

MARX: ON POLITICS AND ITS REDUCTION

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Politics, for Marx, is one of those things one must do in order to be free from doing it. The State, in this perspective, is just the arm of the ruling class, and the only political action which is considered legitimate is the one that leads, ultimately, to the elimination of politics and the State. Two interconnected criticisms are addressed to this thesis. The first is that Marx "reduces" the concept of State to a simple reflection of economics. The second is that political action has a specificity which is not only different from other types of activity but is indeed what is more characteristically human in man's activity. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate these criticisms at the light of a given interpretation of Marx - Marx young and philosopher. The discussion will have, hopefully, some implications regarding the epistemological status of Marx's analysis of the State and Politics and will end with a brief analysis of the relations between Marxist philosophy and existentialism.

1. Marx reduccionist - an epistemological problem

We can start with the concept of "reduction". What does it mean to say that Marx "reduces" the State to a "reflection" of economic factors?

From the point of view of an empirical approach, a reductionist statement can only mean that, if A is a "mere reflection" of B, then all the variance of A can be predicted by the variance of B. This definition is a necessary tour de force, since the expression "reductionism" does not enjoy

currency in the field of empirical social sciences. In any case, the idea is that, when one says that A can be fully understood by the understanding of B and the relations between A and B, and that there is nothing varying in A independently from this relation with B, then one is, indeed, "reducing" A to B - provide, of course, the statement is not correct.

To say that Marx reduces politics to economy is to say that he does not recognize any autonomy to politics, that he asserts that the State is fully understandable and predictable if one knows enough about economics. Is this so? The answer is negative, not because Marx asserts the opposite, but because this kind of correlational statements is strange to the way Marx analysed society. On the other hand, we should notice that this is not the only issue in Marx and Marxism where the question of reductionism can be raised. For instance, it is a Marxist thesis that human thoughts and ideas are nothing but a "reflect" of reality, that the value of a merchandise reflects the amount of work used for producing it, and that religion, morals and values are epiphenomena, or "superstructures", and so on.

Before leaving the empirical approach, I should say that there is nothing wrong on looking for phenomena that are "behind" others, that are their "antecedents", or "independent variables". This is, actually, the very purpose of research, to find this type of relations. The sin of reductionism consists in postulating this connection by definition, and thus refusing the possibilities of other sources of variance and explanation. We can now proceed to a brief look on two of the best known instances of "reductionism" in Marxism, in an effort to spell out the nature of the analytical task he was up to.

The theory of human conscience as a reflection of reality is best expressed, perhaps, in the Lenin of Materialism and Empirocriticism. Lenin's thesis is simple, if not simple-minded. There is a world which exists "out there", independently

of one's idea about it. This is a material world. The assertion that this world exists is what makes one a materialist. It is from this world that man extracts his ideas and concepts, and it is in the intercourse between man's ideas and the world that lies the definition of "truth". Accordingly, all this talk about men "constructing" reality, the search for subjective criteria of truth, and so on, are, in last analysis, late manifestations of religious beliefs on the autonomy of the spirit, or on the predominance of the spirit over matter - in short, sheer idealism.

It is curious how Lenin, drawing from a given development of Marxism, comes to the conceptions of classical realism which is, as any student of philosophy knows, based on metaphysical ontology. In this kind of Marxism, the philosophical attack on idealism, on behalf of materialism, becomes nothing but a pale reflection (the term seems appropriate here) of the classical debate between idealism and realism, with plenty of ideological overtones and little of philosophical background. Hegel, in this context, appears as the main enemy of Marxism, and it is not surprising, then, that it was so difficult for this kind of Marxism to understand the close ties between Marx and Hegel, let alone the deep debt of Marx regarding Hegel. The interesting question, in this, is to inquire on what happened from Marx to Lenin that drove them so apart. What seems to have happened was a gradual shift on the meanings of words like "explanation", "science", and "dialectics", a shift which corresponded to the passage from a context of German philosophy to another of XIX century (perhaps French?) scientificism. Engels is usually considered the main responsible for this shift, although Lenin, among others, had also his share. (The Lenin of Materialism and Empirocriticism. The Philosophical Journals, however, shows a better understanding of Hegel.

The obvious mistake, or misconception, in Lenin's theory of "reflection" is that with it all the attempts to study the human mind as a specific dominion of reality is

considered illegitimate. It is true that this approach led to Pavlov, but one wonders whether this was worth the inability to read Freud. What remains from Marx in this conception is the idea that the intellectual life cannot be understood in itself, apart from the concrete reality of man as a social and working being. What is deeply strange to Marx, however, is, first, the metaphysical assumption of an "external" world, and, secondly, the causal model of explanation implicit in this kind of analysis. Reality, to Marx, is always and necessarily human reality, even if very often dehumanized by historic alienations. To be human means to emerge in the contact between man and nature, this "nature" being, by definition, the outer limits of the human world; and this interaction is both the humanity of the real and the reality of man. The other anti-marxist concept is less easy to see, perhaps because the problems involved are of a much more contemporary concern. We can say, however, that "to explain", for Marx, means essentially to show the human reality which necessarily lies at the bottom any reality which presents itself at the first sight as autonomous. This is essentially a philosophical enterprise, which only secondarily (as I discuss later) leads to empirical causal explanations. The inability to distinguish these two aspects, or concepts of explanation, is what lies behind the difficulties of the attempts of building a "marxist science", where philosophical analysis is taken as the only empirical approach, and philosophy is, in turn, substituted by ideological criticism.

Let us take the problem of explanation in another context, the one of the theory of value. For Marx, the value of a merchandise is a function of the work which is socially necessary for its production. More correctly, the value of a merchandise is the work which is embeded in it. The analysis of value, presented at the beginning of The Capital, starts with the observation of the strange fact that, although very often completely dissimilar in aspect and use, merchandises can be and are interchanged as if they had something comensurable among them. This common element is found to be

the fact that all merchandises are products of human labor. In consequence, the amount of labor in a merchandise is said to be its value for interchange in the market.

The difficulties of using this theory for the prediction or determination of actual prices in the market are well known. The concept of "simple labor", of which the skilled labor is supposedly an aggregate, has no usable operational conceptualization. Prices fluctuate according to variations in demand and supply, on the short run, and on the long run are strongly dependent upon the degree to which the market approaches or not the characteristics of perfect competition. The concept of "value", as different from "price", has no empirical counterpart, and, as a proof of that, the recent Soviet economic reforms introduced, as one of its main points, the use of market prices of insumption and production as the main index for the accountability of the enterprises in a decentralized system (the implication is that, in the centralized system, no accountability was possible besides the fulfillment of very gross and general goals). Does this mean that the Marxist concept of value is wrong?

It does, of course, but only in the sense that it does not predict the reality correctly. The attempt to predict actual prices from labor brings in principle the same difficulties as the attempt to understand thoughts and ideas as "reflections" of reality. The philosophical postulate of a connection does not lead, necessarily, to an actual possibility of empirical determination. It is clear that, for Marx, the reduction of price to labor is, at its origin, a task which has little to do with predictions of price at the phenomenical level. It is rather a reduction in the sense that phenomenology would give later to the term, as a process of going from the phenomonic to the essential parts of reality. As in phenomenology, the essential characteristics of a phenomenon are shown when it appears as immediately related to the human being - in Marx, as an immediate product

of human activity. The intellectual instrument for this reduction is dialectics, a way of looking into what is opposite to the phenomenon, what negates it, and what brings the phenomenon and its negation together. The negation of the merchandise as a good of consumption is its general value of interchange, and what brings together these two aspects of the merchandise is its social element, human labor. The dialectic method, for what it is worth (and here is hardly the place to discuss it), is basically a way of getting to the essence of things, a method of philosophical knowledge, and never intended primordially as a tool for explanations at the level of the phenomenon.

Or was it? After all, Marx predicted the end of capitalism, the revolution in Germany, the victory of the proletariat... It seems clear that, for him, philosophical knowledge and empirical knowledge were one and the same thing, when the subject of knowledge was man. He did, however, make a distinction between "natural" and "human" sciences, in the Manuscripts of 1844, but considered this splitting as just another manifestation of the estrangement between man and his world of objects, through the deshumanization of practical activity.

Why did he not consider the same distinction in the social sciences? He did so, in a way, when he criticized the classical political economy as being the "metaphysics of capitalism", and as such alienated - but science all the same. Marx's own social science was, essentially, a critique of the political economy (this is, of course, the subtitle of The Capital), and this criticism was only possible because the desalienated society has already found its negation, the praxis of the working class, which included the International Communist, the trade unions and the political and intellectual activities of Karl Marx, among other things. In the moment of revolution the science of man ceases to be mystified, but it can only be a criticism. This criticism is simultaneously

essential knowledge and a mode of prediction, because it is part of a revolutionary movement which is in itself the practical criticism of society.

We are touching, here, one of the cornerstones of the problem. The moment of revolution, for Marx, is almost the Dooms Day, when all masks are lifted, and all the truth appears in full light. This general revelation of truth has two components. The first is that, since the pre-history of alienation comes to an end, no more mistifications are possible. The second component is perhaps less stressed, but more relevant epistemologically. It consists on the idea that things become really much more simple, reduced to their true nature - and the moment immediately before the revolution is the moment where there is only one step to go, one negation to perform, to find the true face of things. This simplification of reality is, then, an empirical process which is strongly connected with the intellectual problem of discovering the true face of things (hence, of course, the concept of praxis, as knowledge-action leading to this unveiling-desalienation of reality). Examples are found anywhere in Marx. If we take the class structure of society, for instance, and ask how many class there are, Marx's answer would be that there are many (peasants, landowners, capitalists, aristocrats, workers, etc., as in Class Struggles in France) but that this picture is simplified when capitalism develops, and the revolution becomes near: then there are only workers and capitalists. Or we can take the relations between the working class and the Communist Movement. Marx was quite aware that these two are different things, but even so he states, in the Communist Manifesto, that the Communist Party is nothing but the working class itself in its revolutionary activity. The analysis of the State, which I shall discuss in greater detail below, also brings the idea that the democratic and bourgeois state is the simplification and clarification of the previous political systems, and is just one step short of its final unveiling and destruction.

Since the revolution did not come about, and is not present in the foreseeable future, the unification of types of knowledge, and knowledge and action, could not be kept alive but as ideologies of political parties, or political systems. And the chaos at the intellectual level, among Marxists, is still going on. Engels, closer to XIX Century scientificism than to Hegel, took the identification of the two forms of knowledge as meaning that the philosophical mode was excluded - and his attempt of extending dialectics to the natural sciences became, instead of a "humannization" of natural sciences, a bastardization of dialectics. The natural sciences were strong enough to resist this attempt, but it bounced back with rather disastrous effects, to the field of social sciences. Lukacz, closer to Hegel than to Zhdanov, solved the problem by introducing a drastic distinction between human and natural sciences, the first having dialectics as the basic tool of analysis, the study of nature belonging to another conceptual realm. It is possible to think that an analysis of the work of Lukacz and his followers (among them Lucien Goldmann) would show higher achievement than anything produced in social sciences in the Engelsian kind of official Marxism.

In short: the very failure of revolution to come about forces the distinction between Marx empirical analyst, studying a specific historical reality and making predictions about it, and Marx philosopher, the author of a philosophical criticism of the alienations of the capitalist society. This distinction is made malgré lui, but is essential if one wants to be able to evaluate or at least to understand Marx^(*).

We can now turn to the criticism of the State.

(*) This is not the same as the distinction between young and adult Marx, but is close enough to it to give rise to confusions.

2. The Criticism of the State

Marx's criticism of the State is, in great part, a criticism of Hegel's philosophy of State, which is perceived as the very best justification of the capitalist state. The bulk of this criticism is found in Marx's Criticism of Hegel's Philosophy of State, which is a detailed analysis of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. We can try to spell out the main points of this criticism below.

The essential point in Hegel's conception of the State (and I shall follow here Jean Hyppolite - cf. Bibliography) is the separation between the State and the Civil Society. In the Classical City, the individual will is seen as identical with the general will, and that distinction did not exist. But then, in the Roman Empire, the splitting occurs, and society, as the state of necessity, becomes separated from the State, which is the unit of political life. But in the modern State, for Hegel, this alienation comes to an end. Not that the two spheres of political and private life return to a state of indifference, but that both remain as two moments of the same reality. The Civil Society is perceived as the phenomenon of the State, and the State the Idea of the Burgeois Society. This idea presents itself as the Constitution and the Sovereign, and the mediation between these particulatizations of the Idea and the Burgeois Society is performed by institutions such as the public opinion, the representation of civil groups in the State, the bureaucracy, and so on.

So, for Hegel, the problem of conciliation between the private and the public, individual freedom and the unity of the general will, is already solved. For Marx, however, this is the very problem that is to be solved by revolutionary action.

The first point of Marx's criticism is the relation of dependence between the Civil Society and the State.

For him, it is the State which is the phenomenon, and the essential reality is civil society, because it is in the civil society that the concret man works and lives his concret life. With this Hegel's conception is placed on his feet, and the analysis can go on to find the connexions between civil society and the State - the conclusion being, further on, that the State is nothing but the instrument of domination of the bourgeoisie.

Before arriving to this point, however, Marx develops the criticism of the mediations that Hegel considered as uniting the State and the civil society. The first of these mediations is the bureaucracy. For Hegel, bureaucracy is the soul of the State, and the private activity of the civil servants performed a universal function. For Marx, however, the bureaucrat ends up making of this universal function his private business. For Hegel, bureaucracy has as its first assumption the autonomy and organization of civil society in corporations. The choice of civil servants, and authorities, is conceived as a mixed choice, initiated by the citizens and approved by the Sovereign. The fact is, says Marx, that this kind of penetration of the civil society into the State leads to nothing but to the creation of another kind of private corporation: "the corporations are the materialism of bureaucracy, and the bureaucracy is the spiritualism of corporations: but the corporation is the bureaucracy of civil society, and the bureaucracy is the corporation of the State". The identification between the interest of this corporation of the State and the bourgeoisie only appears later in Marx.

Marx's criticism of bureaucracy goes far beyond the denunciation of Hegel's ideological commitments to the German regime or to its general character of instrument of class oppression. It is worth to quote him at length: (I am translating from the French version, vol. IV of Oeuvres Philosophiques, p. 103).

"The bureaucracy has in its power the being of the State, the spiritual being of society: it is its private property. The general spirit of bureaucracy is the mystery, kept inside it by the hierarchy, and kept from outside by its characteristics as a closed corporation. The spirit of the State, when it is known by everybody, and the public opinion, is thus perceived by bureaucracy as treasons to its mystery. The authority is then the principle of its science, and the idolatry of authority its sentiment. But, inside the bureaucracy itself, spiritualism becomes a sordid materialism, the materialism of passive obeisance, of faith in authority, of the mechanism of a fixed formal activity, of fixed principles, ideas and traditions. Regarding the bureaucrat taken as an individual, the goals of the State become his private goal: it is the hunting for higher positions, one has to make his way up" (underlined in the original).

As usual, Marx is very scant when it comes to solutions: "the suppression of bureaucracy is only possible if the general interest becomes really (and not, as in Hegel, only in thought, in abstraction) the private interest, which is only possible when the private interests become really the general interest" (p. 104).

The criticism of the Legislative power is too dependent upon the particularities of the time for a more detailed analysis here. The point I would like to stress, however, is that Marx considers that the German state is still lagging behind the fully developed bourgeois state, where there is no trace left of the previous medieval institutions, in which "each private sphere has a political character or is a political sphere, or politics is also the characteristics of private spheres". Had the German State come to its fully development, it would have come to the form of a democracy, which is, for Marx, "the solved enigma of all the constitutions". Because here the people themselves are the Sovereign, and the alienation of the separation of the private and public realms comes to its extreme, just one step before

its elimination. Again, the approximation of the revolution simplify things. The complicated structures of the nobiliarchic states disappear, their function as an instrument of class domination tends to become more intense and visible, and so on. At this point the state is, already, the element that will bring man to a desalienated world, but still one step behind its full achievement: "the perfect political state is, by its nature, the species-life (Gattungsleben) of man as opposed to his material life" (from The Jewish Question). The next step is to end this abstraction, and to arrive to the actual integration of the two spheres.

With this perception of the State, is clear that Marx despises the forms of political life which it implies. Political Life, other of Hegel's mediations, is considered as a substitute for popular revolt, and, as such, as another form of mistification. Let me quote again:

"The political sphere is the only political sphere in the State, the only sphere where the content is, as the form, a general content, the true universal, but at the same time in such a way that, while this sphere oppose itself to others, its content becomes also a formal and particular content. The political life in the modern sense is the scholasticism of the popular life" (O.P., vol. IV, p. 71).

The only way of avoiding this scholasticism is to refuse to accept the formalism of the political life, and bring politics back to its true origin and end, the sphere of the civil society. For this it is necessary to do politics, surely, but not according to the formal rules of the democratic game, or at least not believing on them.

Which brings us to the third and last point of this discussion, the philosophical relevance of politics.

3. Human emancipation

"Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become as species-being; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (forces propres) as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as political power" (The Jewish Question, transl. Bottomore, p. 31).

The concept of "Gattungswesen", translated into "species-being" in English and "être générique" in French, seems to be crucial for the understanding of Marx's idea of the end of alienation. We have seen how the end of alienation, in the sphere of politics, is achieved through the negation of the abstraction of this species-being, politics. The same kind of negation, however, is necessary in the sphere of labor, the sphere of the everyday activity of man.

We can only speculate about the meaning of the term "Gattungswesen", which Marx never specifies. For Feuerbach, from whom the term is taken, it seems to point to the capacity man has of being conscious of his belongingness to a species of living beings. This feeling of belongingness seems to be similar to what Toennies will call "community" (Gemeinschaft, as opposed to Gesellschaft) and Durkheim "solidarité mécanique" (as opposed to "solidarité organique").

In Toennies, as well as in Durkheim, communitary societies are those characterized by a basic similitude and identification of values and attitudes among all members of the society. It is not only that everybody has similar values and attitudes, but that this fact is known and lived by the whole population: the society is transparent, and there is a pervasive feeling of togetherness. The opposite to this society is the one where all interactions are based on specificity of goals, absence of affectivity, universalism,

self-orientation and absence of ascribed qualities, to use Parson's pattern variables. Community is historically located in the past, real or hypothetical, and the solidarity among its members is said (by Durkheim) to be based on the similitudes of their values, attitudes and roles. Modern society, in the other extreme, is said to be the tendency of the industrial society, and to be integrated by the solidarity based on the differences of its members, on the division of labor.

Can we conclude that Marx anticipated Toennies in his nostalgia for the ancient, small and simple human community? The answer seems to be affirmative. Marx shared with Hegel (rather than with Toennies) the conception of a primitive union between concept and reality, civil society and state, man and man. This identity of the Idea with itself is, nevertheless, empty; and it is the mediation between being and non-being that brings movement and content to reality. The reconciliation of the Idea with its strangled self is, in a way, a return to the beginning, a return loaded with the richness of the process. I doubt very much that Marx would subscribe to the above, but there is little doubt that something like it was the background against which he worked.

Getting down from the heights of Hegel's Idea, we can suggest that modern society brings, indeed, some of the elements of that "solidarity based on similarities" referred to by Durkheim. Marx's concern with the real inequalities behind the formal equalization of the bourgeois democracy was an obstacle, we can think, to his perception of the process of massification that modern society was creating. Tocqueville's analysis of American democracy can be taken as a premonition of the problems the return to community, in a large-scale society, could mean.

We can go a little deeper in this analysis if we consider the role that division of labor plays in this context. For Durkheim, division of labor is at the roots of

organic solidarity, of solidarity based on differences; for Marx, alienation of labor is at the basis of all other forms of alienation. What is the relationship between alienated work and division of labor? This relation is not very clear, because Marx explicitly refuses to discuss the nature of labor outside the contemporary society, where labor is at the same time divided and alienated. He points to three basic types of alienation of labor. The first is the alienation of the product of labor, which comes from the fact that the worker is himself a commodity in the market; the second is the alienation of the activity of production, because this activity is lived as suffering, instead as joy; it comes from the fact that to work is nothing but a means for something else. Finally, and as a consequence of the previous two, alienated work alienates man from himself, and from his species. Productive life, which is life activity par excellence, becomes a simple means for private life, and the relations of man to man becomes mediated by private concerns. The consequence is loneliness, isolation and the nostalgia for the lost community, where man could be again a community-being (Gemeinwesen).

A very basic question, which Marx did not address himself to, is how much alienated labor is purely a result of a given type of social organization or, rather, it depends on the nature of labor activity in itself. It is possible to say, for instance, that as long as division of labor exists, there will also exist alienated labor, regardless of how society and economy are organized. When we think on desalienated labor we think on a man producing for himself, having a full grasp and control of what he is doing, and enjoying his activity of creation. This conception is very congenial with the simplification of tasks we can expect to find in a community based on the "solidarity of identities", and is clearly incompatible with a highly technified society.

It does not seem to exist a clear approach to this problem in Marx. For him, the technical and social

problems are the same, and the suppression of private property brings, also, the end to the boredom and meaninglessness of piecemeal work. We can take this ideal as the hope for a technological revolution which could bring back the unity of man's work, a technological revolution which would be simultaneous with the social one. This is not very likely, however, if we think on the projections Marx could have made of the development of technology from his vantage point in the XIX Century. More likely is to take it as part of the belief of the deeply social determination of what man feels, thinks and likes. If this is so, to spend the days turning the same handle or sewing the same section of the same type of garment could one day become a joyous and meaningful activity, when one is conscious of being working for the benefit of one's own species.

The only conceivable way this could be done would be for the worker to participate in society at the level of decisions, both at the level of production and at the level of society. Thus, the experiments in self-management and on the elimination of the differences between manual and intellectual work, the former attempted in Yugoslavia and the latter having its best try in Israel's Kibbutzim. The difficulty with these experiments is that they do not bring back the community life at the level of the day to day work. Modern technology seems to imply technical management, the existence of a few directing the work of many, and even the experiences of self-management seem to show that the more active section of the working class is incorporated, or co-opted, by the management, leaving the majority without an autonomous leadership. The elimination of differences between manual and intellectual work, when used as a means for bringing back community, can mean the practical impossibility of using sophisticated and highly productive techniques. The suppression of military ranks in the Chinese Army, the obligation of manual work for "intellectuals", and the development of "intellectual" activities by the masses through the "cultural revolution", all this formidable Chinese experience pointed to

the price for which this community could be obtained: the one of a constant sense of emergency, a perpetual revolution, and a practical renouncement to the ideals of rationalization. The new type of community, in the contemporary mass-scale societies, is the community of social mobilization, obtained through a combination of partisan ideology and Sorelian mythology - and there is little doubt that Marx would have little difficulty finding its alienated character.

The basic difficulty, here, seems to be the one pointed out by Hannah Arendt: that labor is, for Marx, simultaneously a bad and a good thing, his highest vital activity and his bondage. For Marx, she says, man is essentially an animal laborans, labor being understood as the activities of self-maintenance, the activity of the body. "In all stages of his work", she says, Marx "defines man as an animal laborans and then leads him into a society in which this greatest and most human power is no longer necessary. We are left with the rather distressing alternative between productive slavery and unproductive freedom" (The Human Condition, p. 91).

Arendt's solution is to consider that man is not primarily an animal laborans, but rather a political animal which creates history by his acts.

It would be too long and complicated, and of doubtful value here, to go into the distinctions Arendt makes between labor, work and action, and on how these concepts relate to Marx's. It is possible to say, however, that Marx had a much more dynamic conception of human nature than Arendt does. For him, there is no clear-cut distinction between the product of man's hands and the product of man's body, or the product of man's mind. Man is not, for Marx, just the spider which has a mental picture of its web; rather, it is this species of animal which is able of indefinite growth through the intercourse with nature: "to say that man lives from nature means that nature is his body with which he must remain

in a continuous interchange in order not to die. The statement that the physical and mental life of man, and nature, are interdependent means simply that nature is interdependent with itself, for man is part of nature" (Manuscripts, transl. Bottomore, p. 127). Before that, it is said that "the universality of man appears in practice in the universality which makes the whole of nature into his inorganic body". If this is so, history of mankind is history of man's conquer of his own body, the nature, and concepts such as "labor" as a dirty house-keeping activity, or "action" as heroic acts of empty content, are nothing but derivations of the alienations which will one day be eliminated.

It is doubtful that the society to which Marx leads us is the society of leisure and inactivity. Rather, it seems to be the society where there is no necessity in the sense of the government of things - but we have seen that this government of things is, for Marx, essentially a problem of social organization, when there is exploitation of man by man. The fact that there are technical determinations for the alienation of work is an apparent weakness of Marx; Arendt can be criticized, perhaps, for posing an excessively compartmentalized conception of human activities.

But Arendt's criticism goes further. To be happy and satisfied with one's activity is not enough: human activity, to be human, has to transcend the level of the intercourse between man and his body, and man and nature, and come to the level of the relations between man and man, based on speech and deeds, through which one's personality is revealed. Even if we consider, as we must, that a Marxist desalienated society would imply high levels of human interaction, this will still not be enough. Hannah Arendt shares, with the existentialist tradition, that concern with the heroic, the tragic and the unique which is indeed opposite to Marx's future world. Jean Hyppolite traces this divergence back to the opposition between Marx and Hegel. For Hegel, the existence of oppositions and tensions in the human life

never ceases to exist, it is an endless dialectic movement, while, for Marx, there will be an end to history as we know it now. For Hegel, the unit between exceptional and everyday life, between the State and the Civil Society, as an unified Idea, only occurs in moments of tension, war, tragedy and revolution. Marx's criticism is caustic: "this idealism only has its own reality in situations of war and distress, so that its essence is actually the state of war and distress of the State as it exists, while its state of peace is exactly the war and distress of the organism".

But, for once, one would like to see Marx less sharp in the use of paradoxes and more attentive to the deep meaning of Hegel's thoughts. As Hyppolite says, life and death are at the roots of history for Hegel, while, for Marx, the roots are work and the exploitation of men by other men. These are not only differences in conception, but have a deeper consequence; Marx is unable to say anything on how life will be like when this exploitation, against which he dedicated his life, comes to an end.

4. Conclusion

The end of alienation: political struggle is over, social struggle is over, man does not have to work too much, and is happy with his work; he is totally immersed in nature, his body, in other men, also in himself. The feeling of boredom is inescapable, and even the introduction of love and art in this scenario would not preclude the image of beautiful angels playing harp... Is this preferable to the perspective of people trying to be heroes for the sake of it, looking for greatness even for the price of destruction and distress?

This question is, ultimately, meaningless. Any situation of stability and completeness brings also the

feeling of emptiness, the same as the situations of excitement and heroism bring the longing for calm, tranquility and well-being. Marx, very conscious of himself, never tried to come to a general and abstract definition of the final goal of human life. He simply criticized the specific alienations of a given type of social organization, and this criticism holds as valid even if the end of this alienation would bring the need of a criticism in the opposite direction. There is no hope, fortunately, for a final end of alienation, which would be the end of humanity as we know and, in spite of all, like it.

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