accettazione della inevitabilità del processo di fuori-uscita, per il soggetto in relazione con determinate tecnologie, se si vuole: di una alienazione,

che però va sviluppata con consapevolezza e responsabilità, nel senso di una sua effettiva e positiva messa a valore.

In fondo si tratta, a mio avviso, di gettare lo sguardo sul rapporto tra il corpo organico e quello digitale (un rapporto sempre più stretto, come ormai si riconosce da più parti e non soltanto da sponda *post-human*) con il proposito di progettarlo non più nel rispetto soltanto delle logiche delle “megamacchine corporative” e del prolungamento all'infinito dell'esposizione del soggetto ridotto a utente (e destinato, come tale, all'esaurimento, allo stato (di) “terminale”) ma soprattutto – e, se si vuole, in contrapposizione netta con tali logiche – in vista di una condizione di esistenza in grado di consentirci di guardare criticamente quello che si fa, si dice, si “pensa”. In una parola, di prendere le opportune e proficue/fertili distanze da noi stessi, da ciò che attualmente siamo o si pretende (anche da parte di qualche “altro”) di essere.

Note

¹ Ippolita, *Anime elettriche. Riti e miti social*, Jaca Book, Milano, 2016, quarta di copertina.

² Cfr. E. Morozov, *Silicon Valley: i signori del silicio*, trad. it. Codice, Torino, 2016.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵ Cfr. E. Brynjolfsson, A. McAfee, *La nuova rivoluzione delle macchine. Lavoro e prospettiva nell'era della*

tecnologia trionfante, trad. di G. Carlotti, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2015.

⁶ Sia consentito qui il rinvio ai miei *Il futuro incerto. Soggetti e istituzioni nella metamorfosi del contemporaneo*, Ombre corte, Verona, 2013 e *Divenire corpo. Soggetti, ecologie, micropolitiche*, Ombre corte, Verona, 2015.

⁷ Ippolita, *Anime elettriche*, cit., p. 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*

- ⁹ G. Deleuze e F. Guattari, *Mille piani. Capitalismo e schizofrenia*, trad. di G. Passerone, introduzione di M. Guareschi, Castelvecchi, Roma, 2003, p. 634.
- ¹⁰ Cfr. C. Marazzi, *Il comunismo del capitale. Finanziarizzazione, biopolitiche del lavoro e crisi globale*, Ombre corte, Verona, 2010, pp. 205-210.
- ¹¹ Ippolita, *Anime elettriche*, cit., p. 8.
- ¹² Cfr. E. Canetti, *Massa e potere*, trad. di F. Jesi, Adelphi, Milano, 2015.
- ¹³ Ippolita, *Anime elettriche*, cit., p. 10.
- ¹⁴ Cfr. H. Rosa, *Accelerazione e alienazione. Per una teoria critica del tempo nella tarda modernità*, trad. di E. Leonzio, Einaudi, Torino, 2015.

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VARIA

De la emanciparea muncii la protecția socială: politica reprezentării profesionale în România la începutul secolului XX*

(From the emancipation of labor to the emergence of social policies: the politics of professional representation in Romania in the early XXth century)

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Abstract: *The article is part of an approach to the development of labor legislation and social policies in pre-communist Romania, focused on their connection with the evolution of professional representation. Looking at the period of the early XXth century with the hindsight of previous inquiries into the issue of the origins of the corporatist vision of professional representation from within the movement of professional associations itself—before the adoption of the corporatist project by Mihail Manoilescu and other theorists of the Right—, it discovers an episode hitherto understood as pertaining to the (slightly adjusted) survival of the pre-modern type of guild organization to have acted, in fact, as an integral part of the modern confrontation between the syndicalist and the corporatist designs for the representation of professional interests.*

Keywords: *labor legislation, social policies, socialist critique, syndicalism, corporatism.*

Elaborate începând cu ultimele decenii ale secolului al XIX-lea, componentele fundamentale ale statului social au ajuns să fie văzute ca o parte integrantă a societății într-o asemenea măsură încât nu mai sunt percepute ca putând constitui un obiect de dispută între ideologii și

politici ale stângii și ale dreptei. Organizarea muncii pe baze individualiste și contractualiste, prin opoziție cu sistemul de obligații reciproce și privilegii particulare al vechiului regim - realizată în cadrul Revoluției Franceze în 1791 – a fost urmată de construirea treptată a

sistemului modern de protecție socială. Politica reprezentării intereselor profesionale a participat la proces pe măsură ce a fost ea însăși așezată pe baze legislative moderne (în contextul aceleiași caz exemplar francez, aceasta s-a întâmplat în 1884, după ce coalițiile profesionale de orice fel au fost mai întâi interzise prin codul penal napoleonian, pentru a fi apoi dezincriminate printr-o lege a celui de-al Doilea Imperiu, în 1864). Articolul de față participă la reconstituirea istorică a aceleiași dinamici de evoluție în context românesc.

În România, procesul de elaborare a legislației muncii și de dezvoltare a politicii sociale a debutat, la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și la începutul secolului XX, sub semnul unei pronunțate continuități la nivelul terminologiei în raport cu instituțiile și practicile societății premoderne. „Legea pentru organizarea meseriilor” din 1902 (promovată de ministrul liberal al Agriculturii Basile M. Missir) și cea pentru „organizarea meseriilor, creditului și asigurărilor muncitorești” de la 1912 (inițiată de ministrul conservator al Industriei și Comerțului D. S. Nenițescu) au avansat o politică de redresare a meșteșugurilor și a micii industrie – în fața concurenței occidentale și a mării industrie locale incipiente, dar și cu obiective naționaliste, prin raportare la elementul alogen – având în centru ideea organizării întregii ramuri pe baza organizațiilor corporative (corporații cu minimum 50 de membri în cazul

legii Missir, bresle cu minimum 25 de membri congregate în corporații cu minimum 1000 de membri în cazul legii Nenițescu), a căror denumire (cel puțin) evoca instituția breslelor tradiționale desființate printr-un jurnal al Consiliului de Miniștri din iunie 1873, la capătul unei evoluții începute cu proclamarea libertății comerțului prin Regulamentele Organice. Adoptate în continuarea unor proiecte legislative conservatoare asemănătoare ale lui P. P. Carp (din 1881, reluat în 1888) și N. Filipescu (din 1901), noile reglementări se întemeiau pe principiul apartenenței (semi-)obligatorii a meșteșugarilor, muncitorilor, calfelor și ucenicilor la structurile breslelor și corporațiilor, principiu definit de legea Missir prin aceea că „odată ce o parte a meseriașilor din o localitate au hotărât să formeze o corporație, ceilalți meseriași din aceeași categorie de meserie trebuie să facă parte din ea. Dacă cineva nu vroia să facă parte, avea toată libertatea, dar nu mai putea să-și exercite meseria”¹.

Cel mai coerent dintre discursurile critice formulate în epocă în legătură cu această politică – cel al mișcării socialiste – are ca fir conducător ideea reacționarismului patent al legiurilor invocate, văzute ca supraviețuiri premoderne și precapitaliste și ca falsificări ale principiilor juridice de factură liberală și burgheză. În versiunea lui Cristian Racovski, discursul respectiv este consonant cu caracterizarea gheristă a structurilor socio-economice ro-

mânești ca reprezentând o distorsiune a capitalismului, rezultând din fuziunea perversă dintre elemente ale societății capitaliste și remanente ale feudalismului. La fel de caracteristică pentru viziunea de ansamblu a socialismului românesc al epocii este și pledoaria pentru o politică liberală locală consecventă cu principiile generice ale doctrinei, întemeiată pe convingerea că, altminteri, „liberalismul român n-are nimic a face cu liberalismul occidental și îndeosebi cu înfăptuirea lui clasică din Anglia”². Obligativitatea corporațiilor și a breslelor exprimă în modul cel mai acut contradicțiile semnalate, odată ce se admite că „revoluția franceză de la 1789, care a proclamat libertatea individuală, a interzis corporațiile, ca o tăgadă a libertății individuale”³. În virtutea acestui fapt, „dacă le este interzis autorităților a împiedica pe un cetățean de a face parte dintr-o asociație licită, care nu este în contradicție cu Constituția, tot așa le este interzis [...] a sili pe cineva să facă parte dintr-o asociație care nu e conformă cu ideile și interesele lui”⁴. Ca atare, „corporațiile [...] sunt propriu-zis o negare a dreptului de asociațiune, [și nu] o manifestare a lui”, iar „în dreptul modern nu există loc pentru corporații”⁵. Pentru Racovski, legile meseriilor sunt responsabile pentru emanciparea incompletă și inautentică a muncii față de restricțiile impuse de structurile cu caracter corporatist ale epocii premoderne.

Acuzând și ineficiența măsurilor legislative existente în privința unei

autentice reglementări a relațiilor dintre muncă și capital – din cauza caracterului lor mixt (incluzând deopotrivă patroni și salariați) și deci prin „starea înjosoare de dependență în care [ele pun] pe lucrători și ucenici față de patroni”⁶ – comentariul lui Racovski indică sindicatele muncitorești – sau, în genere, coalițiile de salariați, constituite prin opoziție față de patronate – ca unica modalitate acceptabilă de organizare a reprezentării profesionale cu scopul de a asigura progresul politicii de protecție socială, pe baza unei legislații adecvate a muncii. Într-adevăr, „dacă muncitorimea conștientă din România luptă contra corporațiilor” – spune liderul socialist – „ea pune în același timp la dispoziția muncitorilor o armă oțelită și încercată, care poartă cea mai curată marcă europeană. [...] Această armă este sindicatul”, definit ca „organizația liberă a muncitorilor”, unde „intră numai muncitori” cu „scopul [...] de a apăra pe muncitori”⁷. Conexiunea dintre respingerea corporatismului cu caracter de obligativitate și promovarea asocierii sindicale liber-consimțite pe baza revendicării de aplicare consecventă a principiilor constituționalismului liberal este subliniată de condamnarea sub aceeași acuzație de neconstituționalitate deopotrivă a legilor de la 1902 și 1912 referitoare la organizarea meseriilor și a legii Orleanu de la 1909 care „a luat salariaților statului dreptul la asociațiune și dreptul la grevă” (consacrată în presa socialistă ca „legea scele-

rată”⁸). Desigur, caracterizarea citată mai sus a sindicalismului ca o afacere exclusiv muncitorească nu redă exact spiritul gândirii lui Racovski în domeniu, lucru dovedit de un manifest electoral adresat de el funcționarilor publici la sfârșitul anului 1915, pentru alegerile parlamentare din ianuarie 1916 (și construit prin opoziție cu aceeași lege Orleanu), unde se clarifică faptul că „dacă straturile superioare ale funcționării [...] pot fi considerate ca făcând parte din clasa stăpânitoare, aceasta nu e deloc adevărat când e vorba de funcționarii mici”, invocați ca „adevărați fii ai poporului și adevărați proletari”⁹.

În conformitate cu structura de ansamblu a doctrinei gheriste, argumentația clădită de Racovski în chestiunea reprezentării profesionale combină pledoaria în favoarea socialismului local al momentului ca un campion al principiilor liberale împotriva perversiunii suferite de liberalism în mediul românesc (și sub îndrumarea liberalilor oficiali ai locului) cu dezideratele de anvergură și de durată ale proiectului socialist¹⁰, afirmând că „lupta politică este o prelungire și încoronare a luptei sindicale”, că „mișcarea socialistă este forma cea mai desăvârșită a mișcării sindicale” și că „numai cu socialismul un sindicat justifică menirea sa istorică”¹¹. O asemenea profesiune de credință este grăitoare pentru politica de anexare tactică și simbolică a sindicalismului muncitoresc de către mișcarea socialistă, începută în

epocă și continuată după Primul Război Mondial în concurență cu comunismul. Ea dă seama în mod convingător și pentru practica istoriografică – inițiată în perioada 1944-1948 și continuată pe întreg parcursul regimului comunist – de prezentare a sindicalismului muncitoresc drept singura formă semnificativă a reprezentării profesionale în relație cu evoluția cumulativă a dreptului muncii și a politicii sociale, precum și de prezentare a întregului dispozitiv legislativ și instituțional al protecției sociale elaborat până la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial ca fiind în esență un rezultat al presiunilor exercitate de mișcarea muncitorească - socialistă și comunistă – împotriva politicii de rezistență, concesi și echivoc urmată de partidele burgheze. Este interesant că, după comunism, tendința de perpetuare a vechilor modele interpretative s-a conjugat în mod pervers cu cea de depreciere a subiectelor percepute ca asociate cu predicțiile retoricii legitimizează a regimului anterior, cu rezultatul de a întârzia consacrarea unei alte perspective istorice asupra domeniului: aceea a criticii socialiste funcționând – cu rezultate notabile, altminteri – în marginea politicii de aliniere la standardele internaționale emergente ale politicii sociale în cadrul capitalismului, urmată de partidele dominante.

Tezele centrale ale discursului promovat în afara taberei socialiste și menit să aclimatizeze în mediul românesc principiile elementare ale

protecției sociale sunt clar exprimate – și prin departajare față de socialism – în epoca legiurilor Missir și Nenițescu. O deslușire asupra „legislației muncii” din 1908 explică astfel felul cum „se poate crede, de unii nedumeriți asupra cestiunei legilor de raporturi între muncitori și patroni sau capitaliști, că este vorba de o mișcare propriu-zisă socialistă”. Prin opoziție cu această neînțelegere, se clarifică faptul că „una este [...] mișcarea muncitorilor ce cer legiferarea [...] raporturilor lor cu patronii [...], alta este doctrina socialistă”. Aceasta pentru că, „la principiile generale de libertate absolută ale revoluției [franceze], ce lasă pe cel slab în lupta cea mai neegală și crudă cu cel tare, socialiștii răspund tot cu principii generale, tăgăduind dreptul unei proprietăți private”. Concluzia este formulată prin separarea netă a domeniilor acțiunii sociale, arătându-se că, dacă „partea politică ce va rezulta din mișcarea muncitorimei nu poate fi încă definită și nici prevăzută, [...] altceva este cu partea economică”¹², revendicată ca o componentă legitimă a politicii curente, în virtutea unei actualizări elementare a concepției liberale. Lucrarea de mult mai mare anvergură a lui N. Petrescu-Comnen, intitulată *Studiu asupra intervențiunii statului între capital și muncă* și publicată în 1910, este la fel de hotărâtă să disocieze obiectivele liberalismului cu deschidere socială față de dezideratele socialiste: „O lege este socialistă”, se spune aici, „când în intențiunea legiuitorului se

constată o pornire comunistă, o dorință de a lua de la unii pentru a da altora, o tendință de spoliațiune, motivată de oarecari considerațiuni sentimentale independente de orice idee de drept. Să încetăm prin urmare a vedea veșnic, peste tot, fantoma socialismului, să cercetăm mai bine care sunt terenurile activității economice în care regimul libertății a dat rezultate satisfăcătoare, și care sunt cele unde o intervențiune sinceră, lipsită de orice idee comunistă, este nu numai utilă, dar chiar indispensabilă”¹³.

Abordarea istorică a fenomenului reprezentării profesionale în ansamblul său, dincolo de segmentul sindicalismului proletar înțeles de Racovski ca singura alternativă a reacționarismului breslelor și corporațiilor reînstituite agonice după decesul lor natural din anii 1870 – înglobând, deci, asociațiile profesionale cu caracter patronal, cele ale gușterilor albe și cele ale meseriașilor și micilor industriași, alături de organizațiile muncitorești –, se impune ca un corespondent firesc al demersului menit să reconstituie – în răspărul istoriei legitimizează socialiste și comuniste, dar și al derutei antistângiste postcomuniste – evoluția politicii sociale în relație cu ansamblul partidelor și grupărilor ideologice implicate. Concepția subiacentă legilor Missir și Nenițescu poate fi oare și ea recuperată, într-o asemenea perspectivă, ca orientată spre viitor și ca participând la dinamica de dezvoltare a dreptului muncii și a protecției sociale?

O teză de doctorat în drept din 1915, intitulată *Breslele vechi și breslele noi* – și reluând, de fapt, titlul unei intervenții mai puțin concludente a lui Virgil Madgearu de la 1912 –, sugerează un răspuns afirmativ atunci când plasează ferm în orizontul modernității juridice legile criticate de Racovski ca neconforme cu temeiurile dreptului burghez. „Breslele de la 1902 și 1912”, spune autorul, „nu sunt vreo modificare, vreo adaptare a vechilor bresle, față de noul mediu economic creat de împrejurări. Legiuitorul a curmat brusc firul evoluției și a găsit că e mai bine să împrumute legislațiile străine pentru organizarea meseriilor, decât să studieze vechile organizații românești”¹⁴. Încă și mai semnificativ, lista surselor de inspirație menționate în comentariu – ca și în preambulul actului de la 1902 - include – pe lângă documente austriece, maghiare și germane de la 1859, respectiv 1884 și 1900 – paradigma lege franceză Waldeck-Rousseau „pentru crearea sindicatelor profesionale” de la 1884, a cărei concepție și titulatură avea să fie urmată de legea românească promovată de Grigore Trancu-Iași la 1921, sub guvernare averescană (aceasta depășind în mod decisiv reglementările anterioare prin concepția sa modernă asupra organizării sindicatelor profesionale de salariați, patronale sau mixte)¹⁵. Inspiratorul celei din urmă se manifestase la începutul secolului ca un critic al corporațiilor obligatorii¹⁶, iar raportorul în Senat al proiectului de lege

argumentează și el – în consonanță cu critica lui Racovski, dar împărțind prezumțiile filosofice ale lui Petrescu-Comnen – că „asociațiunea profesională liberă este una dintre cele mai bune căi pe care un liberalism luminat și preocupat de viitor o poate deschide mișcării sociale”¹⁷.

Atunci când menționează ideile politice corporatiste franceze de sorginte catolică de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea pentru a întări diagnosticul său de reacționarism în legătură cu breslele și corporațiile românești reînstituite la începutul secolului XX¹⁸, Racovski nu avea cum să anticipeze, desigur, prodigioasa carieră a proiectului corporatist pe parcursul perioadei interbelice – în asociere cu politica fascistă și cu alte versiuni ale autoritarismului de dreapta –, și încă mai puțin putea să prevadă variatele reajustări ale acelorași idei, în corelație cu orientări ideologice foarte diverse, în lumea celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului XX (studiate sistematic în manieră comparativă începând cu un celebru articol al lui Philippe C. Schmitter din 1974, semnificativ pentru felul cum plasează în centrul tradiției corporatiste lucrarea principală în domeniu a lui Mihail Manoilescu, din 1934¹⁹). Beneficiind de o perspectivă inaccesibilă lui Racovski la momentul 1900, suntem îndrituiți să reinterpretăm episodul istoric al „luptei clasei muncitoare împotriva corporațiilor” din epoca legilor Missir și Nenițescu (este titlul unui articol scris în directa succesiune a criticii

socialiste de dinaintea Primului Război Mondial²⁰) ca o parte a contextului ideologic românesc unde s-a cristalizat teoria lui Manoilescu (deci ca participând la istoria ascendentă a corporatismului modern, și nu la supraviețuirea reacționară a celui de factură medievală). Să-l interpretăm, cu alte cuvinte, sub eticheta nașterii simultane și interdependente a celor două mari viziuni moderne – situate în conflict – referitoare la reprezentarea profesională: cea corporatistă, cu accente ideologice predilecte de dreapta, a segmentării verticale a corpului social după criteriul diviziunilor cu caracter profesional, și cea sindicală, de stânga, inseparabilă de concepția stratificării orizontale a societății.

În lucrarea sa din 1928, intitulată *Elemente de economie socială și de legislație muncitorească*, Marco I. Barasch – unul dintre cei mai proeminenți specialiști în politică socială din epoca interbelică – definește economia socială „ca fiind acea disciplină care se ocupă cu studiul tuturor instituțiilor care tind să amelioreze situația socială și morală a clasei salariate”²¹. Crezul sindicalist astfel exprimat este precedat de o critică retrospectivă a legilor Missir și Nenițescu, motivată de faptul că „obligând pe muncitori să facă parte dintr-o grupare în care interesele lor trec pe planul al doilea

față de interesele patronilor”, ele n-au adus „o ameliorare a condiției sociale a muncitorului. O dovadă mai mult că nu în confundarea patronilor și salariaților într-un grup mixt trebuie căutată cheia problemelor sociale”²². Scriind însă în 1935 despre problema „camerelor profesionale în organizarea statului modern”, același autor invocă „momentul constituției din 1923” - cu articolul 70, prevăzând reprezentarea specială a Camerelor de Comerț și Industrie în cadrul Senatului – ca pe „o formulă de tranziție între teza democrației politice moștenită de la Revoluția Franceză, a constituirii puterii legislative pe baza sufragiului universal, și teza organizării statului pe bază corporativă”²³. Nu trebuie să vedem aici doar o adaptare la spiritul vremurilor, pe drumul ce duce către legislația și proiectele legislative carliste din anii 1938-1939, cu fundamente corporatiste de dreapta. Mai degrabă, oscilațiile lui Barasch depun mărturie pentru participarea comună a ideii sindicale și a celei corporatiste la dezvoltarea politicii sociale în epoca dintre cele două războaie mondiale. Atestabil în multe alte segmente publicistice²⁴, dialogul dintre cele două viziuni s-a desfășurat pe linia deschisă de politica reprezentării profesionale a începutului de secol XX.

Note

- * O versiune a fost prezentată la Conferința „Emancipare socială și politică în România modernă. Noi perspective și interpretări”, organizată de Institutul de Istorie „Nicolae Iorga” în 20-21 septembrie 2016.
- ¹ Constantin C. Numian, *Breslele vechi și breslele noi*, f. e., Pitești, 1915, p. 85. Expunerea de motive a legii Missir argumentează că proiectul „împacă principiile liberale” în măsura în care „formarea unei corporațiuni depinde numai de voința celor interesați”, explicând în continuare că „odată [...] formată corporațiunea, face parte din ea orice meseriaș de aceeași meserie din comună. Principiul obligativității deciziei majorității este hotărâtor”. Vezi B. M. Missir, *Legea pentru organizarea meseriilor și regulamentul privitor la aplicarea ei, precedate de dezbaterile corpurilor legiuitoare și de proiectele de legi anterioare*, Atelierele Grafice I. V. Socecu, București, 1905, p. 64.
- ² Cristian Racovski, *Jos Legea Meseriilor. Ce nu vrem și ce vrem*, ed. a II-a, Cercul de Editură Socialistă, București, 1913, p. 4.
- ³ *Ibidem*, p. 6.
- ⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 6.
- ⁵ *Idem*, *Sindicatelor muncitorești. Rolul și istoria lor*, Cercul de Editură Socialistă, Constanța, 1906, p. 47.
- ⁶ *Idem*, *Jos Legea Meseriilor*, p. 6.
- ⁷ *Idem*, *Jos corporațiile*, Cercul de Editură Socialistă, București, 1907, p. 48.
- ⁸ *Idem*, *Ceferiștii și Partidul Social-Democrat*, f. e., f. l., f. d. [1915], p. 7; *Idem*, *Jos Legea Meseriilor*, p. 6.
- ⁹ *Idem*, *Funcționarii publici și Partidul Social-Democrat*, f. e., f. l., f. d. [1915], p. 2.
- ¹⁰ Victor Rizescu, *Canonul și vocile uitate. Secvențe dintr-o tipologie a gândirii politice românești*, Editura Universității din București, București, 2015, pp. 223-293.
- ¹¹ Cristian Racovski, *Sindicatelor muncitorești*, pp. 50-52.
- ¹² Take Policrat, *Legislațiunea muncii*, Tipografia Aurora, București, 1908, pp. 40-46.
- ¹³ N. Petrescu-Comnen, *Studiu asupra intervențiunii statului între capital și muncă*, Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Göbl, București, 1910, p. 8.
- ¹⁴ Constantin C. Numian, *Breslele vechi și breslele noi*, p. 111.
- ¹⁵ *Legislația muncii aplicabilă pe întreg teritoriul țării*, ed. de I. Setlacec și D. Constantinescu, „Eminescu” S. A., București, 1927, pp. 18-32.
- ¹⁶ Grigore Trancu-Iași, *Câteva articole în chestiunea meseriașilor și muncitorilor*, Tipografiile Dunărea, Galați, 1914.
- ¹⁷ N. P. Romanescu, *Legea asupra sindicatelor profesionale. Legea pentru reglementarea conflictelor de muncă*, Tiparul „Oltenia”, București, f. a. [1921].
- ¹⁸ Cristian Racovski, *Jos corporațiile*, p. 19.
- ¹⁹ Philippe C. Schmitter, „Still the Century of Corporatism?”, în *The Review of Politics*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1974, pp. 85-131.
- ²⁰ I. Iacoș, V. Petrișor, „Lupta clasei muncitoare împotriva corporațiilor, 1902-1908”, în *Analele Institutului de Istorie a Partidului de pe lângă CC al PCR*, vol. 8, nr. 5, 1962, pp.

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- ²¹ Marco I. Barasch, *Elemente de economie socială și de legislație muncitorească*, Institutul de Arte Grafice „Cultura Poporului”, București, 1928, p. 19.
- ²² *Ibidem*, p. 15.
- ²³ Idem, *Camerele profesionale în organizarea statului modern*, Cartea Românească, București, 1935, p. 9.
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Parteneriatul estic: începutul refluxului procesului de extindere a Uniunii Europene?

(The Eastern Partnership: the beginning of the ebb for the EU enlargement?)

Gheorghe CIASCAI

Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to highlight the geopolitical limits and the strategic weakness of the European Union in his approach concerning the enlargement policy and the Neighborhood Policy after the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine. For this reason, the research will examine the evolution of the Eastern Partnership since February 2014 after the annexation of Crimea by Russian Federation and the start of war in eastern regions of Ukraine until present. Also, the paper will examine the impact of the dynamics of the Eastern Partnership for the Eastern European Partners, especially for Republic of Moldova..*

Keywords: *European Union, enlargement, Eastern Europe, Russia, security, geopolitics.*

Introducere

Lansarea în 2009 a Parteneriatului Estic a creat impresia unei capacități reale a Uniunii Europene de a-și consolida statutul de actor principal la nivel european, de a promova adecvat interesele sale politice, economice și de securitate în vecinătatea răsăriteană și de a asigura o bună gestionare a frontierelor Uniunii. De asemenea, inițiativa lansată la Praga în mai 2009 a părut că răspunde așteptărilor diverse ale statelor ex-sovietice pla-

sate între Uniunea extinsă în 2007 și Federația Rusă. În plus, noul instrument al politicii externe a UE a generat speranțe în unele din aceste state care doreau o apropiere mai puternică de Uniunea Europeană, inclusive, pe termen lung, aderarea deplină la Uniune. Speranțe oarecum îndreptățite de prevederile Tratatului privind Uniunea Europeană care, așa cum subliniază unii comentatori, permit oricărui stat suveran european să candideze la aderarea la Uniune¹.

Dintr-o altă perspectivă, Parteneriatul Estic a suscitât încă din start nemulțumirea Federației Ruse. De altfel, Federația Rusă a și pus pe picioare o veritabilă strategie care vizează contracararea printr-o gamă variată de mijloace a proiectului european². Parteneriatul Estic este perceput de liderii Federației Ruse ca o implicare nepermisă a Uniunii Europene într-o regiune în care Moscova consideră că are interese prioritare. Aceste interese sunt derivate de liderii ruși din moștenirea sovietică și țaristă, din necesitatea menținerii statutului de mare putere a Rusiei și din necesitatea de a proteja anumite linii roșii de natură politică, geopolitică, militară și economică a Federației Ruse în străinătate apropiată vestică.

În ciuda obiectivelor limitate ale Parteneriatului Estic, Federația Rusă a perceput demersul european ca o tentativă de extindere a Uniunii într-o regiune unde are interese vitale și nu a ezitat să declanșeze un conflict deschis pentru a stopa acest proces, încălcând în mod grosolan normele dreptului internațional. Din această perspectivă, ipoteza acestui articol este că Uniunea Europeană, deși a reacționat rapid și consistent printr-o gamă extinsă de sancțiuni la adresa Federației Ruse, a dovedit o ambiguitate dezarmantă în privința nivelului de ambiție strategică și a scopurilor politice ultime ale Parteneriatului Estic. Evitată prin omisiune de către liderii UE și statelor membre ale Uniunii în prima fază a Parteneriatului Estic, dar

invocată de liderii din unele state partenere, tema lărgirii UE în vecinătatea estică a fost omisă constant de oficialii europeni și în perioada care a urmat evenimentelor din 2014 din Ucraina. Deși ar putea fi considerată ca o dovadă de moderație într-un context de securitate turbulent, respingerea posibilității aderării statelor est-europene partenere dornice să intre în UE, poate fi interpretată ca un semn al slăbiciunii reale a Uniunii. Refuzul european ar putea fi interpretat, desigur, și ca o atenționare la adresa comportamentului duplicitar al guvernelor din aceste state aspirante la statutul de candidat la UE³. O Uniune care, să nu uităm, din anii '70 ai secolului trecut până în primul deceniu al mileniului a derulat o constantă politică de extindere, fiecare deceniu fiind marcat de intrarea în Uniunea Europeană a cel puțin trei noi membri.

Parteneriatul Estic și lansarea confruntării deschise cu Federația Rusă

Încurajați de reușitele anterioare în materie de asociere cu statele vecine, în special în cazul statelor din Europa Centrală care în anii '90 a semnat acorduri de asociere iar în anii 2004-2007 au aderat la Uniunea Europeană, liderii europeni au sperat că acordurile de asociere propuse statelor din Europa de Est în cadrul Parteneriatului Estic vor contribui la „europenizarea” guvernărilor în

aceste state și la stabilitatea și la securitatea vecinătății răsăritene⁴.

Criza din Ucraina din 2014 și evenimentele ulterioare anexării Crimeei de către Federația Rusă au contrazis dramatic speranțele și așteptările europene. În ciuda semnării acordurilor de asociere și liber schimb cu trei din statele partenere, Republica Moldova, Ucraina și Georgia, potențialele beneficii ale Parteneriatului Estic au fost afectate de deteriorarea bruscă a climatului politic, de securitate și economic din vecinătatea răsăriteană. În locul difuzării către Estul Europei post-sovietic a bunei guvernări, a prosperității europene și a normativismului european în materie de conduită internațională, Uniunea Europeană s-a trezit într-o realitate politică și geopolitică ce amintește de *războiul rece!*

Pusă în fața unei Federații Ruse cu o agendă revizionistă asumată explicit, prin anexarea unei părți a teritoriului ucrainean, prin sprijinul vizibil acordat insurgenților separatiști din Donbas și prin punerea sub semnul întrebării a normelor fundamentale ale dreptului internațional, Uniunea Europeană s-a dezmeticit și liderii săi au luat primele decizii de răspuns la comportamentul agresiv al Moscovei. Setul de sancțiuni politice și economice la adresa Federației Ruse, i.e. a personalităților politice și agenților economici din Rusia, a fost însoțit și de o tardivă reevaluare a comportamentului general al Federației Ruse vis-a-vis de Uniunea Europeană și

de Occident⁵. A fost nevoie de șocul provocat conduita agresivă din Ucraina pentru ca europeni să descopere o „Rusie anti-gorbaciovistă”⁶ și antieuropeană. Este posibil ca valorile liberale care constituie temeiul Uniunii Europene și a comportamentului său normativist în mediul internațional să fi provocat o distorsiune în perceperea jocului internațional realist al Rusiei președintelui Putin pînă la declanșarea operațiunilor militare separatiste din Ucraina cu sprijin rusec⁷. Această Rusie *realistă și revizionistă* a văzut în extinderea spre Est a Uniunii Europene (și a NATO) o deteriorare a echilibrului de putere⁸. În consecință, a creat o construcție internațională concurentă cu proiectul european – Uniunea Eurasiatică – în care să integreze statele din Parteneriatul Estic semnate ale acordurilor de asociere cu Uniunea Europeană și a dezvoltat o strategie subtilă de cultivare a disensiunilor în sînul Uniunii Europene, inclusiv prin lansarea unei platforme mass-media de propagandă antioccidentală, Sputnik⁹. Dacă în privința obiectivelor Uniunii Eurasiatice lucrurile erau ceva mai evidente, strategia de încurajare a rivalitatilor și diviziunilor între statele membre și de sprijinire a curentelor politice extremiste din statele membre parte a așa numitului „război hibrid” a fost mult mai greu și tardiv percepută de către mulți europeni¹⁰. În acest context, liderii de la Kremlin nu au ezitat să utilizeze slăbiciunile și divergențele europene în gestio-

narea crizei datoriilor Greciei sau excesele radicale cu nuanțe *naționalist-iliberale* ale guvernului de la Budapesta pentru a provoca ruperea consensului pe care se bazează decizia Consiliului referitoare la sancțiunile politice și economice la adresa Federației Ruse. Reuniunile bilaterale la vîrf dintre președintele Vladimir Putin și primul ministru maghiar Viktor Orban din anii 2015 și 2016 au reprezentat tentative manifeste ale Rusiei de a diviza Uniunea Europeană în dosarul ucrainean¹¹. Însuși Președintele Comisiei Europene, Jean Claude Juncker, a avut poziții publice concesive vizavi de conduita Federației Ruse de natură să afecteze consensul european și respectarea angajamentelor Uniunii față de statele din Parteneriatul Estic, în special față de Ucraina. Declarația presedintelui Comisiei Europene de la conferința internațională organizată la Passau în Germania în octombrie 2015 conform căreia „EU must improve Russia ties”¹² sunt în dezacord cu poziția oficială a Uniunii de menținere a sancțiunilor la adresa Rusiei pînă la respectarea angajamentelor luate de această țară la Minsk.

Dacă se adaugă la aceste tentative ruse de încurajare a divergențelor la vîrfurile Uniunii Europene, relațiile apropiate dezvoltate de diferiți emisari oficiali sau neoficiali de la Kremlin cu mișcările politice de extremă dreapta anti-europene din diferite state membre ale Uniunii, inclusiv finanțarea acestor mișcări politice¹³ avem o imagine mai com-

pletă asupra panopliei de instrumente subversive folosite de Federația Rusă în confruntarea cu Uniunea Europeană declanșată de criza ucraineană și de Parteneriatul Estic.

Așadar, avînd în vedere cele expuse anterior, nu e surprinzător că, în cele din urmă, la nivelul unora din structurile decizionale ale Uniunii Europene s-a conștientizat că Federația Rusă s-a transformat dintr-un potențial partener într-un adversar real împotriva căruia este necesar să dezvolte și o strategie de comunicare publică¹⁴.

Obiectivele limitate ale Parteneriatul Estic și limitele rezultatelor acestuia

În mod paradoxal, confruntarea deschisă a Uniunii Europene cu Federația Rusă generată de criza ucraineană este alimentată suplimentar chiar de anumite ambiguități și linii roșii care se manifestă în cadrul Parteneriatului Estic care decurg din obiectivele limitate ale acestei inițiative europene.

Aceste ambiguități ale Parteneriatului Estic asumate tacit de liderii europeni și evitate cu destulă dificultate de statele partener, în special de cele aspirante la calitatea de membru al Uniunii, s-au menținut și după semnarea Acordurilor de Asociere și a celor de Liber Schimb cu Ucraina, Republica Moldova și Georgia în cursul anului 2014, după izbucnirea crizei din Ucraina.

În ciuda arhitecturii complexe a Parteneriatului Estic care include atât o componentă bilaterală și acordurile aferente, cât și una multilaterală, inclusiv cele patru platforme și șapte inițiative emblematiche deschise pentru toate statele membre și pentru cele șase state partenere, rezultatele în materie de apropiere de Uniunea Europeană sunt modeste, inclusiv pentru partenerii cei mai avansați¹⁵.

Administrații publice atinse de corupția endemică, lipsă de transparență în actul de guvernare, economii disfuncționale, societăți fragmentate, domnia legii în suferință sau ratele înalte ale sărăciei departe de standardele europene sunt câteva din caracteristicile remanente ale partenerilor estici, cei mai avansați în materie de reforme, precum Ucraina, Georgia sau Republica Moldova, deși au beneficiat de finanțări nerambursabile europene și de misiunile de asistență tehnică precum TAIEX.

Oficialii europeni și experți specializați în spațiul răsăritean al Europei identifică drept sursă a menținerii acestor caracteristici moștenirea sovietică a clasei politice care conduce aceste state, conservarea și activarea rețelelor de influență și de loialitate ale Federației Ruse în viața economică și politică din vecinătatea estică dar și duplicitatea elitelor pro-europene din aceste state care încearcă adesea să exploateze oportunist ofertele pe care Moscova le face în mod consecvent.

Nu face excepție de la această situație nici Republica Moldova,

care a fost considerată o poveste de succes Parteneriatului Estic în anii 2013-2014, după cum remarca Nicu Popescu, expert al Institutului pentru Studii de Securitate al UE¹⁶. În ciuda prezenței neîntrerupte la guvernare a unor coalițiilor pro-europene din 2009 până în prezent, de semnarea și de intrarea în vigoare a acordurilor cu Uniunea Europeană sau de sporirea substanțială a ponderii UE în comerțul său exterior în ultimii ani bilanțul moldovean în materie de „europenizare” nu este superior celui al Ucrainei afectată de războiul din Donbas și al Georgiei cu handicapul său geografic și geopolitic. Deteriorarea cursului reformelor în Republica Moldova, pe fondul unor grave scandaluri în sectorul bancar din această țară și a cazurilor de corupție la nivel înalt, a fost sesizată de oficialii din UE care în Consiliul din februarie adresa critici și recomandări ferme noului guvern aparent pro-european de la Chișinău¹⁷.

Însă, deși reponsabilitatea actorilor locali în rezultatele slabe ale Parteneriatului Estic nu poate fi pusă la îndoială, examinarea acestor rezultate cu ajutorul unor instrumente mai precise poate evidenția și reponsabilitatea europenilor, a liderilor de la Bruxelles și a celor din capitalele statelor membre.

Așa cum am menționat mai sus, ambiguitatea angajamentelor europene și limitarea obiectivelor Parteneriatului Estic la o „integrare parțială” și-au pus amprenta asupra performanțelor acestuia și ale

reformelor din statele partenere. Efectul absenței unui orizont bine precizat și asumat de extindere a UE în regiune a fost foarte bine sesizat de un expert în problematica Europei de Est post-sovietice „The EaP countries lack an EU membership perspective, raising the question of whether there is the political will to carry out systemic reforms. There is also the challenge of the EU’s overly ambitious expectations and conditions, inspired by enlargement logic. For these reasons, many reforms remain on paper...”¹⁸.

Se pare că liderii Uniunii Europene și cei ai statelor membre intrare în UE în anii 80, 2004, 2007 și 2013 au uitat efectul catalizator al obiectivului aderării la Uniunea Europeană asupra tranziției lor democratice și asupra propriilor reforme în economie și administrație.

Vecinătatea estică a Uniunii Europene este oare ... europeană?

Contraperformanțele și regresul Republicii Moldova în materie de „europenizare”, după semnarea și intrarea în vigoare a Acordurilor de Asociere și Liber Schimb în 2014 și după adoptarea în același an a deciziei Consiliului și Parlamentului European privind accesul fără viză în UE a cetățenilor Republicii Moldova, pot fi, așadar, interpretate și dintr-o altă perspectivă.

Cu certitudine, liderii Uniunii Europene și ai statelor membre poartă și ele responsabilitatea pentru

traectoria sinuoasă a Parteneriatului Estic și a statelor partenere puternic angajate în această inițiativă. Excesul de prudență manifestat în stabilirea obiectivelor pentru a menaja susceptibilitatea Federației Ruse, pentru a nu irita opinia publică din statele membre „obosită” de extinderile precedente și pentru a nu încuraja așteptări exagerate în statele vizate, s-a dovedit a avea rezultate contrarii.

Astfel, comportamentul liderilor europeni a reușit să încurajeze o conduită revizionistă a Federației Ruse, bine disimulată înainte de momentul semnării Acordurilor de Asociere și Liber Schimb dintre UE și statele Parteneriatului Estic. De asemenea, a provocat reacții absurde și nationaliste ale opiniei publice din statele membre, așa cum o indică rezultatul referendumului din Olanda referitor la Acordul de Asociere UE-Ucraina¹⁹. În fine, a generat speranțe și așteptări în statele partenere care au mizat pe „vectorul european” pentru a evada din „geopolitica eurasiatică” și pentru a depăși traumele istoriei sovietice. Lectura articolului 49 din Tratatul privind Uniunea Europeană referitor la dreptul suveran al statelor europene de a adera la Uniune, negocierile de aderare derulate în prezent de Serbia, Muntenegru și Turcia și chiar Parteneriatul Estic însuși susțin aceste speranțe.

Pentru a descuraja aceste speranțe, factorii de decizie europeni trebuie fie să modifice Tratatul privind Uniunea Europeană, fie să redeseneze harta Europei astfel încât

statele Parteneriatului Estic să fie situate în afara acesteia.

Concluzii

Extinderile succesive ale Uniunii Europene începând cu cele din anii '70 și pînă la cele din anii 2000 au avut toate o logică geografică și geopolitică. După extinderea în direcția nord-vest spre insulele britanice și spre Danemarca a urmat în anii 80 o lărgire către noile democrații din zona mediteraneeană a Europei. Extinderea spre democrațiile scandinave din anii '90 a fost urmată în

primul deceniu al acestui secol de cooptarea în Uniunea Europeană a noilor democrații din Europa Centrală, inclusiv cele din spațiul baltic.

După finalizarea negocierilor cu statele candidate din Balcani este de așteptat ca aderarea succesivă a acestora să aibă loc la începutul deceniului viitor. Pasul logic din punct de vedere politic, economic, strategic și geopolitic al Uniunii Europene ar fi să se îndrepte spre vecinătate răsăriteană europeană și s-o integreze deplin, chiar cu riscul de a se confrunța cu o Rusie realistă, revizionistă și anti-europeană.

Note

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The ambivalent relationship between war and peace: public speeches concerning the issue of terrorism¹

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Abstract: *Following the 9/11 attacks, a coalition of West Countries, led by the United States of America, militarily occupied two countries - Afghanistan and Iraq - in part rewriting the rules which up until then had clearly outlined the difference between a war of aggression and a war of defence. By analyzing the various speeches of ten important world leaders of West Democratic Countries on terrorism of fundamentalist matrix, we will outline a contradiction: declaring the necessity of war as a condition and objective of peace. This is solved in different ways: it becomes an ambivalent strategy in the cases of Obama and Merkel, with the latter being less explicit; in the cases of Bush, Berlusconi, Blair and Rice it leads, albeit with different motivations and arguments, to a stark choice: war; whereas it disappears in the speeches of Zapatero, Prodi and Cameron, who speak of actions and strategies to combat terrorism without ever mentioning war. Without offering any value judgment of the content of the various arguments, I only take them as a pretext to reflect on the rules of ambivalent communication: a communication which starts from a clear contradiction, and argues the necessity of it, before demonstrating its usefulness and proposing strategies of action that take it into account.*

The essay is divided into two parts: in the first one (which is published in this issue) I discuss the concept of sociological ambivalence, I distinguish ambivalence from contradictions and ambiguity and I identify the argumentative strategies of an ambivalent communication. Then I analyze the speech the President of the United States of America Barack Obama delivered on December 10, 2009 in Oslo when he received the Nobel Peace Prize as an example of "good" ambivalent communication. In the second part of the essay (which will be published in the next issue), I analyze the speeches of other world leaders as different examples of ambivalent communication.

Keywords: *political speeches, ambivalence, war, peace, terrorism.*

Introduction

COslo, December 10, 2009: the newly elected president of the

United States of America, Barack Obama, receives the Nobel Peace Prize and delivers his speech.

He is well aware of the controversy that accompanied his nomi-

nation: proclaimed man of peace and yet at the head of a nation, albeit under a wide coalition, that following the 9/11 attacks militarily occupied two countries – Afghanistan and Iraq – in part rewriting the rules which up until then had clearly outlined the difference between a war of aggression and a war of defence. It is also the beginning of his mandate, and to many, such recognition seems to be based more on hope than on the reality of the facts.

Above all, he is aware of the contradiction that he has found himself in. It is for this reason that Obama knows that his words will receive the attention of the whole world.

The analytical perspective that I intend to present, taking a cue from the speeches of ten world leaders on the topic of Islamic terrorism², will show how Obama's speech is skilfully constructed by following a logical progression that leads the listener into a configuration in which the ambivalent contradiction is transformed into strategy: to defeat terrorism, he argues, one must make war *and* peace. It is necessary, therefore, that he (and the prize he is about to receive, the Nobel Peace Prize, and his role of military leader of a belligerent country prove it) is a man of peace *and also* a man of war.

Maintaining at once war and peace, both dialectically (in speech) and tactically (in action), seems to be the *leitmotif* of many public speeches addressing the issue of terrorism, or rather the quintessential

argument that justifies armed intervention in foreign territories which, in other words, makes the war a just war, or at least justifiable.

Just or justifiable? There appears to be some ambiguity in the use of these two terms, even in Obama's speech in which they appear as synonyms. Yet something that is just is unreservedly so, while something justifiable is something that in itself is not fair, but that becomes lawful under certain conditions. Walzer writes that he feels compelled to explain the term 'just war':

*"...just, here, is a term of convenience; it means justifiable, defensible, even morally necessary, given the alternatives, and nothing more."*³

Declaring the necessity of war as a condition and objective of peace is a contradiction that is solved in different ways: it becomes an ambivalent strategy in the cases of Obama and Merkel, with the latter being less explicit. In the cases of Bush, Berlusconi, Blair and Rice it leads, albeit with different motivations and arguments, to a stark choice: war; whereas it disappears in the speeches of Zapatero, Prodi and Cameron, who speak of actions and strategies to combat terrorism without ever mentioning war. Prodi and Cameron – who represent two countries which are involved, albeit to a different extent, in Afghanistan and Iraq – acted with a certain ambiguity. On the contrary, Zapatero – who had Spain withdraw from the coalition in Iraq – was more

consistent with what he had promised in his election campaign.

By analysing the various speeches I do not intend to make value judgements of the content of the various arguments, but only to take them as a pretext to reflect on the rules of ambivalent communication: communication which starts from a clear contradiction, and argues the necessity of it, before demonstrating its usefulness and proposing strategies of action that take it into account.

Ambiguity, contradiction and ambivalence

An analysis of this kind calls into question concepts such as ambiguity, contradiction and ambivalence: complex concepts that have ancient roots and are embedded in the lexicon of various disciplines. It is true that this analysis deals only with communication, in this case oral communication, and it would be sufficient to abide by the meaning that they take on in the economy of discourse and in the logic of the argument, which is something that is perceived as complicated. But it is still worthwhile to broaden our view somewhat just to emphasize how ambiguities, contradictions and ambivalence should not necessarily be construed as deceptions by language, ploys to conceal true intentions or cracks in the logic, but also as expressions of a reality that cannot be represented otherwise.

Now some brief references to the concept of ambiguity. Firstly, we

have Adorno, who, in his work on the authoritarian personality,⁴ demonstrated a strong correlation between ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, and intolerance of ambiguity, following on from the studies of Else Frenken-Brunswik who suggested considering the latter as an indicator of considerable diagnostic interest for the analysis of personality. According to Frenken-Brunswik,⁵ the intolerance of ambiguity corresponds to the denial of ambivalent emotions, a poor capacity for introspection, rigid defences, and an uncritical adherence to cultural stereotypes.

Indeed, in the phenomenology of perception,⁶ the ambiguity inherent to objective reality allows the subject to interpret the world: in art and in literature ambiguity becomes an instrument to represent the polyphony of values that characterize the culture of modernity.

In contrast to this, psychoanalyst Simona Argentieri⁷ defines ambiguity as a 'crime of consciousness'. A petty crime, but a crime nonetheless, capable of corrupting *daily morals*, *political games*, and *the language of passion*, in which ambiguous behaviour, and therefore ambiguous language, are a symptom of psychological and social distress. I do not intend to delve any deeper into the matter, I am interested only for the purposes of my argument, to emphasise the contrast of the two positions. Ambiguity: the symptom of a disease, of a moral weakness, or of the good health of the psyche?

Examining the issue from a sociological perspective, Donald Levine⁸ speaks of the *ambiguity of pathos* to describe the effort that sociology, from its inception, has made to banish from its analysis everything that could be described as the grey area of social behaviour and institutions: chance, irrationality and the pitfalls of rationality, inconsistency ... But obscuring the ambiguity of reality and of experience has not only meant that it would continue to use ambiguously strategic concepts for the discipline (for all of society), but has deprived the social scientist of a powerful explanatory concept capable of shedding light on many aspects of reality⁹.

If the experience is ambiguous, then the language cannot help but be ambiguous. It is therefore necessary to put things in order: firstly to distinguish analytically and then connect – as inherent correspondents and associates – the ambiguity of thought and language (which refers to the ability of the words and phrases to hide a double sense or justify more than one interpretation) and the ambiguity of the experience (the ability of any stimulus to have two or more meanings or simply to have an unclear meaning)¹⁰.

In the economy of these pages the ambiguity of language finds an important place because it is closely linked to the ambiguity of the experience of the subject who is speaking when they, in an ambivalent context, are confused or want to deceive the other party. Interestingly, in this

regard, the definition that, in aesthetics, Empson¹¹ gives for ambiguity: "Any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives rise to alternative reactions in the face of the same language element". As is well known, he distinguishes seven types of ambiguity in poetry: talking about the seventh, he states that it is the most ambiguous one because it is based on two opposite meanings of the word defined by the context. Thus, this level of ambiguity shows a division in the mind of the writer himself.

In this perspective we can clearly see the closeness of the concept of ambiguity with that of the contradictions and ambivalences that arise from the contrast between two propositions of opposite meaning.

It is complicated to trace the genesis of the concept of contradiction which boasts illustrious and complex philosophical traditions. It is a journey that would take us far from ambivalence because if what speculative reason argues is true – that everything contradicts itself – the dialectic proceeds reconciling and resolving contradictions, establishing beyond them, that which Hegel called *identity* or *unity*. This is an operation that by its very nature ambivalence does not allow.

In the sociological field it was Jon Elster,¹² in his reflections on the rationality of action, who outlined a typology of contradictions: logical (i.e. substantial), pragmatic (i.e. contingent), and conceptual (when the explication of the semantic content

of a concept generates logical or pragmatic contradictions).

With a view to choosing, these kinds of contradictions can be divided into desires, beliefs, and choices, as well as into systems of rationality that lead to action as noted by Fiammetta Corradi,¹³ who proposes a fourth type of contradiction: the discursive or argumentative contradiction, which is located in the inner dialogue and fine tunes the strategy that precedes any action. Interestingly, she argues that consistency leads to contradiction. The absence of contradiction is the trait that consistency has in common with rationality, but in the uncertainty of choice, consistency can be a more effective guiding principle than rationality because, unlike the latter, it calls into question the identity and the different visions of the world that make up our individual cognitive map. Consistency, therefore, as a deliberative strategy, is capable of guiding the decision-making process, gradually excluding the less desirable options and overcoming contradictions.

This study is briefly quoted to highlight how contradictions, as well as ambiguities, while part of reality, thought and experience, and enhanced by the complexity of the present, permit, and in many cases require, a choice to be made. So much so, that in the cited case, consistency becomes a strategy capable of effectively overcoming the contradictions that, as noted by the author, are not so much between means and ends (or

goals, if you prefer) but between the same purpose when, as in the case of critical choices, values come into play, the utilitarian criterion of the choice vanishes and the options become infinite.

Ambivalence¹⁴, however, excludes the choice between the two options that it by definition offers. Whether it is a matter of mixed feelings that an individual feels, or two normative instances that belong to the ethical horizon of a society, or the dual institutional mandate of an organization, that which determines ambivalence is that the two proposed options are opposite, of equal strength, and are interdependent, such that they prefigure the impossibility of choice without paying a very high price.

Defining the concept of sociological ambivalence,¹⁵ has meant a painstaking assembly of stimuli, suggestions and theoretical propositions derived from reading the works of authors such as Simmel, Elias, Merton (the only one who speaks explicitly of sociological ambivalence), Elster, Bateson ... to the point of reaching a definition of the ambiguous situation that arises when a social actor (be it an individual, a group, an organization, etc.) in any space-time context, is subjected to the influence of, or must respond to, two different instances which may have something to do with beliefs, individual motivations, obligations, norms, values, knowledge models, cultural forms ... In short, any solicitation

can come from the psychic universe or contingent reality.

What distinguishes these two instances is their opposition and their interdependence, which equally solicit the actor to the point that he must confine his act to a metaphorical space, a continuum defined at its extremities by the two bodies, without being able to provide a better choice for him. In this sense, the action will go towards one of the two poles of ambivalence, but in any case will remain under the influence of the other so much so that it could, under the circumstances, reverse the direction of the action without ever breaking the bond that binds him to the two requirements. In other words, when faced with the double command -do, believe, think... this is the opposite of this - the actor is not capable of making the best choice for himself because the choices, although opposite, appear interdependent and subjectively or objectively imposed. If anything, he may direct his action towards one or other of the two poles in a sort of strategy of alternation (either in time or in space) being careful not to move too far in one direction. Of course he may do so, or even choose a third option, but if this happens, the action that would result would almost certainly have negative effects on both the subject and the context as a backdrop to the action.¹⁶

A useful metaphor to clarify this concept is that of the movement of the pendulum. Ambivalence is given by the juxtaposition of two inter-

dependent forces of opposite force and of equal intensity. The two forces do not exist separately but only in relation to each other. They influence each other and create a dynamic field that supports the effect of this opposing thrust, putting in place a perennially oscillatory movement, provided that it maintains the ambivalent nature of their relationship. This means that neither prevails over the other, if not alternately and only partly. In fact, when one force seems to take the upper hand, the opposing force intervenes, which changes the direction of the movement: equilibrium is always unstable and temporary; ambivalence produces ambivalence.

It is evident that what has just been described is only a theoretical model which exemplifies and simplifies contexts and situations that in reality are much more complex.

Over the years, some of my research has confirmed the usefulness and legitimacy of this interpretation to give an account of social realities and patterns of interaction that are difficult to interpret: teachers of an elementary school attended by non-national and gypsy children, struggling with the dilemma between universalism and particularism; young women whose moral horizon is determined by the tension between the ethics of responsibility towards others and the ethics of personal fulfilment; or juvenile detention centres, whose institutional mandate – to educate and punish

– renders both adults and children ambivalent¹⁷.

Ambivalent communication

It is one thing to ‘uncover’ ambivalence in the interaction of the actors observed, but quite another to do so in an exclusively communicative and non-interactive context, which is the text of a speech. Nevertheless I think it is possible, starting from the concept of sociological ambivalence, to draw a basic diagram of ambivalent communication, a kind of reference model that briefly describes the sequence of argument.

We will begin with two statements from the same speech. Because such communication prefigures an ambivalent configuration, three preconditions must be met. The first condition is that we start from an argumentative force: a thesis is supported and then an opposite view is reaffirmed; two opposing propositions are asserted¹⁸; or an intention is declared, followed by a declaration of an opposing intention. The second condition is that the two statements are both reasonably sustainable. Finally, the two statements must have for the speaker the same motivational force, or if they must argue, the same normative force, or the same degree of accuracy, with respect to the reference context.

The locutor of an ambivalent communication can choose to end his speech here, or continue, either

demonstrating the interdependence between two statements (they justify each other, or are the result of each other, or, if you change the content or character of the former, you are also changing those of the latter); or demonstrating the need to pursue implicit or explicit goals contained in the two statements, to finally outline appropriate action strategies to achieve these goals.

The first three steps are constitutive of ambivalent communication, the others are consequential. Specifically, the first condition is satisfied when there is an explicit and clear admission of the opposition between the two propositions contained in the speech. The second condition is satisfied when the sustainability and practicality of both statements is argued convincingly. The third condition is satisfied when the speaker argues the necessity of it¹⁹. The first two conditions are met when the inadequacy and impossibility, or the inconvenience of choosing are demonstrated. The last is satisfied when the action strategies are convincingly proposed and take into account both options, respecting the ambivalent configuration.

If we were to adopt Toulmin’s model²⁰ for the (argument) analysis, the sequence of argument would be as follows:

1. Two claims are expressed;
2. Their opposition is declared;
3. The sustainability/practicality of both the statements is argued;
4. Their necessity is argued;

5. The inconvenience of choosing is argued and therefore the usefulness of pursuing the indications contained in both statements;
6. “Rational”, and therefore feasible action strategies are presented.

Data (commonly known or verifiable assertions which are logically antecedent), warrants (guarantees or rules legitimating the transition from data to theory) and any accessories such as backing (an assertion supporting warrants), qualifiers (usually an adverb or a similar expression showing caution or presence of mind in reasoning) and rebuttals (expressions showing that the speaker allows exceptions to the presented theories) supporting the theories explained in the different steps of the argument can be adequate or, on the contrary inadequate and this

marks the difference between a good communication and a bad one.

War or peace, war and peace: action strategies and strategies of argument

In his speech, Obama argues the ambivalent relationship between war and peace as a response to Islamic terrorism; other leaders argue the need for a clear choice – war *or* peace – to defeat the threat of Al Qaeda (al-qā’ida), outside of ambivalent logic and argumentation.

It is therefore possible, starting from Obama’s example, to imagine a communication that describes an ambivalent situation and consequently outlines strategies that change the extent to which the speaker is or is not aware or able to tolerate ambivalence.

Cognitive dimension	Affective dimension <i>Intolerance/non-acceptance</i> <i>Tolerance/acceptance</i>	
<i>Unawareness</i>	Ambiguity in the language in an attempt to eliminate cognitive dissonance	Adaptation
<i>Awareness</i>	I’ll wait until the situation changes=I won’t act I’ll act, making a choice=I’ll come out of the ambivalence I’ll deny everything/lie	Alternation in time Separation in space Unity in time and space

Table 1: Ambivalent Communication Strategies

In the case of the speeches taken into consideration, that of Bush could be read as the speech of one who denies ambivalence, and who

does so to deceive the other party. Conversely, Obama’s speech (and, in a less conscious and reasoned way, that of Merkel) declares

ambivalence and proposes appropriate strategies: to alternate actions of peace and war in the same space, to put in place at the same time military actions and humanitarian and diplomatic interventions in different regions of the world, and to militarily assist the government of a country to fight terrorism and promote democracy.

Blair and, with a weaker argument, Berlusconi, admit the evidence of the contradiction between the value of peace and the necessity of war, but their role requires them to choose: the war on terror is fought militarily alongside the United States.

Rice is radical: there is no contradiction, war and peace coincide.

Prodi also speaks of the war on terrorism, emphasizing the concept of asymmetric warfare and unconventional strategies, tactics and resources. He emphasises above all the need for a joint responsibility on the part of international organizations (primarily the UN) to implement measures to combat terrorism, promote development, strengthen diplomacy, prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and supervise and find solutions to serious regional crises.

Sarkozy's argument is simple. In times of war, in 1917 and in 1942, the United States has twice brought peace to Europe and made this a lasting peace through the Marshall Plan. France is at their side out of friendship, gratitude and loyalty.

Zapatero and Cameron also talk about the ways to counter terrorism, but both with an eye to their own country. Particularly striking is the intervention of the former, carried out on December 31, 2004 at the Parliamentary Commission of Investigation on the bombings in Madrid on March 11, 2004. That is to say, that he himself stated, nine months and two days after the terrible Islamic terrorist attack in which 192 people lost their lives, that Aznar had cost himself his reelection by accusing ETA of being responsible.

The speech of Zapatero, who, having become Prime Minister on March 15 2004, immediately announced the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq, is consistent in pointing out the ways in which to combat the terrorist threat: showing that they are not afraid; bearing witness to the values of democracy: respect for others, civility, solidarity, hospitality, citizenship, participation; through coordinated investigative police operations to identify the sources of terrorist financing; with legislative actions to regulate, for example, the sale of weapons and explosives; with international operations of intelligence; and by honouring the victims of terrorism.

“Thirty hours from the time of the massacre millions and millions took to the streets in the biggest and most participated in demonstration of courage that has ever taken place in any country (...) Furthermore, after an attack as brutal as this not a

single case of xenophobia was recorded. Not one. Can you find another country in the world more peaceful and more secure? Stronger? More reflective and more moderate? It is not easy to contain the pride of belonging to a country that gave on this occasion an example of civility, a sense of citizenship, of solidarity.”

It is interesting how Obama, Rice and Berlusconi mention the juxtaposition between realism and idealism that has ancient origins and has characterised in time a heated debate on the necessity / indispensability of war. The realist argument, as noted by Walzer,²¹ can be traced back to Thucydides and literature that Hobbes produced two centuries later: war does not need any justification because it is, by its nature, ruled by necessity (i.e. by interest and power). For this reason, it expresses its own rules, other than those of morality: *inter arma silent leges*. The idealists, represented by Woodrow Wilson, hold a different view, according to which, on the contrary, war is only just if it is waged to eradicate war.

Walzer points out how this perspective risks the justification of war, transforming it into a crusade. Todorov defines as “political messianism” the attitude of those who claim to act in the name of the ‘greater good’, thus justifying their actions and thereby masking interests as values.

In any case, continues Walzer, who defines himself as realistic and

not a realist, the contrast between aims and values is misleading because war is always discussed in evaluative and ethical terms and it is therefore legitimate to distinguish between just wars, that is justifiable, and unjust wars, that is not justifiable.

The fact remains that Bush’s foreign policy for the Middle East, of which Rice is the spokesperson, is presented as the end of the opposition between realism and idealism:

“No serious realist should claim that power is its own justification. No idealist should imply that power is irrelevant to the spread of ideals. The real issue is to establish a sense of proportion between these two essential elements of policy.”

Obama says:

“And within America, there has long been a tension between those who describe themselves as realists or idealists – a tension that suggests a stark choice between the narrow pursuit of interests or an endless campaign to impose our values around the world. I reject those choices.”

Rice says:

“There is an old argument between the so-called “realistic” school of foreign affairs and the “idealistic” school. To oversimplify, realists downplay the importance of values and the internal structures of states, emphasizing instead the balance of power as the key to stability and peace. Idealists emphasize the primacy of values, such as

freedom and democracy and human rights in ensuring that just political order is obtained. As a professor, I recognize that this debate has won tenure for and sustained the careers of many generations of scholars. As a policymaker, I can tell you that these categories obscure reality. In real life, power and values are married completely.”

Implicitly, but of the same position, are Berlusconi and Blair.

The former says:

“...this is the time in which interests and values must be closely and rigorously combined.”

The latter, speaking of the legitimacy of militarily intervening for humanitarian reasons:

“This not only served the purpose of repairing injustices, but it was necessary because, in an increasingly interdependent world, our interests were closely related to those of others, and it is a really rare event that a conflict which breaks out in one area of the world does not extend immediately to another.”

All of these speeches present an argumentative tension between the themes of peace and those of war and propose strategies to combat terrorism, combining these tensions in different ways.

Possible models of ambivalent communication

An ambivalent message in itself does not exist. What exists, rather, is a person who, for example,

experiences ambivalent feelings and expresses this ambivalence in their speech. Alternatively, a subject who in their communication describes an ambivalent context: in this case a tension between the need to combat terrorism (to make war) and at the same time build peace.

In this sense, the speeches of Obama and Rice are two examples which are very different from each other. Very briefly:

Obama: terrorism is a war against us. In order to achieve peace we must make both peace and war. It is not enough to fight the terrorists; we must also combat the conditions that foster terrorism: poverty, ignorance, disease, and so on.

Rice: Islamic terrorism has changed the way we understand war: they attack, we go on armed peacekeeping missions; they make war, we, fighting terrorism, make both war and peace.

The substantial difference between the two speeches is that in the first case the speaker provides arguments in support of his thesis, and that is the close link between war and peace (or, according to the interpretation proposed, their ambivalent relationship); in the second case a sort of act of faith is required (you have to believe it because we say so), ambiguously solving the contradiction between war and peace.

Ambivalence and ambiguity mark out opposite semantic territories: the first reveals, the second conceals.

‘Good’ ambivalent communication

An example of good ambivalent communication is that of those who take on board the contradictions of their discourse and lead them to the ambivalence of the situation to which it refers. A situation that, as such, must be addressed by implementing appropriate strategies without leaving the ambivalence, i.e. without making a choice that will eliminate one or the other of the terms of the contrast.

It is the speech of those who give account of the contradiction: those who state clearly and affirm in a well-argued way the veracity of the claims and in an equally well-argued manner illustrate the action strategies that take the contradiction into account.

Specifically, the war/peace question: terrorism is a war against democracy. To achieve peace, we must at the same time make war (flush out terrorist nests wherever they are found, capture the leaders, kill them...) and peace (diplomatic and intelligence actions, negotiations, economic investment in poor countries...). Because if it is true that war alone does not defeat terrorism, but rather fosters it, it is equally true that peaceful actions alone cannot fight it.

Those who support this thesis believe that the choice between war and peace is impossible and that it is necessary to put in place a strategy that takes ambivalence into account and that is effective with respect to the given objectives. In other words, it is the speech of those who say "I choose not to choose" and act accordingly.

It is the communication of those who are aware of the ambivalence, tolerate it because they understand it and argue its reasons. In this perspective it takes into account the complexity of the situation, promises action strategies to resolve problems and to achieve objectives (the types of such strategies have been previously described).

Obama's speech is an example of good ambivalent communication for many reasons: it is able to explain and accommodate divergent views, because the sequence of argument respects the 'rules' of ambivalence. Not even its defects (some errors of omission, for example) weaken it significantly²⁴. His whole speech is intended to demonstrate that to achieve the proposed objective – to defeat terrorism – it is absolutely necessary to put in place at the same time acts of war and acts of peace: choosing just one of the two strategies, and excluding the other, would result in failure to achieve the objective.

The interesting thing about Obama's speech is that it does not support the arguments that generally make up the rhetoric of just war (defensive war, war that obeys the rules, war that exports democracy) because for him, it is much more important to show how a war is justifiable only if interdependent with peace.

From this point of view (that is, from the point of view of ambivalent argumentation), it can be considered a good model against which to analyse the other speeches.

Obama's speech

Immediately after he gives thanks, Obama explicitly denounces the contradiction that he finds himself in to be accepting the Nobel Peace Prize (*"the most profound issue surrounding my receipt of this prize is the fact that I am the Commander-in-Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars"*) and makes his own the reasons and objections of those who believe that prize to be undeserved or at least premature: *"Still, we are at war, and I'm responsible for the deployment of thousands of young Americans to battle in a distant land. Some will kill, and some will be killed."*

Not only does he share these reasons, but he argues them and the doubts raised against him become his own doubts: *"And so I come here with an acute sense of the costs of armed conflict – filled with difficult questions about the relationship between war and peace, and our effort to replace one with the other."*

From here on begins a reasoning that leads step by step to the ambivalence of the relationship between war and peace.

"War, in one form or another, appeared with the first man. At the dawn of history, its morality was not questioned; it was simply a fact, like drought or disease (...) and over time, as codes of law sought to control violence within groups, so did philosophers and clerics and statesmen seek to regulate the destructive power of war. The

concept of a "just war" emerged, suggesting that war is justified only when certain conditions were met: if it is waged as a last resort or in self-defence; if the force used is proportional; and if, whenever possible, civilians are spared from violence."

Here, Obama introduces the concept of 'just war', a key concept throughout his argumentation which represents the first pole in the ambivalent configuration that he is about to construct. First and foremost a strong admission of the truth:

"...for most of history, this concept of "just war" was rarely observed. (...) And while it's hard to conceive of a cause more just than the defeat of the Third Reich and the Axis powers, World War II was a conflict in which the total number of civilians who died exceeded the number of soldiers who perished."

This experience, and this knowledge changed us all, "victor and vanquished alike", and we realised that new rules were in play... *"America led the world in constructing an architecture to keep the peace: a Marshall Plan and a United Nations, mechanisms to govern the waging of war, treaties to protect human rights, prevent genocide, restrict the most dangerous weapons. In many ways, these efforts succeeded. Yes, terrible wars have been fought, and atrocities committed. But there has been no Third World War."*

But today *"this old architecture is buckling under the weight of new threats. The world may no longer*

shudder at the prospect of war between two nuclear superpowers, but proliferation may increase the risk of catastrophe. Terrorism has long been a tactic, but modern technology allows a few small men with outsized rage to murder innocents on a horrific scale. Moreover, wars between nations have increasingly given way to wars within nations. The resurgence of ethnic or sectarian conflicts; the growth of secessionist movements, insurgencies, and failed states – all these things have increasingly trapped civilians in unending chaos.”

In these new conflicts, all the rules of just and justifiable war are violated: *“In today’s wars, many more civilians are killed than soldiers; the seeds of future conflict are sown, economies are wrecked, civil societies torn asunder, refugees amassed, children scarred.”*

Obama admits the complexity of the war/peace relation: *“I do not bring with me today a definitive solution to the problems of war. What I do know is that meeting these challenges will require the same vision, hard work, and persistence of those men and women who acted so boldly decades ago. And it will require us to think in new ways about the notions of just war and the imperatives of a just peace.”*

This is the crux of Obama’s speech. It begins an argument that redefines in the light of the present what war is and what peace is and argues the ambivalence of this relationship. The first rule of ambi-

valent communication – a thesis is supported: war can be just or justifiable.

“There will be times when nations – acting individually or in concert -- will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified.”

The opposite thesis is supported: war is never just or justifiable.

“I make this statement mindful of what Martin Luther King Jr. said in this same ceremony years ago: “Violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones.”

The second rule of ambivalent communication – starting from this contradiction the veracity of both statements is argued: *“I know there’s nothing weak – nothing passive – nothing naïve – in the creed and lives of Gandhi and King.”*

But being aware of the value and the power of peace does not mean ignoring the necessity of war: *“But as a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by their examples alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people. For make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler’s armies. Negotiations cannot convince al Qaeda’s leaders to lay down their arms. I raise this point; I begin with this point because in many countries there is a deep ambivalence about military action today, no matter what the cause.”*

At this point Obama introduces the arguments that support the third condition in ambivalent communication and that is the interdependence between the two opposite terms.

"...at times, this is joined by a reflexive suspicion of America, the world's sole military superpower" but this accusation is to be rejected because war and peace are terms in an ambivalent configuration of which America is the protagonist, undertaking acts of war and acts of peace:

"Whatever mistakes we have made, the plain fact is this: The United States of America has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades with the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms. The service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform has promoted peace and prosperity from Germany to Korea, and enabled democracy to take hold in places like the Balkans."

This strategy (this "sacrifice") implicitly supports Obama. It was inevitable because breaking the ambivalence of the situation and opting for one or other of the terms of the contradiction (either war or peace) would have had deleterious effects: there would be no democracy in Korea, Germany or in the Balkans. They did it in order to follow their ideals and their interests: *"We have borne this burden not because we seek to impose our will. We have done so out of enlightened self-interest – because we seek*

a better future for our children and grandchildren."

Therefore ambivalence is the only possible strategy:

"So yes, the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace. And yet this truth must coexist with another – that no matter how justified, war promises human tragedy."

Admitting the necessity of war in order to create peace doesn't mean attributing positive values to it, *"But war itself is never glorious, and we must never trumpet it as such"*, because it should only be considered in its interdependence with peace (implicitly it is said that a war that could not be considered within such an interdependence can neither be just nor justifiable).

We must be aware of the ambivalence inherent in reality and in human nature itself and implement strategies that take it into account: it is a challenge and an act of courage: *"So part of our challenge is reconciling these two seemingly irreconcilable truths – that war is sometimes necessary, and war at some level is an expression of human folly."*

To obtain lasting peace "we must direct our effort to the task that President Kennedy called for long ago. „*Let us focus,*" he said, *„on a more practical, more attainable peace, based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions."*

With this statement the fifth and penultimate step of ambivalent communication is introduced: defining the goal he wants to achieve in the context in which he is consciously operating: *“What might this evolution look like? What might these practical steps be?”*

So we pass to the sixth stage of ambivalent communication and that is the proposal of appropriate strategies that take account of ambivalence and that are ‘rational’ in view of the objectives: the creation of institutions that can guarantee peace going against human nature.

The first step in this direction is to establish the rules of just war (one of the two poles of ambivalence).

The first rule: *“I believe that all nations – strong and weak alike -- must adhere to standards that govern the use of force (...) I am convinced that adhering to standards, international standards, strengthens those who do, and isolates and weakens those who don’t.”*

The second rule: *“But in a world in which threats are more diffuse, and missions more complex, America cannot act alone.”*

The third rule: war is admitted for self-defence and it is the only condition that can justify a unilateral act. *“I – like any head of state -- reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend my nation. (...)The world rallied around America after the 9/11 attacks, and continues to support our efforts in Afghanistan, because of the horror of those senseless attacks and the*

recognized principle of self-defence.”

The fourth rule: when there is an unjustified aggression from one country to another it is necessary to intervene because that intervention contributes to reinforcing the first rule (and that is that everyone must respect the rules).

“Likewise, the world recognized the need to confront Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait -- a consensus that sent a clear message to all about the cost of aggression.”

The fifth and sixth rules: on an international level it is possible to militarily intervene in the internal affairs of a country to avoid the massacre of civilians and wherever there are humanitarian crises.

“More and more, we all confront difficult questions about how to prevent the slaughter of civilians by their own government, or to stop a civil war whose violence and suffering can engulf an entire region. I believe that force can be justified on humanitarian grounds, as it was in the Balkans, or in other places that have been scarred by war.”

A rational strategy is necessary if peace is to be achieved. If we work exclusively with instruments of peace, we do not reach our objective: we must implement a strategy of ambivalent action that allows the use of war under the above conditions.

“Inaction (that is, neither war nor peace) tears at our conscience and

can lead to more costly intervention later. That's why all responsible nations must embrace the role that militaries with a clear mandate can play to keep the peace."

"But in many countries, there is a disconnect between the efforts of those who serve and the ambivalence of the broader public. I understand why war is not popular, but I also know this: The belief that peace is desirable is rarely enough to achieve it. Peace requires responsibility. Peace entails sacrifice."

Peace, therefore, is the other pole of ambivalence, because while the rules for war are being established, it is also necessary to establish the rules for peace, rules, like the previous ones, to which everyone must adhere: *"for if we want a lasting peace, then the words of the international community must mean something. Those regimes that break the rules must be held accountable."* In other words, those who break the rules must be punished (implicitly implied, like war). This is a statement that highlights the war/ peace interdependence and their ambivalent relation.

But what are the actions for peace?

First of all, the prevention of the production of atomic weapons; *"Those who seek peace cannot stand idly by as nations arm themselves for nuclear war."*

The second action for peace: the respect of human rights must become a rule for everyone and everyone must work towards achieving this

goal because *"peace is not merely the absence of visible conflict. Only a just peace based on the inherent rights and dignity of every individual can truly be lasting."*

But to promote human rights in places where they are not respected, international reproach and war is not enough: beyond war there is diplomacy even if *"engagement with repressive regimes lacks the satisfying purity of indignation. But I also know that sanctions without outreach – condemnation without discussion – can carry forward only a crippling status quo."* Coming to terms with the enemy does not exclude war but it can be an effective weapon to support internal dissidents and avoid war. Here Obama outlines alternation, one of the strategies suggested by ambivalence: when the pendulum is swinging too close to the side of war, one must put into action strategies of the opposing type. Balancing war and peace is an effective ambivalent strategy but it must be patiently planned and it requires long periods of time: *"There's no simple formula here. But we must try as best we can to balance isolation and engagement, pressure and incentives..."*

The third action for peace: everyone should contribute to the economic security of all countries because if this objective is not reached then there can be no lasting peace (in other words, there is no leaving the ambivalent configuration).

"...a just peace includes not only civil and political rights -- it must

encompass economic security and opportunity. For true peace is not just freedom from fear, but freedom from want."

But this is not enough because there can never be a lasting peace that does not implicate war in its defence *"without something more -- and that's the continued expansion of our moral imagination; an insistence that there's something irreducible that we all share."*

At this point Obama touches on (but does not recognize) an ambivalent configuration, given by the contradiction of universalism / particularism, and equality / recognition of difference. And precisely because he does not understand that this contradiction introduces an ambivalent configuration, he dismisses particularism as the exclusive source of many conflicts. If Obama had continued consistently in his ambivalent argument, he would have had to connect the exasperation of particularism (of which religious fundamentalism is the most extreme expression) to the absence of the opposite pole of the ambivalence: respect for the rights of all, which is universalism. Fundamentalism breeds where there is a lack of civil rights, where there is deprivation, poverty, etc., in other words what Obama has maintained up until now.

He forfeits a strong argumentative resource and falls back to a quite obvious and trivial theory that does not weaken the speech, but neither does it strengthen it.

"...we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Adhering to this law of love has always been the core struggle of human nature. For we are fallible. We make mistakes, and fall victim to the temptations of pride, and power, and sometimes evil."

Another ambivalent configuration? If one looked hard enough, one would find the entire last volume of Freud in there as well as the (ambivalent) relationship between Eros and Thanatos. But, obviously, this call for Obama is just a rhetorical stopgap. A good rhetorical stopgap that singles out emotionally strong values.

It appeals to values which, from now until the end of the speech, in an oratory crescendo, reproduce the ambivalent peace/war configuration that has been set from the beginning and throughout his speech.

"The non-violence practiced by men like Gandhi and King may not have been practical or possible in every circumstance, but the love that they preached – their fundamental faith in human progress – that must always be the North Star that guides us on our journey."

For if we lose that faith – if we dismiss it as silly or naïve; if we divorce it from the decisions that we make on issues of war and peace – then we lose what's best about humanity. We lose our sense of possibility. We lose our moral compass."

Note

- ¹ This essay is part of a broader consideration on political or public communication aiming at a close analysis of the reasoning quality, of stereotypes, of ideological subtle deceptions. The results of this work have been published in two volumes: Franco Rositi (ed.), "La ragione politica. I discorsi dei leader politici", Liguori, Napoli, 2013; Vando Borghi, Ota De Leonardis, Giovanna Procacci (eds), "La ragione politica. I discorsi delle politiche", Liguori, Napoli, 2013.
- ² Silvio Berlusconi, September 25, 2002, Chamber of Deputies, Parliamentary debate on the international situation and the crisis in Iraq; Tony Blair, March 5, 2004, Sedgefield; George W. Bush, March 18, 2003, Speech to the nation, 48-hour ultimatum to Iraq; David Cameron, February 5, 2011, Munich Security Conference; Angela Merkel, February 7, 2009, Munich Security Conference; Romano Prodi, September 20, 2006, 61st United Nations General Assembly, New York; Condoleezza Rice, October 1, 2002, Manhattan Institute, "Wriston Lecture", on the national security policy; Barack Obama, December 10, 2009, Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony; Nicolas Sarkozy, November 7, 2007 USA Congress Washington; José Luis R. Zapatero, December 13, 2004, Parliamentary Investigative Committee on the attacks of March 11, 2004 (Atocha). The speeches have been selected from September 11, 2001 to the end of 2011 in solemn public occasions when the speaker explained his opinions with a careful reasoning; I have excluded Islamic leaders' speeches because the analysis is focused on the western defence of war; finally, among western leaders I have decided to keep a balance between the right and left wing.
- ³ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars, A moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, New York, 1978, p. 64.
- ⁴ Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, The American Jewish Committee, New York, 1950.
- ⁵ Else Frenken-Brunswik, "Intolerance of ambiguity as on emotional and perceptual personality variable", *Journal of Personality*, view issue TOC, Vol.18, Issue 1, sept. 1949.
- ⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception*, Gallimard, Paris, 1945.
- ⁷ Simona Argentieri, *L'ambiguità*, Einaudi, Torino, 2008.
- ⁸ Donald N. Levine, *The Flight of Ambiguity*, The University of Chicago Press Ltd., London, 1985.
- ⁹ This has resulted in errors of three types: inconsistent applications of seemingly precise categories in empirical studies; inadvertent use of the same concept with different meanings in different contexts; and inability to adequately define the different meanings of the word, even when the ambiguity becomes clear. To successfully use ambiguity, Levine proposes two strategies: reasoning by analogy, through that which the different meanings of the term have in common, thus building to a higher level of abstraction a paradigm that includes them all. Or,

- on the contrary, reasoning for differences and understanding the reasons through the genesis.
- ¹⁰ This, according to Levine, allows us to profitably use the ambiguity of concepts and experiences to reflect on such areas and thus restore some order and coherence.
- ¹¹ William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, New Directions Publishing, New York, 1966 (first published 1930), p. 34.
- ¹² Jon Elster, *Logic and Society*, Wiley, New York, 1978.
- ¹³ Fiammetta Corradi, "Note sul concetto di coerenza", *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, a. XLVIII, n.2, 2007.
- ¹⁴ Although the concept of ambivalence alienates itself from sociology, it is rather well known to psychoanalysis: the first to broach the subject was Bleuler (Eugen Bleuler, "Vortrag über Ambivalenz", in *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse*, vol. I., 1910), who distinguished: *voluntary* ambivalence, indicating a person who manifests opposing behaviour; *intellectual* ambivalence, when a proposition and its antithesis are simultaneously expressed; and *affective* ambivalence, when the same object is signalled by two feelings of equal intensity but of opposite character. A concept incorporated by Freud who, in defining the stages of psychic and sexual development of the individual, uses the concept of emotional ambivalence to measure the progressive change of the relationship between self and other.
- ¹⁵ Anna Rita Calabrò, *L'ambivalenza come risorsa*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1997.
- ¹⁶ Anna Rita Calabrò, "Uguaglianza e differenza: il caso dell'inserimento in una scuola elementare di bambini zingari e stranieri", *La società multietnica*, n.2, Agosto, 1996; Anna Rita Calabrò, *Una giornata qualsiasi*, Ripostes, Salerno, 1996; Anna Rita Calabrò, "Prigionieri dell'ambivalenza", *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, a. XXXVIII n. 2, 2002.
- ¹⁷ In these cases, choosing means compromising a balance, creating a malfunction in the system, or making a costly sacrifice. It is for this reason that in a school where everyone is convinced that universalistic principles should be applied, we realize that this road leads to the discrimination of immigrant children and, conversely, to treat them differently from the others, taking account of their disadvantage, has the effect of a serious act of injustice to everyone (Anna Rita Calabrò, "Uguaglianza e differenza: il caso dell'inserimento in una scuola elementare di bambini zingari e stranieri", *La società multietnica*, n.2, Agosto, 1996). Educating and punishing are two proposals the prison context renders opposite, but when prison officers believe that their role is only to supervise, and delegate the educational role to educators and trainers, and when they, in turn, distance themselves from the punitive reality of the prison, the organization goes into crisis and agents, educators and teachers lose authority with respect to the youths (Anna Rita Calabrò, "Prigionieri dell'ambivalenza", *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, a. XXXVIII n. 2, 2002). For a young woman who is planning her own life and must decide how much to invest in professional success and how much in family (taking into account

that society's expectations of her require her to be present and competitive in the labour market as well as to take on the responsibility of care) the choice often bears the sign of a sacrifice that in many cases calls into question her self-image (Anna Rita Calabrò, *Una giornata qualsiasi*, Ripostes, Salerno, 1996).

¹⁸ "In logic, opposition may exist between two terms, or between two statements. Two terms are said to be opposed to each other either when they are contradictory, or contrary to, or correlative, or when one is the deprivation of the other (like good and bad). Two propositions are in a relationship of opposition when, having the same subject and predicate, they somehow exclude each other, in that they differ either in quality or quantity, or in both quality and quantity. Opposition gives rise to antithesis". From the point of view of logic "contradiction represents, therefore, the most radical form of opposition: two contradictory statements can neither be both true, nor both false: excluding each other necessarily makes one true and one false." (Mario Ghio, Dario Sacchi, "Opposizione", *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, Bompiani, Milano, 2006, p. 8163) In this case, therefore, it is more correct to speak of oppositions than of contradictions because ambivalence is created when two statements, despite their opposition, are both considered necessary.

¹⁹ 'Necessity' in the Aristotelian sense, in that it cannot be otherwise.

²⁰ Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958.

²¹ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars, A moral Argument with*

Historical Illustrations, Basic Books, Inc. Publishers, New York, 1978; Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2004.

²² Tzvetan Todorov, *Les ennemis intimes de la démocratie*, Editions, Robert Laffont S.A., Paris, 2012.

²³ Henry Kissinger, "Realists vs. Idealists", *The New York Times*, Thursday, May 12, 2005, p. 56.

²⁴ My analysis neglects the quality of the speech in the broad sense, so much so that it fails to capture errors and omissions in Obama's speech. Two examples: When Obama lays claim to the hegemonic role that America had for the maintenance of peace in the world after the Second World War, he admits the fact that there were conflicts, however, where the rules of just war (for example, not striking the civilian population) were not respected. However, he remains ambiguous and does not specify who has violated such rules. But when he mentions the Korean War as an example of a just or justifiable war for the maintenance of peace - a war that has thus complied with the rules - it is clear that America is not named an accomplice and that in his speech there is at least one error of omission: how many civilian victims were there in Korea and Vietnam? Even later, when he says "America has never fought a war against a democracy" he neglects to mention the support that over time the United States has given to more than a few right-wing dictatorships, as well as to local corrupt elites. So much so, that Todorov (Tzvetan Todorov, *Op. cit.*, pp. 76-78) accuses Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech of "political messianism".

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RECENZII

Evaluări ale opiniei publice românești asupra fascismului italian (1922-1943)

(The Romanian Public Opinion's Evaluation of Italian Fascism (1922-1943))



Carmen Escu Müller, *Evaluări ale opiniei publice românești asupra fascismului italian (1922-1943)*, Editura Argonaut, Cluj Napoca, 2016, p. 414.

În urmă cu câteva luni, Editura Argonaut din Cluj-Napoca a publicat volumul intitulat *Evaluări ale opiniei publice românești asupra fascismului italian (1922-1943)*,

semnat de către istoricul Carmen Escu Müller.

Lucrarea de față este un eveniment cultural important în spațiul istoriografiei românești deoarece are cel puțin două valențe importante: prima dintre acestea scoate în evidență capacitatea de documentare și analiză a autoarei, iar a doua privește noutatea subiectului.

Ca apreciere generală considerăm că volumul este rezultatul unei cercetări fundamentale orientate. În cadrul acestei lucrări, Carmen Müller și-a propus să prezinte și să analizeze punctele de vedere ale mai multor vectori de opinie, poziționați la dreapta sau la stânga ideologică din România.

Acest rezultat s-a concretizat ca urmare a parcurgerii unei serii impresionante de articole publicate în presa anilor 1922-1930 și iulie 1943, dar și prin studierea percepției unor personalități importante ale gândirii politice românești ca Mihail

Manoilescu, Ioan Petrovici, P. P. Negulescu și Nicolae Iorga.

În opinia noastră, prezentarea și analiza unui spectru larg de idei din perioada interbelică, ce a avut ca subiect fascismul italian, prin studiarea publicisticii timpului, se înscrie în demersul autoarei de a se ajunge la o bază largă de cunoaștere. Subiectul în sine este important deoarece acoperă un gol în istoriografia autohtonă pe această temă. Perioada interbelică reprezintă, pentru generația ce s-a născut după căderea comunismului, un moment istoric foarte puțin cunoscut, de aceea o activitate de cercetare menită să scoată la iveală particularitățile acesteia, prin intermediul unor izvoare primare și relevante, este laudabilă. Mai mult, cititorul interesat poate să observe o paletă vastă de opinii susținute în presa vremii despre fascism și reprezentantul său cel mai important, Benito Mussolini.

Cercetarea subiectelor este realizată din punctul de vedere al metodologiei istorice de tip descriptiv și analitic, autoarea preferând să nu ofere opinii definitive, lăsând în acest mod cititorului posibilitatea să își construiască o imagine proprie.

O caracteristică a prezentării subiectelor, care răzbate pe parcursul întregii lucrări, este aceea că indiferent de culoarea politică sau ideologică a celor care au publicat, interesul pentru Italia și fenomenul fascist a fost mult mai important decât pentru un alt fenomen totalitar, cu care dealtfel ne învecinăm, respectiv comunist. Acest interes

poate fi „citat” în mai multe chei interpretative: putem vorbi de o legătură firească, de lungă durată, cu Italia, din punct de vedere istoric, sau, interesul pentru spațiul politic italian a fost mai mare deoarece în perioada interbelică diferite personalități culturale și politice sau grupuri au rezonat cu ideile promovate de fascism. Lecturile aceluiași fenomene realizate de oamenii timpului ne demonstrează sfera de interpretări și evaluările diferite care reflectau interesele de grup ale momentului.

Din punctul de vedere al structurii, volumul este alcătuit din zece capitole, dar partea tematică ce privește analiza în sine acoperă capitolele III-VII. Primele două capitole au un caracter introductiv, în timp ce capitolul VIII a fost rezervat concluziilor, iar ultimele două capitolele găzduiesc bibliografia și indicele general.

În primul capitol (pp.13-28) se regăsesc elementele introductive. Pe parcursul acestuia sunt prezentate pe scurt: conceptele folosite, (ideologia, stânga, dreapta, fascismul), structura lucrării, sursele și explicarea folosirii anumitor surse bibliografice.

Al doilea capitol (pp. 31-54) intitulat „Fascismul italian marșul către putere-evaluări românești” abordează două teme interesante: „Instaurarea fascismului în literatura politică” și „Instaurarea fascismului reflectată în presa vremii”.

Capitolul numărul trei (pp. 55-80) analizează relațiile internaționale dintre România și Italia prin prisma Tratatului de amicitie și colaborare

cordială româno-italian, semnat de ambele părți în anul 1926. Pe parcursul acestui capitol autoarea a realizat o incursiune interesantă în presa vremii : Îndreptarea, Viitorul, Adevărul, Dimineața, Universul, Cuvântul, Patria și Aurora. Aici trebuie să fac următoarea observație. Apreciez elementul de onestitate intelectuală a autoarei, care a realizat o analiză transversală a informației, ce s-a regăsit în epocă atât în presa de partid, cât și în cea cu amprentă ideologică: Îndreptarea (Partidul Poporului), Viitorul (Partidul Național Liberal), Patria (Partidul Național Român), Aurora (Partidul Țărănesc), Adevărul, Dimineața (stânga), Universul (centru-dreapta), Cuvântul și Curentul (dreapta). Preluarea informației din mai multe surse a permis autoarei să realizeze o imagine clară asupra principalelor abordări pe care presa vremii le-a avut în privința încheierii respectivului tratat.

Al patrulea capitol (pp. 81-165), intitulat: „Perspectiva opiniei publice democratice de stânga asupra fenomenului fascist italian 1922-1927” aduce o imagine, aș putea spune exhaustivă, asupra ideilor, conceptelor, abordărilor și intereselor pe care stânga ideologică românească le-a exprimat prin intermediul ziarelor Adevărul și Dimineața.

Capitolul numărul cinci (pp. 166-318), intitulat: „Percepția opiniei publice de dreapta asupra fascismului italian – anii 1924 – 1930” folosește aceeași tehnică a prezentării subiectului prin studierea articolelor prezentate în ziarele Cuvântul și Curentul.

Se observă aici că, pentru cele două capitole, autoarea folosește tehnica analizei în oglindă prin faptul că a ales două ziare de stânga Adevărul și Dimineața și două ziare de dreapta Cuvântul și Curentul. În plus, Carmen Escu Müller, pentru a îmbogăți nivelul de informații ce au provenit din rândul reprezentanților dreptei ideologice românești, a prezentat concepțiile teoretice ale unor teoreticieni, militanți politici și publiciști precum Vasile Marin, David Popescu, Vasile Marghescu, Mihail Manoilescu, Ioan Petrovici, P.P. Negulescu și Nicolae Iorga.

Alegerea acestor reprezentanți ai dreptei ideologice este adecvată deoarece autoarea lucrării a putut să prezinte cititorului un spectru foarte larg de idei. Și asta deoarece la nivelul dreptei românești, viziunile nu au avut un caracter unitar, deși au existat elemente comune. Fiecare dintre aceștia reprezintă în istoriografia românească fațetele complexe prin care s-au exprimat mișcările de tip naționalist, etnicist și antisemit. Pentru a exemplifica mă voi opri doar la Vasile Marin, David Popescu și Vasile Marghescu, deoarece lucrările acestora sunt mai puțin cunoscute în istoriografia românească, în timp ce Mihail Manoilescu, Ioan Petrovici, P. P. Negulescu și Nicolae Iorga, fac parte deja din literatura „clasică”.

Vasile Marin a fost tânăr om politic țărănist care a intrat în Mișcarea Legionară începând cu anul 1933. Licențiat în drept, secretar de redacție al ziarului Vremea și

ulterior redactor la Cuvântul, Vasile Marin a fost unul dintre cei mai importanți reprezentanți al naționalismului și antisemitismului tinerei generații ce s-a afirmat în perioada interbelică, legitimându-se de la ideile promovate de M. Eminescu, Aurel Popovici și A.C. Cuza. Cu toate că V. Marin a rămas în memoria colectivă deoarece a participat la războiul civil din Spania ca reprezentant al Mișcării Legionare, se știe mai puțin că în spațiul academic s-a evidențiat prin lucrarea sa de doctorat intitulată „Fascismul. Organizarea constituțională a Statului Corporativ Italian”, ce a fost publicată în anul 1933. Aceasta a fost, la acea dată, cea mai completă lucrare despre fascismul italian.

Generalul David Popescu a fost comandantul diviziei a 11-a a armatei române în perioada 1 ianuarie 1940-31 august 1941. În plan politic a îndeplinit funcțiile de ministru de interne în guvernul Ion Gigurtu pentru perioada 4 iulie 1940-4 septembrie 1940 precum și în perioada 4 septembrie 1940-14 septembrie 1940, în guvernul Ion Antonescu. Acesta a fost un admirator declarat al regimului fascist. Popescu consideră că „Superioritatea fascismului rezidă în valoarea lui etică; alte ideologii sau religii promit «recompense pământești sau cerești», în timp ce fascismul nu promite nimic, doar mobilizează populația la muncă și la sacrificii cu scopul salvării țării (pentru început, salvarea de comunism)” (p. 170).

Vasile Marghescu (avocat, doctor în drept și științe politico-economice) a fost un admirator necondiționat al regimului fascist. În viziunea sa, „statul asigură și garantează ordinea socială și economică, fără a lichida libertatea producției. Primatul fascismului în raport cu alte doctrine (sindicalismul marxist, neomarxismul, sindicalismul sorelian, în special) constă în faptul că a înființat un sistem de organizare care are în vedere în primul rând națiunea, nu clasa socială. În sistemul corporatist, distribuirea bogățiilor se face pe baza unui principiu etic” (p. 171).

Ultimele două capitole tematice, șase (pp. 319-390) și șapte (pp. 391-408) analizează tema intitulată „Războiul italo-etioopian în dezbaterea opiniei publice românești” prin prisma informațiilor regăsite în ziarele Adevărul și Curentul. Informația prezentată este dedicată ultimului război de factură colonială din perioada interbelică (1935-1936) și prăbușirii regimului fascist în iulie 1943. În acest capitol autoarea a pus accentul pe modul în care presa de dreapta și de stânga din România s-a mobilizat pentru susținerea, respectiv condamnarea acestor acte politice.

Volumul se încheie cu o parte rezervată concluziilor (pp. 409-414) la care se adaugă un spațiu rezervat expunerii bibliografiei studiate (pp. 415-421).

Concluziile finale ale autorului acestei scurte recenzii sunt că, din punct de vedere academic lucrarea publicată de doamna Escu Müller se

susține pe o bogată bibliografie, are o structură ce i-a permis demonstrarea ipotezei de cercetare, iar din punct de vedere al acurateții folosirii aparatului critic este ireproșabilă, fiind folosit sistemul de notare al Academiei Române.

Bibliografia folosită de autoare este relevantă și specifică temei cercetate, autoarea reușind să își ducă la bun sfârșit demersul pe care s-a bazat cercetarea datorită struc-

turii și informației oferite. Cartea este utilă prin limbajul folosit profesorilor, studenților dar și publicului larg.

Concluzia finală este că, în urma lecturării cu atenție a volumului observăm depunerea unui efort lăudabil și necesar ce se înscrie în cadrul unei activități de cercetare reale.

Sabin DRĂGULIN

Sfânta Rusie – consecință ultimă a teologiei politice bizantine? Două dimensiuni ale secularizării

(Holy Russia - A Last Consequence of the Byzantine Political Theology? Two Dimensions of Secularization)



Alain Besançon, *Sfânta Rusie* (trad. Vlad Russo), Humanitas, București, 2013, 168 p.

Ediția în limba română a lucrării despre Rusia, semnată de Alain Besançon, apare la doar un an de la publicarea acesteia în limba franceză (2012), într-un moment cu o dublă semnificație: pe de o parte, vizibilitatea tot mai mare a Rusiei pe scena internațională pe care cei mai mulți comentatori o pun pe seama ieșirii din post-comunism și a străduinței de a-și forja o identitate ale cărei contururi sunt încă greu de

stabilit; pe de altă parte, împlinirea a 80 de ani de viață ai autorului, renumit sovietolog francez. O dată ce sunt puse împreună aceste semnificații separate rezultă faptul că cititorul român se află, cu certitudine, în fața unui eveniment editorial: un cercetător ajuns la deplina maturitate intelectuală se exprimă eseistic, adică liber și nu de puține ori polemic, asupra Rusiei, subiect care deja de ce ceva ani suscită interes. Potrivit recenzentului Theodor Baconschi, cartea se prezintă ca „un soi de rezumat hermeneutic, după patru decenii de cercetări personale mult apreciate [...] O carte cu teză, care demonstrează că, indiferent de prejudecățile angajate, lectura occidentală a fenomenului rusesc rămâne polemică sau apologetică: nu avem deocamdată bazele istorice, psihologice și geopolitice de a vorbi din interior...”¹. Dacă lucrarea este relevantă pentru publicul francez din perspectiva iluziilor pe care Franța le-a avut în legătură cu Rusia (analizate în capitoul ultim), aceasta este folositoare cititorilor români din

perspectiva influenței puternice pe care Rusia a avut-o asupra României, mai ales interbelice (nu doar datorită proximității spațiale, ci și asemănării condițiilor de viață). Astfel, publicul de limba română o poate lectura nu doar pentru a înțelege Rusia, ci și pentru a se înțelege pe sine. În 2016, cititorul român se află într-un moment rezumat cum nu se poate mai clar de Robert D. Kaplan: „Iar Rusia reprezintă acum o amenințare nu numai pentru că este Rusia, ci și pentru că imperiul neo-țarist al lui Putin, ca cărui putere stă în rezervele de gaze naturale și petrol, a redus geopolitica la factorul etnic, în care o parte câștigă numai dacă cealaltă parte pierde”². Nu în ultimul rând, cartea poate fi citită și polemic alături de perspectiva lui Aleksandr Soljenițin expusă în lucrarea *Rusia sub avalanșă* (Humanitas, București, 2000, 224 pp).

De fapt, nu Rusia suscită preocuparea lui Alain Besançon, ci *Sfânta Rusie*, lucru indicat încă din titlu. Faptul că autorul alege să spună *Sfânta Rusie* și nu Imperiul Rus sau, mai simplu, Rusia sugerează faptul că această denumire este definitorie pentru statul rus, indiferent de modul în care se percepe pe sine. Sfânta Rusie sugerează fuziunea puternică dintre tema religioasă (caracteristicile specifice ale ortodoxiei) și tema națională (importanța teritoriului), atât de puternică și de semnificativă pentru locuitorii săi încât nicio altă țară, cu excepția Țării Sfinte, „nu și-a atribuit calificativul de sfântă” (p. 53). Alături de titlu,

cuprinsul oferă un al doilea indiciu cu privire la cheia de lectură a eseului. Astfel, cartea este împărțită în șapte capitole, după cum urmează: „I. Minciuna” (pp. 11-19), „II. Ortodoxia” (pp. 21-47), „III. Istoria” (pp. 49-66), „IV. Slavofilismul” (pp. 67-101), „V. Contracurențele” (pp. 103-116), „VI. Două interpretări” (pp. 117-130) și „VII. Iluzii franceze” (pp. 131-165).

Premisa de la care autorul pornește în redactarea eseului se situează în tradiția Custine-Michelet: „minciuna reprezintă trăsătura esențială a Rusiei.” În completare, autorul susține că această minciună despre care au vorbit marchizul de Custine și Jules Michelet este de două tipuri: „minciuna logică” sau „vorbirea mincinoasă” și „minciuna ontologică” sau „natura falsificată prin scamatoria schimbării realității cu pseudorealitatea, care derutează gândirea interlocutorului” (p. 15). Din punct de vedere istoric, prima minciună aparține regimului Nicolae I (începutul secolului XIX), iar a doua regimului comunist (începutul secolului XX). Sub aspectul conținutului, în minciuna țaristă, Rusia spirituală și sinceră se opune Europei materialiste și fățarnică; în minciuna comunistă, utopia a devenit realitate. Recenzentul Theodor Baconski, dincolo de ceea ce le deosebește, „vede în ambele mistificări un apăsător sentiment de inferioritate, dublat printr-o inegalabilă vocație scenografică”.

Ipoteza eseului este aceea că „în fundalul diferitelor tipuri de min-

ciună, religia ortodoxă (sic!) introduce propria sa atmosferă” (p. 23). Cu alte cuvinte, „conștiința rusă” este inseparabilă de „matricea sa religioasă”, chiar dacă istoria i-a adus modificări ulterioare. Din acest motiv, autorul discută ortodoxia (capitolul II) după semnalarea problemei minciunii în primul capitol, dar înainte de istorie (capitolul III). Minciuna constituie premisa eseului, iar discuția despre ortodoxie permite formularea ipotezei eseului. Într-un fel, definiția de lucru a minciunii (absența „coincidenței între gândire sau vorbire și lucruri”, fabricarea „dublului adevăr”) se regăsește tacit în dualitatea contradictorie dintre „ortodoxia rusă” și „viața ortodoxă”. Cu alte cuvinte, scindării dintre gândire/vorbire și lucruri îi corespunde ruptura dintre preceptele creștine și viața practică a creștinului rus, dintre prezența în Biserică a creștinului rus și prezența în lume a acestuia. Bineînțeles, autorul nu insinuează nicio clipă că minciuna ar fi consecință imediată a dualității dintre preceptele creștinismului răsăritean și aplicarea lor în viața de zi cu zi de către creștini. Dacă dualitatea precept religios – viața concretă este intrinsecă creștinismului răsăritean dat fiind accentul pe care îl pune asupra misticiei, în detrimentul moralei (în opoziție cu creștinismul apusean unde virtuțile exclud în totalitate viciile), minciuna, spune autorul, s-a născut abia atunci când s-a produs apropierea dintre străini (europeni) și ruși. Dacă dualitatea din sânul creștinismului rus nu reprezintă o cauză a nașterii minciunii, ea totuși are o relevanță

întrucât modul rusesc de a concepe creștinismul răsăritean a dat naștere unui orgoliu național pe care însă contactul ulterior cu lumea occidentală l-a arătat ca fiind nefondat. Or, spune autorul, pentru a estompa un eșec fie „se minte”, fie „se caută consolări” (p. 13). Aceasta este „minciuna logică” care s-a practicat începând cu domnia Țarului Nicolae I.

Matricea religioasă pe care Alain Besançon o analizează detaliat în capitolul al doilea se manifestă în act, din punct de vedere istoric (III. „Istoria”), și în gândire, din punct de vedere filosofic dacă nu chiar ideologic (IV. „Slavofilismul”). Acest lucru este afirmat tacit de autor abia către sfârșitul lucrării: „Creștinismul răsăritean a dat poporului rus un mod de a acționa, o atitudine în fața vieții ce poate fi urmărită din momentul în care a fost în măsură să se exprime prin scris” (p. 90). La întrebarea dacă slavofilismul este mai mult o ideologie decât o filosofie (viziune revizibilă asupra vieții și istoriei) se poate răspunde în măsura în care actul de naștere al acestuia datează de la începutul secolului al XIX-lea. Cu alte cuvinte, slavofilismul, asemenea oricărei ideologii, apare ulterior evenimentelor istorice care au bulversat conștiința rușilor și a europenilor (francezi, englezi, germani), atunci când contactul dintre cele două lumi s-a produs din ce în ce mai mult (de la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea). Deși nu spune explicit, Besançon lasă de înțeles că schimbul intercultural dintre Europa occidentală și Rusia, cu ambițiile și obsesiile reciproce, a fost atât de puternic

încât a produs o amplă transformare: Sfânta Rusie a devenit Imperiul Rus. Cel care a cauzat „dispariția temei Sfintei Rusii” (al cărei scop este unul mesianic, religios) a fost Petru cel Mare a cărui revoluție a constat în angajarea Rusiei în scopuri seculare (pp. 62-63). Astfel, Petru cel Mare a întors Rusia de la proiectul „restaurării universale a adevăratului creștinism” (p. 65) îndreptându-o către modernizare, către recuperarea unui decalaj imens care o separa de civilizația apuseană; marele Cneaz din Țar a devenit Împărat, iar centrul de greutate s-a mutat de la Moscova la Sankt-Petersburg, fereastra către occident a Rusiei. Așa cum s-a întâmplat și cu trecerea de la un simplu cneaz la țarat, transformarea de la țarat la imperiu nu s-a făcut prin eliminare, ci prin acumulare astfel încât matricea religios-mesianică a continuat să producă efecte și în imperiu: „Împărații de la Sankt-Petersburg [...] păstraseră totuși două lucruri: rețeta puterii nelimitate și un alt mesianism, nereligios, cel al dominației neîngrădite” (p. 65).

Cum poate fi pusă în legătură minciuna cu slavofilismul? Este, desigur, ironic faptul că un rus, disident și slavofil recunoscut, a așezat la baza ideologiei minciuna (Aleksandr Soljenițin). Slavofilismul, așa cum sugerează autorul în capitolele IV, VI („Două interpretări”) și mai ales VII („Iluzii franceze”) reprezintă nu doar o tehnică a mințirii străinilor, ci și o justificare a unei întârzieri atât în ochii proprii, cât și față de alții. Dilema lui Petru I, devenită ulterior

dilema statului, a fost, în formularea lui Kliucevski, următoarea: „Petru voia ca robul, rămând rob, să acționeze liber și curajos” (p. 70). O dată creată nobilimea, problema ei a fost aceasta: „care este valoarea Rusiei în raport cu civilizația europeană? Ce înseamnă să fii rus?” (p. 71). Autorul analizează slavofilismul în literatură (Pușkin, Gogol și Dostoievski) și în doctrinele filosofico-politice (Kireevski). În contrapondere la slavofilism, autorul discută trei curente polemic: liberalii (Ceaadaev), revoluționarii (Belinski, Herzen) și Lenin (marxism-leninismul).

Faptul că Rusia a ieșit din post-comunism reprezintă o certitudine, cel puțin din a doua parte a mandatului lui Vladimir Putin. Care este identitatea Rusiei la acest moment însă nu se poate stabili cu precizie, iar un motiv pentru această neclaritate identitară este chiar modul de raportare al comunismului la trecutul rus, o chestiune discutată în capitolul VI („Două interpretări”). Marxism-leninismul nu reprezintă un simplu contracurent la slavofilism așa cum sugerează capitolul anterior, ci este în același timp altceva. În opoziție cu școala istoriografică care puterea comunistă trebuie înțeleasă prin raportare la trecutul țării (reprezentată de polonezii Joseph Conrad și Richard Pipes, apoi de istoricul maghiar Tibor Szamuely), Alain Benançon se raliază școlii care pune accentul pe ideologie (reprezentantul de seamă fiind Aleksandr Soljenițin, precedat de Boris Souvarine, Arthur Koestler): „în această interpretare ne confruntăm, dincolo de orice cronologie, cu răul

în stare pură, cu neantul, cu duhul răului, cu ființa ucigașă și mincinoasă, cu demonul.” (p. 127). Chiar dacă „pecetea istorică nu dispare”, cronologia nerisipindu-și, astfel, relevanța, ideologia, atemporalitatea răului, rămâne definitorie pentru regimul marxist-leninist. Mai important decât condiția comunismului este efectul acestuia: „fiind neant, comunismul nu poate avea o întrupare concretă”; oricât ar părea de paradoxal, Besançon sugerează că nu a existat societate comunistă, economie comunistă, ci doar o putere (regim) politic (p. 128). Cu alte cuvinte, Rusia postcomunistă nu a putut metaboliza revoluția bolșevică așa cum Franța republicană a asimilat revoluția de la 1789 ceea ce a însemnat, pe de o parte, „trecerea la modernitate fără schimbări de fond”, iar pe de altă parte „aprofundarea și nu dispariția minciunii” (p. 16). Este paradoxal, desigur, întrucât comunismul a produs un om mai mult sau mai puțin apropiat de „omul nou”, această dublă mișcare de continuitate și schimbare fiind deja documentată de mai mulți autori³. Aprofundarea minciunii în postcomunism presupune amalgamul: „vechii dușmani [ai disidenților-eroi din comunism] vorbesc ca ei. Nu reușesc să spună adevărul, fiindcă nu mai știu care este acesta.” (p. 18). Este imposibil să nu fie remarcat destinul asemănător al Rusiei cu cel al României, cu diferențele de rigoare (mai ales cele care țin de relevanță istorică și geopolitică): „Pentru noi, românii, această muzică sună oarecum cunoscut. Există similitudini și diferențe de

scară. Avantajul nostru este acela că – mult mai mici fiind – am reacționat la paternalismul occidental prin atitudini psihodramatice mai puțin convulsive” (Theodor Baconschi).

Din punctul meu de vedere, forța polemică a acestui eseu rezidă în importanța teologiei pentru înțelegerea istoriei, mai precis în contribuția ortodoxiei la identitatea istorică a Rusiei (care astăzi, lasă autorul să se înțeleagă, se manifestă atât ca sfântă, cât și ca imperiu, având o misiune atât providențială, cât și seculară). În afară de contradicțiile rusului care îi uimeau pe străini, așa cum sunt blândețea vs. brutalitatea, generozitatea vs. Lăcomia, îngerul vs. fiara (p. 43), contradicții analizate magistral de Dostoievski în opera sa, ortodoxia a mai avut o contribuție prin faptul că s-a prezentat pe sine drept unică păstrătoare a adevărului creștin, moștenirea Bizanțului asumată oficial de Rusia (a treia Romă) fiind aceea că statul trebuie să fie brațul instituțional al apărării credinței. Astfel, definitiv pentru matricea religioasă a Rusiei (sub aspectul doctrinar al învățaturii creștine și instituțional al Bizanțului) nu este dualitatea pe care trăirea mistică o introduce între preceptul religios și viața morală (practică). În definitiv, excesul dualității specific Rusiei este simetric excesului produs de monismul occidental; contradicțiile rusului (sublimate în figura istorică a lui Ivan cel Groaznic pe care Besançon o discută în detaliu) sunt poate la fel de șocante ca unitatea occidentalului care, pe baza unei

teologii juridico-morale, este capabil să ofere „rețeta” mântuirii.

Al doilea aspect (și mai) polemic al lucrării analizate este sugestia potrivit căreia secularizarea este un fenomen specific și Europei Răsăritene, nu doar occidentale (așa cum, în logica slavofilă, se crede deseori). Desigur, secularizarea se manifestă diferit: dacă în vest aceasta are o puternică componentă raționalistă (vizibilă mai ales sub aspectul criticii istorico-filologice a Bibliei), în est secularizarea se prezintă ca o colonizare puternică a religiei de către politică. Dacă finalitatea secularizării occidentale este ateismul, finalitatea secularizării răsăritene este credința într-un Dumnezeu național, chiar etnic. Astfel, Sfânta Rusie reprezintă exemplul cel mai clar al felului în care învățătura religioasă este confiscată de discursul politic. Iată un exemplu: întrucât Rusia (Moscova) este succesoarea Bizanțului (Constantinopolului), iar creștinismul răsăritean reprezintă dreapta credință

(ceea ce este adevărat până în punctul în care politicul interferează producând mutații teologico-politice așa cum este naționalismul religios sau filelismul), atunci statul rus are obligația providențială de a păstra nealterată credința și de a o răspândi celorlalte popoare ortodoxe.

Indiferent că place sau nu, autodefinirea Sfintei Rusii drept „a treia Romă” (secolul XV) este justă, iar Rusia reprezintă succesoarea de facto (cel puțin) a teologiei politice a Imperiului Bizantin, atât sub aspectul credinței adevărate (indiferent dacă aceasta are un rost utilitar, de menținere laolaltă a unei populații, sau providențial, de răspândire), cât și a nostalgiei imperiale (*pax romana*). Acestea sunt datele esențiale de care europeanul trebuie să țină cont și, pe care grăbit cum e, le primește concentrat în eseu sovietologului Alain Besançon.

Nicolae DRĂGUȘIN

Note

¹ Theodor Baconschi, „Rusia, un imperiu scenografic”, *Revista 22*, 6 august 2013. Disponibil pe internet: <http://www.revista22.ro/rusia-un-imperiu-scenografic-29681.html> (accesat 12 iunie 2016).

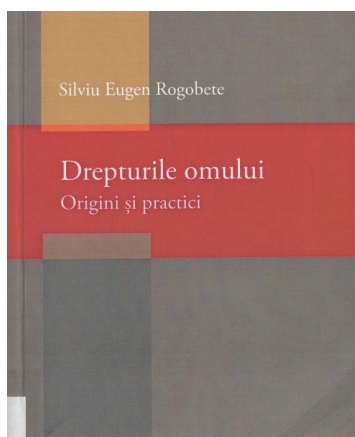
² Robert D. Kaplan, *În umbra Europei. Două războaie reci și trei decenii de călătorie prin România și dincolo de ea*, traducere de

Constantin Ardeleanu și Oana Celia Gheorghiu, București, Humanitas, 2016, p. 309.

³ A se vedea, de pildă, Lucian Boia, *Strania istorie a comunismului românesc (și nefericitele ei consecințe)*, Humanitas, București, 2016, 232 pp.

Drepturile omului. Originile și perspectivele unei ideologii contemporane

(Human rights. The origins and perspectives
of a contemporary ideology)



Silviu Eugen Rogobete, *Drepturile omului. Originii și practici*, Timișoara, Editura de Vest, 2015.

Drepturile omului reprezintă nu numai un subiect inepuizabil, ci și o ideologie în sine, confirmată, fie și parțial, de o practică politică pe măsură. Lucrarea profesorului Silviu Rogobete propune o introducere în această complex problematică, calibrând atent elemente ținând filosofia drepturilor omului cu elemente juridico-normative alcătuind cadrul de funcționare al principalelor instituții internaționale care se ocupă de

respectarea și promovarea drepturilor omului: Organizația Națiunilor Unite (ONU), dar mai ales Consiliul European (CE) și Uniunea Europeană (UE).

Cartea asumă fără echivoc perspectiva teoretică postmodernă și statutează clar caracterul ideologic al drepturilor omului, în sensul discursiv și particular al termenului: ideologia reprezintă viziunea unui anumit grup de oameni, legat de interese și perspective congruente, care își prezintă propria filosofie de viață extrapolată pe coordonate politice drept universală sau cel puțin universalizabilă. Și totuși, în absența acestei aspirații spre universal a fiecărei ideologii/discurs în parte, democrația ar fi imposibilă. A afirmat-o convingător filosoful politic argentinian Ernesto Laclau care, în principala sa lucrare, scrisă împreună cu Chantal Mouffe – *Hegemony and socialist strategy. Towards a radical democratic politics* – a ajuns la concluzia că socialul nu este niciodată transparent în raport cu el însuși, fapt care se

traduce prin imposibilitatea suprimării reprezentării și implicit a politicului.

În același timp, autorul afirmă că paradigma postmodernă este oarecum opusă paradigmei iluministe clasice, numită „progresist-evoluționară” și bazată pe teleologia emancipatoare a subiectului istoric devenit gradual conștient de sine. Din câte am înțeles, autorul consideră că „progresismul evoluționar” este incapabil să se pronunțe în ceea ce privește drepturile omului deoarece nu se poate sustrage istoriei, adică historicismului implicit al iluminismului, care nu poate percepe lucrurile altfel decât în mod evoluționar, ghidate de un scop mai mult sau mai puțin ascuns, dar care le gestionează și le pune în perspectivă permanent. Astfel, numai postmodernismul ar fi capabil de a furniza o viziune științifică obiectivă asupra dezvoltării înțelegerii de sine a umanității, deoarece s-ar apleca asupra ei din afara, nu din interiorul istoriei (p. 23). Se postulează astfel un caracter anistoric pentru metodologia deconstructivistă a postmodernismului, fără a se lua în calcul sursele iluministe ale aceluiași postmodernism și implicit caracterul său istoric, finit, de teorie apărută în cadrul unui anumit context social, economic, politic și intelectual, context pe care nu îl poate niciodată transcende pe coordonate metafizice pentru a se erija în evaluatorul său obiectiv. Postmodernismul nu este o teologie, dar rămâne, prin intermediul drepturilor omului și nu numai,

o ideologie. Ori, tocmai caracterul său ideologic pare a fi negat de plasarea sa pe coordonate anistorice.

Mai departe, autorul propune o incursiune în istoria filosofică a drepturilor omului începând cu Grecia Antică și legea naturală, trecând prin evul mediu și epoca clasică și ajungând la concepțiile moderne, respectiv postmoderne asupra subiectului. Argumentul principal este acela că, gradual, așa cum în cadrul creștinismului s-a operat tranziția de la Revelație înspre individ ca sursă ultimă a dreptului, accentul mutându-se deci de la comunitate la individ – tot așa legea naturală prin care antichitatea imagina o ontologie statică, perfect ordonată și armonioasă, în care individul și comunitatea aveau sens doar ca parte a unui întreg superior și transcendent, a cedat locul, în special prin intermediul filosofiei politice a lui John Locke, dreptului natural, unde depozitarul ultim al legitimității politico-juridice este individul, care a înlocuit definitiv ontologia transcendentă a vechii legi naturale.

Într-adevăr, în centrul drepturilor omului se află omul unic, singular, cu ale sale drepturi incontestabile și irevocabile, normativ vorbind. Dar izolarea abruptă a individului de societatea din care nu absolutizează în vreun fel drepturile omului, ci efectiv le fragilizează. Unde se termină individul și începe societatea? Unde se termină societatea și începe individul? Sunt întrebări la care nu se poate răspunde în mod ultim, dar orice inițiativă în vederea

construirii unui răspuns trebuie să pornească de la necesitatea gândirii și plasării acestor două elemente într-o permanentă și indisociabilă relație. Individul este societate, ne spune Hegel, prin faptul că aspirațiile, cunoștințele, interesele, emoțiile sau credințele sale sunt construite social și provin exclusiv din interacțiunea cu alți oameni. Societatea este la rândul său individ, deoarece nicio societate funcțională, democratică măcar în linii mari, nu este îndrituită să sacrifice libertățile personale în prezumtivul beneficiu al unui interes general superior. Așa cum este indiscutabil necesară protecția individului în fața abuzului exercitat de către puterea statului, la fel de necesară este și protecția unor categorii de oameni neprivilegiați material și/sau intelectual în fața abuzurilor unor entități economice sau a acelorși state, care au tot mai des regretabila tendință de a legifera în beneficiul piețelor și tot mai puțin în interesul cetățeanului pe care pretind că îl reprezintă. Da, prima generație de drepturi, civile și politice, pe care au autorul o privilegiază fără doar și poate, este fundamentală, dar ea nu înseamnă nimic în absența celei de-a doua generații de drepturi (economice, sociale) sau, mai nou, în absența celei de-a treia generații (preponderent ecologice). Dreptul de a nu fi abuzat, sub diferite forme, de către stat, nu poate fi în niciun caz echivalat cu diminuarea sau chiar eliminarea protecției cetățeanului în fața abuzurilor economice, sociale și

ecologice ale unor actori privați care reușesc îngrijorător de des să convingă statele să lucreze în favoarea lor. Mai mult, statele periferice ajung să convingă ele însele investitorii externi, potențiali sau reali, de posibilitățile suplimentare de a reduce drepturile colective ale angajaților. Nu sunt sigur cât de mult mai valorează pentru un angajat cu contract de muncă pe durată determinată, cu un salariu mic și o normă supraîncărcată, drepturile din prima generație...

Partea a doua a cărții tratează regimul internațional al drepturilor omului, pornind de la ONU și de la Declarația Universală a Drepturilor Omului și trecând atent, minuțios și elaborat, prin Convenția Europeană a Drepturilor Omului, emisă de CE, Carta Socială Europeană, Curtea Europeană a Drepturilor Omului (CEDO) și ajungând la Curtea Europeană de Justiție, organism afiliat UE a cărui atribuții se suprapun parțial cu cele ale CEDO în vederea eficientizării procesului de implementare a drepturilor omului în spațiul european. Mecanismele supranaționale ale UE și CE reprezintă principalele garanții în acest sens: constrângând statele să respecte în mod adecvat drepturile propriilor cetățeni care îi pot acționa în instanță și extinzând astfel domeniul drepturilor omului dincolo de limitele statale care îl circumscriau până în a doua jumătate a secolului XX, cele două organizații au creat un nou și deosebit de puternic tip de drept. Mai fragil

astăzi decât în orice perioadă de după încheierea Războiului Rece, regimul supranațional al drepturilor omului trebuie reintegrat în mod convingător în contextul social și economic din care face parte și abia după aceea extins. Altfel, este posibil să ajungem în paradoxala și

nefericita situație de a proteja drepturile omului în Europa nu numai în fața statelor și a diferiților actori economici privați, ci chiar împotriva Uniunii Europene înseși.

Emanuel COPILAȘ

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He is also the creator and editor of the web-site “CriticaMente”: www.costruttivamente.blogspot.com

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Revista *Polis* publică studii redactate în limbile **română și engleză**. **Toate articolele în limba română trebuie însoțite, obligatoriu, și de traducerea integrală în limba engleză**. Articolele trebuie să respecte normele general valabile pentru redactarea lucrărilor științifice, conținând în mod obligatoriu o parte introductivă, capitole / secțiuni distincte și concluzii, având dimensiuni cuprinse între **20.000 – 40.000 de caractere cu spații** (10-20 de pagini standard). Articolele vor fi redactate utilizând paginarea standard a programului Microsoft Word, folosind fontul **Times New Roman, 12 pct**, cu **spații de 1,5**, fără a lăsa spații libere între paragrafe. Prima pagină a lucrării va conține, obligatoriu, următoarele informații: titlu, autor (afiliere instituțională și adresă de corespondență), rezumat de 200-350 de cuvinte și 4-6 cuvinte cheie.

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Rezumat în limba engleză, 200-350 de cuvinte. Rezumatul va prezenta, pe scurt, conținutul lucrării, menționând metologia utilizată în cercetare, principalele premise, argumentele folosite și concluziile articolului. Vă rugăm să verificați corectitudinea gramaticală și lexicală a rezumatelor în limbi străine și să evitați folosirea programelor de traduceri automate. Ne rezervăm dreptul de a refuza rezumatele cu greșeli flagrante de traducere.

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Fiecare articol trebuie să includă, în mod obligatoriu, **o parte introductivă**, o secțiune de **cuprins** împărțită în capitole și subcapitole, în care ideile, ipotezele de

cercetare menționată în partea introductivă să fie demonstrate sau infirmate, și o secțiune de **concluzii**.

Bibliografie

CARPINSCHI, Anton, BOCANCEA, Cristian, *Știința politicului. Tratat*, Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, 1998.

PETREU, Marta, *De la Junimea la Noica. Studii de cultură românească*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2011.

ȘANDRU, Daniel, „Ideological aspects in Petre Andrei’s political sociology”, *Transilvania*, Nr. 11, 2011.

Resurse electronice

STAN, Liliana, „Elemente ale metafizicii idealului la Petre Andrei”, *Transilvania*, Nr. 11, 2011, http://www.revistatransilvania.ro/nou/ro/anul-editorial-2012/cat_view/45-anul-editorial-2011.html, p. 60 (accesat pe 23 februarie 2013)

NOTĂ: Tabelele și figurile vor fi incluse în textul articolului și numerotate în ordinea apariției, după modelul de mai jos. Vă rugăm să nu folosiți tabelele și figurile în mod excesiv.

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Tabelul 1: *Model de tabel*

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Revista *Polis* folosește sistemul de referințe bibliografice recomandat de Academia Română.

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Exemplu:

[...] Este o chestiune pe care politologul român Mattei Dogan o prezintă atât în studiile sale interbelice, cât și în lucrările recente¹. [...]

¹Mattei Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2010, pp. 241-261.

Bibliografia finală a lucrării reunește toate sursele citate în notele de subsol, listate în ordine alfabetică. **Resursele bibliografice consultate de pe Internet vor fi menționate într-o secțiune separată.** Citarea acestor resurse va respecta regulile generale privind citarea surselor electronice, precizând data la care documentul electronic a fost accesat de către autorul articolului.

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The *Polis* Journal of Political Science welcomes **original manuscripts which have not been published elsewhere and are not under review by other scientific journals**.

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Before sending us your work, please use the following guidelines to write your paper. Polis reserves the right to reject the articles which do not comply with these instructions.

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The *Polis* Journal of Political Science publishes articles and studies written in **Romanian and English**.

All articles should comply with the general standards of academic and scientific writing, and they must comprise an introductory part, distinct chapters / sections, and conclusions. The texts should have **20.000 to 40.000 characters with spaces** (10 to 20 standard pages).

Articles should be written using the default page layout in Microsoft Word, with **Times New Roman, 12 pt, 1.5 line spacing**, and no additional spaces before and after paragraphs.

The first page of your article should include the following information: article title, author(s) name(s) (institutional affiliation and e-mail), an abstract of 200-350 words, and 4-6 keywords.

Please use the following template to format your paper.

ARTICLE TITLE
First name(s) SURNAME
Institutional affiliation
E-mail address

Abstract

Abstract in English, 200-350 words. The abstract should summarize the paper's content, mentioning: the research methodology used, the main hypotheses, the main arguments developed and the paper's conclusions. Please check the grammar and lexis of articles written in English if you are not a native speaker of this language and avoid using programs for automatic translation. We reserve the right to reject articles with flagrant translation mistakes.

Keywords: 4-6 keywords in English

All articles must comprise **an introductory part**, a section devoted to **the paper's content**, divided into chapters and subchapters – in which the research hypotheses mentioned in the introduction should be argued for or against -, and a section of **conclusions**.

Bibliography

- BELL, Daniel, *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 2001
- FREEDEN, Michael, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996
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Electronic resources

- STAN, Liliana, „Elemente ale metafizicii idealului la Petre Andrei”, *Transilvania*, No. 11, 2011, http://www.revistatransilvania.ro/nou/ro/anul-editorial-2012/cat_view/45-anul-editorial-2011.html, (accessed on 23 February 2013)

NOTE: Tables and figures should be inserted in the text and numbered in order of appearance, according to the model below. Please do not use tables and figures in excess.

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Table 1: *Table model*

CITATION STYLE

The *Polis* Journal uses the reference style recommended by the Romanian Academy. In this system, the bibliographical resources quoted in the text are cited in footnotes.

Example:

[...] In is a matter that the Romanian political science scholar Mattei Dogan describes both in his interwar studies and in his recent works¹. [...]

¹Mattei Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2010, pp. 241-261.

The paper's final **bibliography** assembles all the sources cited in footnotes, listed in alphabetical order. **The bibliographical resources consulted on the Internet are to be listed in a separate section.** These resources should be cited in agreement with the general rules relative to the citation of electronic bibliography by mentioning the day on which the electronic document was accessed by the author.

Footnote format

In order to insert footnotes into your article, please use the „Footnote” option available in Word, using **Times New Roman, 10 pt, 1 line spacing**. The first time an author / a work is cited, the footnote must provide full bibliographical details, including the page-pages (use the abbreviation „p.” for one page and „pp.” for multiple pages). The footnotes for subsequent references to the same author / work should use Latin shortened forms (*ibid.*, *op. cit.*, etc.)

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