

Reality and Perception

Contribution to the Revolutionary Theory of Knowledge¹

Published by N+1 #33 in April 2013

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The Reversal of the Cognitive Pyramid	2
The Perception of Reality in Political Practice	5
The Non-Reversed Practice: Direct or Be Directed	7
The Perception of Reality in Party-State Diplomacy	10
Reality and Perception According to the Bourgeois Revolution	12
Rome-Moscow via Berlin or Vice Versa?	15
The PCd'I and the Perception of the Revolution	18
A Uchrony as Gedankenexperiment	21
Results Achieved by Humanity	23
Reality, Will, Free Will and Revolution	26
Democracy? Does not Exist.	32
Perception, Mother of All Revolutions	35
Recommended Readings	37

'The future society demands no material from the infamous present society, and does not consider the alleged positive science constructed by the bourgeois revolution, which for us is a class science to be destroyed and replaced piece by piece, not unlike the religions and scholasticism of previous forms of production. In a totally revolutionary manner, we have constructed the science of the life of society and its future outcome. When this work of the human mind will be perfect, and it can only be perfect after the killing of capitalism, its civilisation, its schools, its science, and its thieving technology, man will be able for the first time to write even the science and history of physical nature and to know the great problems of the life of the universe' (Thesis of Naples, 1965).

As usual, let us anticipate some conclusions so that it is clear, before going into the exposition, what we want to prove. Revolutionary theory, by definition, cannot compromise with the ideology of the ruling class without distorting itself. On the other hand, we normally call it 'class' theory improperly: if the dominant ideology can only be that of the ruling class, the dominated class cannot have its own ideology from which to derive a specific theory. It is therefore necessary to first distil from the dominant ideology the dominant theory, and then separate from what is specific to the present society what, in the dynamics of the ongoing revolution, is already an anticipation of the future society. This is the general sense of the quotation from Marx that we placed at the opening of our Internet site: if it were not possible to derive the data of the

¹ Report recorded on 24 September 2011 in Pesaro during one of usual quarterly editorial meetings. Processed during transcription.

future society from the present one, as it is, any attempt to blow up the latter would be quixotic. The revolutionary theory therefore does not fall from the sky, it is not a 'creation' of the intellect, but arises from the material clash between the present and future modes of production. We will see in the course of the exposition that the part of the general theory concerning knowledge entails going beyond mere sensory perception to achieve the necessary capacity for abstraction, thus achieving the capacity to 'do science'. We would not proceed an inch if we did not answer the questions: who is the subject that acquires the capacity for abstraction by going beyond mere sensory perception? And is not every revolt, as Marx himself admits, the result of the oppressed class's perception of reality? No revolution has ever asserted itself as a result of the assumption of a theory by the mass of revolutionaries, nor even as a result of practices employed by programmatically prepared minorities. Instead, in every victorious revolution, there has always been a unity of fact between the knowledge achieved by the historical party of the revolution and the deployment of the masses in spontaneous movement, the only guarantee for the development of the formal party:

'In the decisive part of its dynamics knowledge takes its start in the form of an intuition, an affective, non-demonstrative knowledge; intelligence with its calculations, its accounts, its demonstrations, its proofs will come later (italics ours). The novelty, the new conquest, the new knowledge does not need proof, it needs faith! It does not need doubt, it needs struggle! It does not need reason, it needs strength! Its content is not called Art or Science, it is called Revolution!' (From the original myth etc. see bibliography).

In the chronology of the great revolutions (Neolithic, ancient, feudal, bourgeois and communist) we are faced with the most decisive of all. Reasoning a century after the last communist attempt and before the next onslaught, we have an obligation to understand what happened in the past in order to be in line with the future. This is not a catchphrase: one of the great tragedies of human history took place between 1917 and 1926, and the measure of its severity can only be had by comparing what could have been, not simply by studying what was.

The Reversal of the Cognitive Pyramid

In the historical archive that we have been expanding, sorting, digitising, using, publishing for decades, is contained our memory, a legacy received from the generations before us. To be preserved, but above all not to be treated as a kind of museum of our background, as is often the case. This is why we like to consider it not so much an 'archive' as a large collection of raw materials, semi-finished products and energy inserted from time to time in what we can consider a production process. Through the latter, the processed material reaches new levels of completeness, or at least tends towards it. It goes without saying that we speak of processing according to the principle of invariance, i.e.

that it proceeds while respecting the internal coherence of the system and all its elements. Each new product is added to it and connected to it, and it is certainly fascinating to immerse oneself in it all in order to derive working guidelines from it, to concatenate texts that have remained chronologically distant and spatially distinct, to insert tesserae into the great mosaic of the revolution in progress.

All this is to say that now, once again, we will draw from our not too metaphorical filing cabinet to integrate, with new and very old contributions, archive materials we published a few years ago under the title *Per una teoria rivoluzionaria della conoscenza* (in the double issue 15-16 of *n+1*, June 2004). The reason is quickly stated: we are not aware that the political action of men or their organisations has ever been analysed from the point of view of the theory of knowledge. Apart from the great preparatory works of critique of philosophy left by Marx and Engels, the only faint trace, albeit a very precise one, can be found in the aforementioned 2004 work. Even Lenin's great effort in describing the difference between 'Marxist philosophy' and 'empiriocritical philosophy' on the subject of the theory of knowledge remains in the realm of philosophical confrontation between concepts; hence it cannot answer the question of the nature of political action in relation to the nature of human knowledge, i.e. in relation to man's way of learning. We will see that this relationship could be the key to understanding many otherwise impenetrable historical passages.

Obviously, there is no theory of knowledge without the activity of the knower, whatever form of life it represents, assuming, of course, that inanimate nature is devoid of memory and knowledge (see the aforementioned 2004 paper). Comrades will recall that one of the main themes of that seminal anthology is the 'reversal of the cognitive pyramid', which means, in short, reconnecting with Marx and Engels and treating ideology, theory, basically science, as a product of human activity and not as a factor. It is perhaps worth reiterating that it is the state of the socio-economic system that determines men's ideas, so that even scientific theory is born a posteriori to explain, rationalise or standardise the production and reproduction processes of our species. Ultimately, man drew nautical charts after millennia of sailing; he gave scientific accommodation to the laws of thermodynamics after the steam engine was invented and built; a physics of electricity was developed after batteries, dynamos and light bulbs were built. And so on.

The extreme conclusion with respect to this 'reversal' is, in its political scope: we cannot have a complete revolutionary theory of knowledge until the edifice on which current knowledge has developed is torn down. However, we can obtain a valuable approximation by placing ourselves in perspective, by projecting ourselves into the future society, at least as far as the negation of the categories of the present one is concerned. That is to say, we facilitate the anticipation of future knowledge in two ways: first, by prefiguring future human relations by feeling ourselves to be members of a completely different party than

those known to us; second, by reversing current scientific practice, that is to say, starting not from the immediate results of capitalist man's production and reproduction but from what we have defined as a kind of physiology of knowledge, given that we have a body, senses, and have always given rise to more or less complex societies that have been and are collective bodies and senses.

Having established that knowledge is influenced by class relations, in order to know how man comes to know, we must not start from what he knows in capitalist society but from what he can know regardless of a certain type of society, be it ancient, feudal or bourgeois. As we shall see, present-day man has evolved from earlier stages by refining his biological sensors, the only ones that could and can relate him to the environment. Sensors that have been performing their function for millions of years and cannot be artificially evolved, they can only be amplified. As a by-product of this approach, we will also obtain an explanation of why, in today's society, man can only know himself and nature in the bourgeois way and how, within this rigid determination, a mutant factor can arise, first in a very limited number of human specimens, capable of introducing new forms of knowledge; forms which, while manifesting themselves within the bourgeois world, are located beyond it. This mutant factor can be compared to the meme, introduced by some evolutionists by analogy with the gene: memes are fragments of information that can participate in the evolutionary process of human knowledge and modify material life.

Having made this premise, derived from the heritage in our archives and supported, as we have seen, by work that can be likened to the production and reproduction process of our species, we must ask ourselves what the political implication of which we have just spoken can be. If knowledge is a product of human activity and a true revolutionary theory of knowledge cannot exist until after the power relations between classes have been overthrown, how can we now talk about it with scientific knowledge and not as a utopian model to be realised? There is something wrong at the level of logic. By introducing the anticipatory function of the party we improve the situation, but by transferring the cognitive process from individuals to an impersonal community, however projected into the future, we do not unravel the logical knot.

The key to the problem lies not only in the origin, but above all in the function of the party, as we can say paraphrasing a well-known text of ours. It is not enough for the party to exist and represent the real movement towards the future: it must sum up the realisation of it. Now, if we were to stop at this statement, we would run the risk of falling into a vulgar voluntarist activism, and in fact this was precisely the revisionist interpretation, still in vogue, of Marx's famous last thesis on Feuerbach: 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; it is a matter of transforming it'. It is clear that taking the trouble to transform the world would be an onerous task even for gods. On the other hand,

why bother if communism means, with Marx and Engels, 'the real movement that abolishes the present state of things'? Thanks to this real movement, the revolution will unleash the communist society on us without us having to lift a finger. If we are part of the process, i.e. the real movement, just as the party is part of it, it becomes difficult to imagine a movement that abolishes itself, there is a logical paradox. The 'real movement' evoked by Marx and Engels is mere gradualist evolution if it does not produce knowledge and consequently consciousness, hence will, or, as our current says taking up Engels (Dialectic of Nature), 'reversal of praxis'. This is the factor that breaks the logical paradox. Knowledge and conscience (will) project the party outside of the gradualist evolutionary movement, they place it at a higher level from which it is possible to influence reality.

If this does not happen, the existing political level swallows up any revolutionary ambition, leading it back to the gradualist, reformist, parliamentarist, frontist, democratic, etc. evolution, which is what actually happened during the 1917-1926 revolutionary attempt. It is wrong to think that there were mistakes, betrayals or defeats in the military sense of the term: as we shall see, the protagonists, whether masses, leaders or parties, did not have the chance to step outside the logical level of society as it was and acted according to its dictates. They gave themselves democratic structures, they deliberated in congresses similar to parliaments, they did 'politics' at all levels, from trade union compromise to corridor work on the fringes of congresses.

The Perception of Reality in Political Practice

Before moving on to an overview of examples of the problems caused by the impossibility of having a complete union between coherent theory of revolution and praxis, let us summarise what has been said so far with the help of one of our basic texts, Party and Class Action, 1921: 1) revolutions and parties are not 'made', they are directed; 2) the current tasks of the party are deduced from those it will have in future society. First, then: the revolution is there, it has its own course, it cannot be 'made'. Of course, at its culmination there may be some form of insurrection. Second: the party is formed in the course of the revolution and naturally tends to draw its functions from capitalist society (the dominant ideology is that of the ruling class), so a leadership is needed that can break this constraint and introduce functions drawn from future society. In both cases there is a vital problem of direction. The quoted text makes it clear that the necessary knowledge cannot be drawn from the sum of inherited knowledge but a paradigm leap is needed, as we would say now.

Go for the paradigm leap, one might say, but what the hell does political practice have to do with the theory of knowledge? Such a question is only justified by the habit of not asking it. Of course, what we are producing is a semi-finished work and not a ponderous essay, so for reasons of time we will

limit ourselves to analysing only a piece of our history, specifically that of the years 1917-26, warning in advance that the underlying theory (which we will see later) applies to all human activity and that only in relation to the collective work in progress do we use it to answer the question that so many are asking: why did the revolution in that period fail and why did it turn into a huge counterrevolution? We are faced with one of those classic cases where to get an answer we have to destroy the question and reformulate it. Can a revolution understood, with Marx and Engels, as a 'real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs' 'fail'? Can it turn into a counterrevolution?

No. An insurrection, a coup d'état, an assault on power as at the time of the Commune can fail, but a revolution cannot fail. When the vile German bourgeoisie failed to unleash its revolution in 1848, Bismarck did, and Engels wrote that this crude Junker was working for us. When Stalin became the symbol of the counter-revolution in Europe, our current emphasised the historical dialectic of that moment: having failed the conditions for the double revolution in Russia and China, the bourgeois revolution in Asia was proceeding anyway. Were Stalin and Mao 'working for us'? Certainly, even if from the proletarian point of view it was counter-revolution. In fact, the point of view in which we place ourselves is decisive: at that time the Old Mole had dug in at an industrial pace, elevating the executives of Italy, Germany, the United States, Russia, China and Japan to the rank of clear, unequivocal enemies, moreover intent on perfecting the machinery of the state in a process that would prove irreversible. The political perception of that universal event was: Democracy versus Fascism, Resistance. The historical reality was: exaggerated imperialism; proletarians forced to fight as political soldiers (a term coined by the Waffen SS) for one of the imperialist camps; revitalisation of the bourgeois system on a planetary scale for half a century.

In the theory of knowledge, immediate perception, as we shall see, is the primary basis on which our ideas about the world are formed. They arise initially from the very close relationship between the individual or species and the environment, evolutionary adaptation, mutation. Insofar as man evolves as a social being, he produces and reproduces his own existence to the point of changing his nature as man into man-industry (Marx, Manuscripts); immediate perception is no longer sufficient, indeed, without theory, physics, mathematics, biology, etc., it leads to error. Knowledge and consciousness of the world drastically change the man-nature relationship (which in any case remains nature-nature, since man cannot be non-nature); hence everything becomes mediated by knowledge, which increases exponentially and becomes 'science', i.e. conscious intervention that anticipates a desired and planned result. It is hard to see why what we have called the 'reversal of praxis' cannot also be applied to relations within the mass of men, who are divided into classes, etc. Yet if we analyse the nature of relations between men in this field, we see that it

still reflects the stage of more or less subjective perceptions, which is then the stage at which even the most evolved animals have stopped.

We have therefore chosen to bring the discourse on the theory of knowledge into the political sphere for two reasons: 1) we want to show that the scientific investigation of a subject such as knowledge is not an end in itself, but is very closely connected to the capacity or possibility of revolutionary forces to become attuned to the revolutionary process by following it or anticipating it; 2) we want to show that the force of counter-revolution can do nothing against the appearance of mutant social elements, which, frozen in their development for longer or shorter periods, stubbornly reappear on the historical scene. Of course, the context is not that of knowledge acquired individual by individual as in school (our current has also been characterised by its 'anti-culturalist' struggle), but rather that of the emergence of an impersonal force, the revolutionary party, capable of coherently representing the entire path of our species towards the new society.

The Non-Reversed Practice: Direct or Be Directed

In the second volume of our History of the Communist Left, there is a chapter devoted to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, entitled 'A culmination and a crossroads'. The terms are formally accurate: culmination, because in that year the International tended to overcome the democratic improvisation with which its founding congress had been prepared the previous year. Under predominant Bolshevik influence it produces theoretically unexceptionable theses. It demands greater rigour from its members for membership. It correctly frames the historical phases of the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions. It appeals to communist internationalism by calling for the formation of a single party of world revolution. Crossroads, because the CI could have effectively been the trigger for revolution in Europe and thus in the world only by remaining faithful to the theses produced, which it was not. At the same time as the above theoretical documents were being produced, their content was being annihilated by the dominant political practice in Congress. This gigantic rupture was not felt by the protagonists, who therefore continued to behave as if they were in the corridors of a parliament, immersed in a kind of virtual reality, constructed within the scenario of existing relations, which was not observed, analysed and modified from a higher level.

Reasoning with the detachment allowed by the years, especially basing ourselves on the teaching of our current, which with powerful insight denounced the opportunist drift even then, we note that in general there was a consistent gap between the real historical course and the subjective perception of the protagonists. Thus the potential great world party of the proletarian revolution found itself not only unable to overthrow praxis, but was subjected to all the conditioning that the unreversed praxis acted upon. Against this danger our

current warned the CI and the parties that formed it as early as 1920, leaving us a wealth of irrefutable written evidence on the subject.

What was already regarded as a victory for the revolution, in Russia and elsewhere, had naturally aroused great expectations throughout the world. The Berlin-Moscow armistice of 1917 amplified plausible hopes, despite the resumption of fighting in 1918. The German attack had weakened Russia, forcing it to capitulate and cede territory on the strategic European flank. 'Ceding space to gain time' was an easily understandable formula, but the peace of Brest-Litovsk was also the obligatory way forward for a Russia that had become a non-nation, ravaged by civil war and broken up into some twenty territories controlled by various counter-revolutionary forces besieging the small Soviet core. The capitulation of Germany and the end of the war had further fuelled expectations. The strong German proletariat, which had already shown heroic defeatism during the ongoing war, had the road paved in front of it, and in fact, after only a few months, it rose up armed against its own bourgeoisie. The massacre that had followed, the repeated and failed attempts with the Munich and Budapest Republic of Councils, had not led to amore precise redefinition of tactics; on the contrary, they had led the Bolsheviks to rather artificially 'stimulate' the 'construction' of the 3rd International.

From this moment (March 1919) to the 2nd Congress (July 1920) history saw a divergent progression between the ebb of revolution in Europe and the rise, with relative consolidation, of Soviet power in Russia. Which inexorably, begins to identify itself with the state. But the phenomenon is not felt or, if it is, it is ignored. All Bolshevik leaders are convinced that it is a matter of a few months, after which Germany will throw the strength of its proletariat onto the field. The defeats are attributed to the nefarious influence of the social-traitors. Lenin is among the most optimistic, Zinoviev speaks of such a vertiginous process that it will lead to victory even within a few weeks, not only in Europe but also in the rest of the world.

With the congress in progress, the delegates follow the Red Army's counter-attack and its march on Warsaw with incredible tension. The Bolshevik party is so sure of victory that it rejects an English mediation for peace with Poland. Lenin meets with a French delegation and takes the seizure of Warsaw, the fall of Germany, the reconquest of Hungary and the uprising in Italy and the Balkans as certain. Even when the Red Army is now pinned down and forced to skirmish in East Prussia, Lenin expects the Polish uprising and is indignant at those who note that there is nothing more to be done in that reactionary peasant area.

In fact, the Congress expected revolution but was itself already in the hands of counter-revolution. There were delegations from parties or fractions that were not communist at all, not even meeting the membership conditions

drawn up by a commission on the sidelines of the congress. The French delegation, for example, was led by Marcel Cachin, an interventionist social-nationalist whom the Italian delegates asked to be thrown out, silenced by the Russians because he represented 'tens of thousands of organised people'.

Let us pause for a moment at this point. It is evident that in what has been listed so far, albeit in an ultra-synthetic way, there is all the evidence to realise the divergence between the actual facts and the perception that individuals and organisations as a whole had of the facts themselves. Apart from our comrades at the time and other little-regarded congressmen, everyone was convinced that 'small' flaws in revolutionary coherence were irrelevant. How could one point more or less in the list of conditions of admission affect them? Could a tactical clarification or some corridor agreement change the impetuous course of the ongoing revolution? The seizure of power in Russia and the imminent explosion of mighty Germany were facts in themselves sufficient to justify both optimism and indifference to theoretical and tactical derogations.

In nature there can be small realities that produce large effects, let alone if these realities are not small at all but are only perceived as such. Take Germany, the country that most influenced the counterrevolution in Europe and Russia. Between 1919 and 1920 in Germany there were two communist parties, the KPD and KAPD (Communist Party of Germany and Workers' Party of Germany) and an "Independent" Social Democratic Party, USPD. In the background was the large (electorally) Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The left wing of the USPD had asked for membership of the International, which, confident of the revolution's outcome, had stalled thinking that the independents, swinging between social democrats and communists, would eventually move towards the latter. Instead, the revolution 'delayed', and the CI agreed to negotiations for the entry of the USPD on the condition that right-wing elements etc. would be expelled so that a merger with the Communist Party could take place. From the merger between the right wing of the KPD and the left wing of the USPD came the VKPD (Unified Communist Party) at the end of 1920.

These were political games in the bourgeois tradition, but they were considered quite normal. The trouble was that the CI considered the German proletariat as a whole to be revolutionary, believing that its part, framed in the Social Democratic Party and the Independents' Party, was susceptible to communist influence. The pestiferous democratic conception led to reasoning on the basis of 'majorities', or at least numbers, without taking into account the complexity of relations, not only in Germany. It is only from this perspective that one can understand why the CI was even influenced by mere German election figures: in the 1920 election, the Communist Party had taken 500,000 votes, the Independents five million and the Social Democratic Party six million. The leaders of the International did not even think it conceivable that within the

German revolutionary proletariat there would actually be one to ten unfavourable proportions for the Communist Party. This produced a policy with a nefarious influence on the parties in all other countries. How can one believe that parliamentarism serves any purpose and at the same time not believe what it reflects?

The Perception of Reality in Party-State Diplomacy

In March 1920, in Copenhagen, there is an extra-political meeting between representatives of the PSI and the Russian party under the interested eye of the respective governments with a view to resuming trade relations. Nitti himself facilitates the contacts. Present were Bombacci for the PSI, Cabrini for the League of Cooperatives and Litvinov for the Russian state. In April, the PSI sent, again with Nitti's support, a technical mission to study the achievements of the Soviet government. All the Italian delegates travelled with regular passports, something that had proved impossible on other similar occasions. These missions had nothing directly to do with the forthcoming congress, since the date was not yet known, and in fact elements from outside the promoting parties participated in them. However, the list of delegates who were to travel to Moscow was drawn up in Copenhagen.

They left Milan and were met at the Russian border by Zinoviev, who only then warned them of the imminent 2nd CI Congress. On the train, corridor manoeuvres are already taking place: Zinoviev discusses with Bombacci the expulsion of the ultra-reformists from the PSI. Serrati, who defends the right-wingers, travelled on the same train, was not informed of the talks and made a political case. The delegation, having arrived in Moscow, split up. One part devotes itself to the congress, the other to finalising the trade agreements made in Copenhagen. At the congress, the PSI delegates realise to their surprise that a delegation from the Communist Left (Bordiga, De Meo, Polano) has been invited separately. The surprise is even greater when they learn that the invitation came from Lenin himself. The latter had presumably drawn up differentiated lists, as transpires from a letter to Gheller dated 20 June 1920 in which he asks him to 'track down exactly and by name' Francesco Misiano, a left-wing maximalist. Bordiga was already travelling on behalf of the Fraction in order to make contact with left-wing elements in Switzerland, Germany, Holland and Denmark. From Germany he had sent some notes for the party press, criticising the USPD - KPD attempts at rapprochement, justifying the split of the KAPD, albeit in the light of a different theoretical approach to the question of abstentionism.

These hints on the 'environmental' situation at the 2nd Congress can easily be integrated with the description of the political clash of those years in the second volume of the History of the Communist Left. Here we would like above all to highlight the inadequacy of the structure that was supposed to

prefigure the world party of the proletariat. Bordiga had been invited as a representative of the Fraction, and therefore without voting rights. But he represented the real level reached by 'Italian' communism, while the official PSI delegation was almost entirely composed of 'right-wing' elements, not only distant from communism but often also from a serious reformist democratic socialism. It was precisely those characters that, apart from the ambiguous Serrati, Lenin and the CI demanded to expel without much fuss. Why did these situations arise? Lenin had recognised in the Soviet, the organ of the 'Italian' Left, the same revolutionary coherence as Bolshevism. Anti-parliamentarism was a common element and the need to separate from the reformists also. But at the congress, the Bolshevik party distributed Lenin's pamphlet on Extremism, an infantile disease of communism, to every single delegate. The contradiction was blatant: the drastic condemnation of a few elements deemed extremist was the order of the day, while no one paid attention to the ridiculous laxity towards the mass of guests who, Conditions of Admission in hand, were to be thrown out.

The right-wing Italian delegation epitomised the situation perfectly: equipped with spaghetti, sausages and flasks of wine to cope with the shortcomings caused by the civil war, they had not set themselves the task of theoretical and political verification, they were not looking for a connection to the world revolution: on the one hand they were scheming (Serrati was a champion in that field), on the other they were 'observing' a novel model of government. As if to see how a little machine works, he anticipated the future pilgrimages of the Bernard Shaw, the Curzio Malaparte or the hideous Mr and Mrs Webb (all of whom would later travel to Stalinist Russia as 'observers'). Zinoviev had a nice saying:

'We didn't know that any reformists had arrived; we had the most complete confidence in Serrati as in all the people he had led with him; we considered them elements that were still confused, but whose devotion to the proletarian cause was truly sincere'.

But what a proletarian cause, those people were immediately at ease, trespassing in the corridors of the former tsarist palaces. Exponents of the corrupt Italic petty bourgeoisie, they let pass over their impermeable skins the head-washing of a Lenin, who was terrible but had no experience of how tough the Italian opportunists were. They, faced with repeated attacks not only from Lenin but also from Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bucharin, had not reacted, as if the matter did not concern them. On the contrary, Serrati defended on behalf of the entire delegation both Turati, who was not there, and D'Aragona, who was present. He criticised the invitation to Bordiga and Polano (the latter representing the socialist youth) without being contradicted. Finally, the representatives of the cooperatives and trade unions, having done their economic exchange work and recorded the characteristics of the model analysed, simply left without even attending the congress.

This was the matter on which the Bolsheviks relied so much. And it was more or less the same in every country. The following year the CI theorised the need for a united front. One more year and, as far as Italy was concerned, where the Communist Party of Italy had just been formed by splitting from the PSI, the International ordered reunification with the latter on the sole condition that the right-wingers were expelled. On the margins of the 4th Congress the PCd'I delegates were grouped together in the infamous Hotel Lux and subjected to pressure of all kinds on what was immediately called the 'Italian question', so much so that Bordiga, from Italy, had to intervene several times. Here is one of the many coded letters sent to Moscow:

'It seems to us that [in Moscow] you surround everything the communists say and do with mistrust, while you smile at all the scalzacans of Italian politics. It would be up to you to react to this way of doing things and to inform us in time of the direction being taken there. Should you then be persuaded of those tactical truths that we by our limited nature do not understand and with which we are not suited, would you at least, by your epistolary eloquence, share with us such enlightenment, so as not to leave us in darkness and error. But in any case, and whatever opinion you have on the sublime calculation of politics, you must step on a typewriter, and give a sign of life to the party that has delegated you there. Greetings communists, and pardon my style due to the fact that we have on our hands these days certain c.. probably quite different from those of which you are currently making extensive use' (6 August 1922).

There is plenty of material to realise what methods the Russian party and the CI used to 'convince' recalcitrants. Within a few years the situation worsened. With the advent of the forced 'Bolshevization' of the communist parties, corruption turned into political terrorism. At the Lyon Congress (1926) the congress votes were simply falsified to oust the Left. The opportunist parable ended with the Chinese catastrophe, and as far as the following years are concerned, one can only speak of reason of state. By the end of the 1920s a cycle had been consummated. For those who wish to treasure it, the lessons, the Lessons of the Counter-Revolutions, as one of our texts is entitled, are formidable.

Reality and Perception According to the Bourgeois Revolution

This brief account, reduced to events, i.e. stripped of grand intentions and the apparatus of texts, is certainly hard to digest, but it can help us understand the gap between reality and perception during the greatest revolution humanity has ever undertaken, the one we have been living through since the Manifesto was published. The claim to fight bourgeois society by remaining within it, without matching action to theory, i.e. without a 'reversal of praxis', is the

deadliest epistemological error the party of revolution can fall into. The trouble is that it is not really an 'error'.

The discrepancy between reality and perception has produced an enormous amount of philosophical material for millennia and continues to produce it even at the level of scientific knowledge. There is a small problem of meaning that we must overcome before proceeding: at one time, in philosophical language, 'perceiving' referred to objects or situations acquired by the senses and understood as such. Today, the term is part of normal language and is used more in reference to the difference that can exist between what is detected by our senses, subjectively, and what can be detected objectively by a measurement, for example: there is an actual difference between the temperature perceived depending on humidity, wind, clothes worn, and that measured by a thermometer. This is less trivial than it might seem at first glance, but we will not enter the field of diatribes on induction/deduction, etc., or the even more insidious field of physical indeterminism, for which the object/subject dualism disappears. We therefore remain in the field of perception as an individual or collective sensation that is variable and almost always erroneous - or rather different - from an objective 'measurement'.

Galileo was one of the first scientists to theorise the need to criticise results obtained through the misleading senses and to seek them instead through abstractions supported by objective measurements that would allow experimental verification. The materialist and atheist Enlightenment took the Galilean method to its philosophical consequences, and the bourgeois revolution placed it at the basis of the scientific and technical revolution that engulfed Europe and the world from then on. The Galilean paradigm is acquired by Marx in his exposition on method (Introduction to *For the Critique of Political Economy*, 1857) and resists the attacks of new discoveries or formalisations so well even today that it is evoked in the cognitive schemes of Newton, Einstein, Lenin, Bateson, right up to our current (cf. Einstein and some schemes for the reversal of praxis).

There is no doubt that it is a product of the bourgeois revolution that ours has also acquired, just as there is no doubt that it is a product of the ancient slave society that is Euclidean geometry, which in turn survives very well even though non-Euclidean geometries have emerged in the meantime. Why then is it so difficult for our revolution to find human instruments, individuals or collectivities, capable not only of understanding these issues and incorporating them into their political theses, but also of using them as a weapon to direct men and events instead of being directed?

Galileo's aim with his studies was not to win a round in the theological dispute, as in the Middle Ages. Nor was he trying to convince the priests. Gone were the days of the confrontation between wise men, no longer the Abelard and

Bernard, currents within a mode of production, but directly men reflecting different modes of production. It was not a matter of taking sides for Aristotle and Ptolemy against Copernicus and Galileo and vice versa, but of understanding nature in the light of the source industry, without theological or philosophical interpretations, i.e. deriving theories without aligning sentences but facts, abstractions based on reality, experiments. Galileo was not a good philosopher, he was bad at speculation, but he was a great scientist, comfortable designing mental and real experiments to prove his theories. And to do this he used not Latin but the vernacular, bringing scientific texts to literary heights. He regarded his method as 'our militia', binding students, friends, protectors and... purchasers.

He told his opponents: Look inside the blessed telescope and you will see the Medicean Planets revolving around Jupiter. Instead of deriving hypotheses in the absence of knowledge, you will know facts from which to derive certainties after calculating and experimenting. Copernicus did not denounce the old geocentric system as wrong. He simply had a lot of data at his disposal to create a more precise theoretical model that corresponded to the motions of the Cosmos. From the point of view of relative motions, it is the same thing to put the Earth or the Sun at the centre of the system, so to argue over principles is beyond the scope of scientific observation, theory and verification. Men had always seen the Moon and the Sun revolving around the Earth, and the fact that this was also the case for Jupiter's satellites could not convince anyone of the need to change reference. The evidence was there, Greek, Arabic, medieval and Renaissance astrolabes worked and there were admirable explanatory manuals. Galileo realised that a cleansing operation was necessary: so that the scientific data would not be polluted by subjective perception, the latter had to be eliminated. The leap into a new era was of gigantic magnitude. How can one, tradition said, eliminate what our senses tell us, if they, apart from the perfection of faith, are all we possess to know the world? The revolution replied that no, it is not true that we only possess the senses through which we perceive reality: we have geometry, mathematics, astronomy, all instruments derived from our observation of the world but which are now something else, they are powerful means to understand the world, removed from what the individual 'feels', universal even in the hands of no matter who.

These essential references should be supplemented with what we have already written on the subject in the past and need not be repeated. Let us only recall the very important note at the beginning of our text Elements of Marxist economics, where we expound on the need, if one wants to do science, to deal with measurable quantities, i.e. to lead the qualitative back to the quantitative or, at any rate, to realities that can be treated according to invariants, such as the always equal calculation of the area of infinite polygons, etc. The industrial revolution followed the bourgeois revolution that freed society from the suffocating limitations of the feudal era. Industry takes full possession of the

new science and the social productive force expands at an exponential rate. Everything converges towards the accumulation of the potential necessary for our revolution. The latter's theory records the highest levels of human knowledge and anticipates its further developments (machine system, automation, social brain, freeing labour-power from the production process, etc.).

But in the end, when the facts are tested, the theory finds no application in relations between men and parties. Even in the Third International, the use of the old bourgeois categories within a structure based on the bourgeois model takes over. The 'parties of the revolution' themselves, to varying degrees, had adapted to this model. Opportunism, parliamentarism, transformism, revisionism and other plagues in 'ism' had invested them with the well-known results. The workers rose up everywhere, but their momentum tragically collided with parliaments, congresses, frontist theses, betrayals, tactical swings. A catastrophe.

Rome-Moscow via Berlin or Vice Versa?

We are used to naming our surroundings and also to grouping the various objects of our observation into sets. In front of us we have a bottle, three glasses, two microphones, forty chairs and so on. We refine the description of what we name and list, so the bottle is green, the glass is transparent, the microphone is on, the chairs are lined up. We, observers, know how to give qualitative descriptions by delving into the qualities of the observed, putting in imagination, art, creative flair and a host of other things that respond to a relationship between the 'outside' we perceive and what we carry 'inside', whether innate or acquired. But that 'three glasses', that quantitative element affixed to the object, that utterly abstract and yet so important expression eliminates at once all our subjective perceptions of quality, forces us with an irrepressible violence into a community within which that datum is shared without possibility of discussion by Chinese and Americans, Vikings and Boers, without democracy, majorities or debates on opposing theses. That 'three' has no colour, no taste, no temperature, no depth, in short, it does not stimulate any of the five senses, it does not generate passions of the heart or brain. It does not even have value, an abstract category with which this society has abundantly intoxicated us. Yet without that insignificant little numerical sign, today's society, indeed, humanity, would not even be conceivable. The story is well known: according to tradition, Pythagoras was the first 'philosopher' to discover a relationship between the world of nature and the world of abstractions. He was what would later be called a metaphysician, and it was precisely by going 'beyond physics' that he introduced into human knowledge a principle that, like Galileo's we have mentioned, changed the way the world was conceived. Until then, on one side was nature, on the other man and his thinking. To tell the truth, even today we continue to perceive a dichotomy between man and nature,

and the population of the globe quietly continues to think that this is fine; but as far as science is concerned, with Pythagoras we find ourselves at one of its fundamental, revolutionary turning points. In practice he noted, starting with music, that certain aspects of arts and crafts, specifically human phenomena, were traceable to numbers. And since arts and crafts realised their purpose with material instruments, that is, made of elaborate natural matter, numbers represented the point of contact between the world of matter and the world of the spirit. We do not know whether this point of contact represented for him an overcoming of the matter-spirit dichotomy, but in fact 'his' motto 'everything is number' leads to one of the syllogisms that only later, with the advent of logic, caused philosophers (i.e. the scientists of the time) so many headaches: if everything is number and nature/spirit are part of the whole, then nature/spirit are number, i.e. the same thing.

This necessary result recurs many times in history, but men, in their generality, still behave in a 'natural' way, i.e. without using the power of the appropriate instruments to overthrow praxis. Thus, in 'normal life', both nature/thought dichotomies and discussions about a 'paper world', as Galileo called affabulation incapable of understanding nature, persist. Of course, mankind uses metre and litre, clock and GPS, computer and money, mediating continuously between the two pre-Pythagorean worlds, that of nature and that of thought, but if it has to engage in political struggle, it does not behave substantially differently from the age of Pericles or Cicero. The empire of subjective perception continues undaunted to dominate us, the number of those who adopt the criteria of abstraction as a bridge between nature and thought remains statistically negligible outside of science subservient to commodity production.

When we take this view in order to draw the necessary lessons from the history of our revolution, we are outside the realm of judgement or criticism of the alleged error. The Paris Commune, as one of our texts puts it, was great for what it really was, not for what its exponents wanted it to be. The same applies to the Third International. The cobblers denounced by our current long before anyone realised the opportunist and then counter-revolutionary drift did not spring from nowhere, they had their matrix in the nature of the so-called vanguard, which was unable to place itself above the movement it was supposed to lead. However, just as we claim the Blanquist Commune, Proudhonian and very little influenced by the few internationalists, we claim that vanguard. Claiming it as our own has nothing to do with official and uncritical deference to all that it represented. On the contrary, it is precisely in identifying its limits by means of a precise autopsy on its corpse that we are able to understand its greatness, which allowed it to reach the 'peak' we spoke of, even if, having reached the 'crossroads', it did not take the road that we as a current expected.

We realise the enormous epistemological leap that our current required of the protagonists on the scene of the revolution. An atypical historical determination, recognised as such even by Lenin, had triggered an insurrectional process in Russia, while revolutionary tension was growing throughout Europe. The main capitalist countries on which the material power of the revolution rested were England, France, Germany and Italy. In terms of insurrectionary potential, old England was cut off due to age limits. France had not been able to unleash its traditional political potential, and its proletariat had not been able to prevent the worst scum of politicalism (Cachin, Frossard, etc.) from leading it. Germany, industrially powerful, was too young a country, with a still naive proletariat, a swinging communist movement and a murderous social democracy. Italy had an underdeveloped industry but a very combative proletariat, a socialist party in the hands of the maximalist current that at least had managed to avoid supporting the war, and a fledgling communist party, very strong in relation to the alignments in the field and the industrial reality, and above all well equipped theoretically thanks to historic battles against the oldest bourgeoisie in the world and the most pandering opportunism. Russia had developed, thanks to the internationalist school of emigration, a remarkable communist core, tempered for struggle and capable as a whole of great theoretical coherence, qualities that had allowed a coherent path towards insurrection and seizure of power.

This synthesis, however extreme, clearly tells us that the only two forces capable of facing the revolutionary ferment at the end of the war without betraying, indeed without having already betrayed, were the Russian and the Italian forces. The principle identified by Marx, reported by Mehring, taken up by our current and never contradicted by the facts, that the proletarian revolution marches from West to East starting from central Europe, would have demanded a preferential welding between the new Italian party and the party that had taken power in Russia. A de facto identity had matured between them (The Soviet: 'Bolshevism, plant of every climate') even if contacts and collaboration were problematic. This welding was to strongly influence the situation in Germany, whose proletariat was unable, despite its strength, to counter opportunism, being, more than in other countries, still imbued with democracy (see the phenomenon of councilism). One understands that such a scheme is difficult to accept even by elements that refer to the 'Italian' Communist Left in a coherent manner. This difficulty is the result of an absolutely subjective 'perception', foreign to a scientific model, but then as now it was in fact unthinkable from a Russian geo-historical point of view to look at the apparently insignificant Italy instead of the mighty Germany, Europe's leading industrial power. Material determinations, political predisposition, and recent events placed Russia in the optimal condition to fall into an epistemological 'error' of incalculable consequences.

In geopolitics (i.e. the study of geographical determinations on politics) maps, colours, delimitation of zones of influence are essential. In the modern version, it is customary to abandon planispheres and draw spherical zones centred on the subject-state to show with immediate graphic effect its perception of the context, of its relationship with neighbouring states. The term used is just that. Russia was in the most favourable conditions to exaggerate a map of its perception. In addition to being a great power, Germany had shared the eastern front with Russia on a historic friction line. In order to close that long front, the German War Ministry had facilitated the organisation of the 'Lenin train' that brought the revolutionary general staff back to Russia through German territories. The painful peace of Brest-Litovsk had taken a quarter of its European territories from Russia. It had anticipated the end of the war, but the Bolsheviks only had to hope for social consequences in Germany so that the unleashing of revolutionary potential would allow the treaty to be annulled (which it did). With the war over, effectively the German proletariat had gone into attack formation leading to justified optimism in Moscow about the revolutionary prospect. But the historical order was now reversed: the revolution was now to march from the East to the West, and the Russian communists bore the tremendous responsibility for its direction. It was an unnatural situation. The result was that political influence continued to march from West to East, but not with Germany as a power denying itself in order to merge into the revolution (this was Marx's wish), but as a power and that was all, with the Social-Democratic butchers Ebert, Noske and Scheidemann at its head.

The PCd'I and the Perception of the Revolution

In 1925, the Communist Left published an article entitled *The Opportunist Danger and the International*. It was a very harsh denunciation of the tactical drift underway, initiated under the weight of contingent national or international 'situations'. It was not the first denunciation, nor was it the last, but in it the nature of the new opportunism was particularly highlighted. To be guided by contingent situations was to lower the tasks of world revolution to the level of bourgeois politics. The degenerative process was not identified with that of the Second International, although it was given the same appellations, opportunism, revisionism, tacticalism, etc., but was considered more serious. Bernstein and Kautsky had theorised that the movement is everything and the end nothing, that socialism could be merged with democracy. In a sense their action was consistent with an explicit theory. The Third International did not, it swore by principles, sacralised a Marxism-Leninism worthy of a religion and acted in defiance of any principle.

'A few weeks after the complex debate of the 3rd Congress, the united front emerged of which nothing was said in the deliberations of that one. The workers' government did not appear until after the decisions of the February 1922 Enlargement, it disappeared or was partly attenuated in the decisions of the 4th Congress, to serve as a basis in the time following the tactics in Germany. Only at

the close of the Fifth Congress and with great reluctance did anything leak out about the other serious step of the proposed unity with Amsterdam. The new tactic, as usual, is a fait accompli before an international body has examined it. Now we have always demanded that in matters of tactics decisions should be peremptory, and preventive, not posthumous' (art. cit.).

Today we can note the high level of criticism better than then. Prior decisions were demanded. What else does it mean if not plans? Evidently the steering centre of the revolution had abdicated the need for the reversal of praxis. In Darwin's theory, adaptation to the environment is envisaged, and without theory, i.e. without design, without overthrow of praxis, the environment stabilises, homeostatizes with all the life forms it harbours. The dialectic implicit in the theory of evolution is that organisms mutate, register change at the genetic level and snap to a different form. Indeed, rather than evolution, one should speak of revolution, as some contemporary scientists seem to admit. Man is capable of intervening in the evolutionary process, at least as far as his own works and society are concerned. If he merely receives impulses through his senses and acts solely on the basis of them, he does not introduce new elements into the process itself.

The Left had already taken a stand on this subject several times, and always its voice within the party and the International had provoked fierce intolerance and finally complete marginalisation. The more the perverse effects of the criticised decisions became evident, the more the forces within the party and the International that sought to restore coherence between theory and practice were ignored and fought against. In 1924 an important article had appeared in the Left's journal Prometheus, 'Communism and the National Question'. In it it responded, by bringing the argument back to theory, to one of the many aberrations of the International. In practice it had begun to slide from the conception that Germany was the powerful country at the heart of the revolution, to that according to which it was instead a country oppressed by the oppressive conditions imposed at Versailles by the victors of the war. A 'national question' for Germany was put forward, as was the custom at the time, whereby a rapprochement between the communists and the social-patriotic movement was hypothesised. The irrepressible Radek, already the director on behalf of the CI of the Frontist rapprochement with German social democracy, became an advocate of this rapprochement, even extolling the spirit of sacrifice of the nationalists who had fallen to defend the Ruhr from French occupation. It was evidently at its height, but the Left responded calmly by bringing the matter back to its material substance, cleansed of immediatist encrustations.

Absolutely to be rejected, he wrote, is the thesis that communist policy is derived from a simple 'examination of situations'. It must be borne in mind that this examination must be conducted in the light of a well-defined theory that lays down binding principles. This is not a matter of aprioristic ideas but of a

historical programme rooted in times before the International itself existed, a programme that it has already laid down as the basis of its political action.

'The way of coordinating individual solutions to this general aim is embodied in postulates acquired by the party, and which present themselves as the cornerstones of its programme and tactical methods. These postulates are not immutable and revealed dogmas, but are in turn the conclusion of a general and systematic examination of the situation of the whole of human society in the present historical period, in which exact account is taken of all the facts that fall under our experience. We do not deny that this examination is in continuous development and that the conclusions are always being revised, but it is certain that we could not exist as a world party if the historical experience that the proletariat already possesses did not allow our critique to construct a programme and a set of rules of political conduct' (art. cit. Prometheus no. 4-1924).

By 1924, those who showed the greatest intolerance of theoretical appeals were about to win. In the specific case of Germany, the enormity of the slip was obvious, but not to those who were experiencing it immersed in the world that suggested the infamous 'examination of situations'. For our current, reducing the historical task of the great German proletariat to a more immediate problem of national emancipation was only understandable in the light of a counter-revolutionary catastrophe. And to think that just a short time earlier, the proletariat itself had been attributed the function of a revolutionary engine capable of pulling Europe along. Had not Marx said that idealist petty-bourgeois Germany would only assert itself as a nation by denying itself? And had he not deduced from this, after the war with France, that Germany's great industrial power, now in full development, would clash with backward Russia, opening the way to world revolution? Now revolutionary Russia was pushing Germany back into the idealistic and patriotic quagmire of the petty bourgeoisie. Something huge was at stake, such upheavals could not be produced by 'men making mistakes' alone.

At the time, it was only natural to blame opportunism or even opportunists. Lenin had already warned against such a conception, even though he himself occasionally slipped on this point in the field war. Later our current made it clear that so-called opportunism was not a phenomenon that could be moralistically attributed to men or parties with reprehensible behaviour, but was a social phenomenon, to be assessed solely on the basis of the material determinations that produced it:

'Opportunism is not a phenomenon of a moral nature and reducible to the corruption of individuals, but it is a phenomenon of a social and historical nature whereby the proletarian avant-garde, instead of arranging itself on the side that stands against the reactionary front of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois strata, initiates a policy of welding together the proletariat and the middle classes. In this the social phenomenon of opportunism does not diverge from that of fascism' (Thesis of Naples).

From this important consideration, the organic theory of the party was further developed in the post-World War II period, with limited and temporary practical experimental implications, of which, however, we feel we are the continuators.

A Uchrony as Gedankenexperiment

What would have happened if, at the end of the First World War, the revolution had marched in the right direction and an organic party conception had been imposed, accompanied by a consistent tactic with respect to the revolutionary conditions in Europe? The obvious objection that history is not made with 'what ifs' must be got out of the way here: we know this very well. However, we also know that, for educational purposes, scenarios from the past, from Thermopylae to Dien Bien Phu, are reproduced in war schools and alternative conditions are simulated, which can either confirm the results of reality or significantly alter them. This was once done with the physical reproduction of theatres of war, moving toy soldiers, artillery, cavalry. Today, it is done with sophisticated computer programmes, some of which are also on the market. Such simulations are carried out in the most diverse fields, from economics to climate, and their most common structure is that of modelling well known data to project their dynamics into the future for forecasting purposes.

Having said this, we have no intention of proceeding to the definition of a detailed wargame on the epochal clash between two conceptions of the current revolution, which would be very difficult, among other things, since factors that would be difficult to treat in the laboratory would intervene. Nevertheless, it is interesting to proceed in broad outline with our uchrony (= timeless, as utopia is = without place). Mental experiments (gedankenexperiment) have illustrious precedents and with those we defend ourselves against attacks from behind. The experiment without physical instruments and materials dates back to the ancient Greeks, but in modern science, as far as is known, it was first used by Galileo, while the term was coined by the chemist-physicist Oersted in the early 1800s. Einstein produced mental experiments at an industrial rate. Schroedinger left us his famous experiment of the neither dead nor alive cat.

To begin with, our incurable determinism leads us to observe that if the initial conditions were respected in full, with infinite precision, the game would be very disappointing: it would always give the same result. The uncertainty principle would have to be taken into account, but for now the microscopic and macroscopic worlds have no common language to understand each other and we take it for granted that we only move our pawns at the visible level. Chaotic phenomena could lead to unknowable situations, but at the moment, chaos scientists agree on determinism, so let's gloss over that, because to take the

first steps of simulation we will introduce a far more powerful variable than the proverbial flap of the butterfly's wings that causes the hurricane.

In 1920, as we have seen, two PSI delegations arrive in Moscow, one composed almost exclusively of right-wingers, the other representing the Communist Abstentionist Fraction. The 21 conditions were drawn up with the decisive contribution of the Fraction. On 2 August Bordiga replied to Lenin on the 'question' of abstentionism. He declares that he does not even want to touch on the nature of the problems raised, but reiterates that parliamentary action at that revolutionary moment distracts the proletarians from what they are trying to do, i.e. insurrection. He predicts that the International's action cannot be both parliamentary and revolutionary at the same time. He throws out a phrase to which the congressmen remain indifferent: 'I would not like,' he says, 'that with the participation of communist ministers in bourgeois governments the way would be opened, after the conquest of power, to the participation of bourgeois ministers in communist government. Which meant the dictatorship of the proletariat, an absurdity that unfortunately had already been seen in Hungary.

The uchronic variable is as follows. As early as 1919 Lenin, who in the general programmatic confusion is the only one in objective agreement with the 'Italian' Left, instead of insisting on the frontist road, thoroughly analyses the latter's path and recognises that it is true, as Bordiga says, that the communists are all anti-Parliamentary. At the 2nd Congress he demands that the conditions of admission be simplified, interpreted to the letter and applied on the spot. After which most of those present are forced to leave the Congress and the parliamentary 'question' is settled between the only ones left, i.e. the Russians, the Italians of the Communist Fraction and a few others from the minor parties, perhaps a few Germans. Bordiga agrees with Lenin on revolutionary parliamentarism and together they specify its meaning: destruction of parliament from within (the Left had effectively dropped the prejudice): the first parliamentarian who slips up is out of the party and out of the International. No parliamentarian resists democratic corruption and so they are all automatically thrown out of the party and the CI. The 'question' is extinguished. The consequences of the 2nd Congress of the CI are reflected in the 3rd Congress. From 1920 to 1921, as the glue of the CI failed, the faux-communist parties disintegrated. A fast track was established between the Bolshevik Party and the CPd'I, the only two truly communist parties. Discussions begin on the meaning of organic centralism. The system of parliament-like democratic congresses is abandoned. The heavy artillery of theory besieges what remains of the German party on two fronts. The tactic of the single front is considered a mistake, confirmed by the Hungarian disaster. The parties in the other countries, where of course only communist elements remain, are recomposed without regard to 'winning majorities'. With no remnants of bourgeois society in its way, in 1922 the Communist International accepted the Rome Theses and, on that basis, proclaimed the full fusion of the Communist Party of Russia, the Orthodox

Communist Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Italy. The United World Party of the proletariat was born with headquarters in Berlin. Contacts immediately began with the Chinese Communist Party for its dissolution within the World Communist Party. As a by-product of such a scenario, of course the Italian centrists get out of the way, starting with Gramsci who goes to study 'philosophy of history' with Croce and Gentile. Et cetera, et cetera.

Is this a game? Perhaps. But let us imagine that a comparable situation will arise again. It will be one thing to start out with the same view of the battlefield and the forces at play, it will be quite another to have verified what trouble a lack of theory can cause. It is as if we could give Napoleon the chance to repeat the battle of Waterloo or the invasion of Russia by changing strategy and tactics on the basis of proven experience. In the case of the 2nd CI Congress, decisive consequences can already be deduced from the hypothetical drastic measure on the conditions of admission, the full application of which would have wiped out almost all of the congressmen, obligatorily provoking a chain reaction. If this did not happen in reality, it is only because the prevailing politicking contemplates as natural the signing of a manifesto document that one intends not to comply with. The consequences of a reversal of this practice can therefore be imagined: each of the 21 points alone would have made a clean sweep. Let us not hazard further steps, but in the scenario of the possible we would at the very least have achieved the preservation of the world party. In the actual unfolding of events, only the memory of the Communist Left was saved.

Results Achieved by Humanity

The reader who follows us a little astonished at such an argument should rest assured: our current is in the habit of scrambling our interlocutor from time to time to test his or her resilience. In *Russia and Revolution*, just to give an example that serves us in context, to show in which fragment of time the October and its consequences are located, we take the subject out of context and, tackling the enigma of space and time, we make a tour from the atomists to modern cosmologists via Thomas Aquinas and Giordano Bruno. And all to say that:

'In space, the revolutions can be infinite, because of the complexity of social organisms on Earth... and all the more so if - suggested by the cosmic comparison - we think, as is fashionable, of the Martians and all the extrasolar planetians. In time, the series of revolutions has a beginning and an end: their series lies between primitive communism and the communism of our social programme'.

Thus, among the infinite types of possible revolutions in space (even virtual space, such as ours) there is the uchronic variant, provided it is plausible. In time, i.e. in the historical series of the maturity of the revolution itself, the Russian one ranks among the double ones, with 'overlapping' periodisation, as

the quoted text defines them. In the first case we have a scenario with open solutions, in the second we are bound to a given form, present in a finite series. In other words, the Russian revolution could only be twofold, but its outcome could be bourgeois or proletarian in an infinite number of ways.

Those who would base their knowledge of the great event that was the October solely on their own perception and that handed down by others, would dispense with this whole scheme and could read an entire library from it, extracting only what the protagonists said about themselves: vanguard of the world revolution, revolution against capital, betrayed revolution, building socialism in one country, frontism up to the great patriotic war on the side of the imperialists with various partisanship. And so on according to the sources.

We used to say that from the bourgeois outburst, the one that actually occurred, only the memory of the Left has been saved as coherently revolutionary. This is true, but it needs integration. There is not only the memory of the Left, there is also the real change in the world. Today, 2011, the time series presents only mono-revolutions, i.e. communist and that's it, no longer double, let alone bourgeois. The general set-up of capitalism is of a very modern type, with relative surplus-value drainage (machinism, automation, productive lightness, irreversible release of labour-power). Practical activism, that of those who believe they can transform the world by 'doing politics' in the old way still exists, but only as ideology, in fact political praxis has become exclusively parasitic (cf. The corpse still walks). Those who still conceive of the class movement and its leadership (party) as something to be built are but a residual remnant from the demolition of the Berlin Wall and all that it unduly separated. It is the revolution that commands, that chooses its instruments. First you adhere to it, then you give yourself a theoretical reason. It is no coincidence that Marx compares communism to a demon that can only be overcome by submitting to it. Practical experiments, he says, can be conquered with weapons, but theory is invincible and is bound to permeate everything. Handling ideas instead of facts is 'natural' because, as we have seen with Galileo, our sensory perception has evolved this way; but correctives are always easier to adopt.

When popular scientific works become best sellers and scientific pamphlets are placed in newspapers by the millions, disseminated like flyers at bargain prices, it does not mean that we are all becoming conscious scientists, but that the paradigm has shifted and industry can market and mass sell consequential goods. All this may be unconscious as long as one wants, but the revisionist currents that believe change is possible with talk in parliament have had their day. Of course parliaments exist and will probably exist as long as the bourgeoisie exists, but they have persisted out of mere inertia since they received their initial impetus with the fall of the Bastille. On the contrary, the 'real movement that destroys the present state of affairs' lives by a motion of its own that is reinforced over time and that needs to be understood. The theory

that unites the objective movement with its subjective understanding is the primary pre-requisite that makes possible the application of the 'social will', i.e. the overthrow of praxis. The work of destroying the existing must therefore be supported at the same time as the theory for the future, i.e. the conscious project of the future itself, is affirmed.

A part of humanity, whether communist or not, is coming to the conclusion that one can no longer live like this. The historical party is configured as the whole of this humanity. It would be foolish to think that the doctrine of the proletarian revolution, which emerged as a result of the bourgeois revolution, would die out. In reality it is growing stronger. The ideological capitulations of the bourgeoisie in the face of our theory are no longer counted. Even explicit admissions of the relevance of Marx's findings are beginning to take place (anyway, 'communism is dead', right? Red Terror Doctor with his bum doesn't scare anyone anymore). Apart from this, by far the most interesting phenomenon is the material shift towards the realisation of a 'mass' social brain. We were the only current in the world to consider the phenomenon important and to study it (even experimentally), extending Marx's hints; and now not only is everyone talking about it but they cannot help but do so because the development of a social super-organism is underway. Its evolution is there for all to see, it is spreading neurons and synapses, still proceeding according to the criterion of trial-and-error-corrections, but at an impressive speed and certainty.

When people spoke of 'organic centralism' in the 1920s, they did so more in criticism of the 'democratic centralism' that was still a remnant of the bourgeois revolution in the party. But the criticism was extended to the general democratic principle, a theme addressed programmatically in 1922 in the theoretical journal of the CPd'I. The adjective 'organic' (which has organs) was meant to be the negation of 'hierarchical', 'pyramidal'. Today, one no longer has to affirm by negation. In 1964, during the preparatory work on fundamental theses, organic centralism was very precisely referred to the biological structure of living organisms, in which differentiated organs contribute to the functions of the whole. In the resulting theses (known as the Naples Theses), a dialectic is introduced between the existing party, which emerges as the antithesis to the democratic party, and the party of the future, which will no longer have anything to do with bourgeois society. In the theses the basis of development is the historical party to which organised labour groups adhere, but the focus is on the fact that these contingent groups are a guarantee for the future emergence of the 'true party' only if they assimilate the concept of organicity to the full (Milan Theses). The task is immense, since it is necessary to prevent 'on the edge of time' continuity from breaking down, despite the counter-revolution, but there are no other solutions. The Theses of Naples say even more: as the revolution matures, the party that becomes its instrument as the 'organ of the proletarian class' begins to be no longer just a party that opposes other parties in a battle

for power, but to represent the interests of the entire human race. In this sense it will have to die out or at least become exclusively an 'organ of the species'.

There was a time when such talk not only generated rejection in political circles, but was not even understood. Today, we see time and time again that, as soon as they come out of communist circles, they are not only understood but appreciated, and it is now normal to be told 'I thought so too, but didn't know how to express it'. The proof can be found on the Internet. It is understood that everything can be found there, including the world's junk, but careful patrolling reveals a real epistemological emergency, and indeed there is no longer a 'there' separate from us, we are in it. As Kevin Kelly says, the boundary between the 'born' and the 'produced' (between the biological and the artificial) is beginning to blur.

For 2,500 years now, certain scientific findings have been overturning what our perception calls reality. Despite everything, we still today continue to place immediate perception at the basis of what we believe to be knowledge. In the political field, this happens more virulently than in any other field. It is certain that the maturing of the current revolution will upset this state of affairs, it is already upsetting it.

Reality, Will, Free Will and Revolution

Our current, elaborating on Marx's studies on the succession of social forms (in the Grundrisse), emphasised the importance of a 'doctrine' of modes of production. It went so far as to affirm, in this regard, that one cannot call oneself a communist and revolutionary if one does not recognise oneself in such a doctrine. This statement may seem exaggerated, but it is not at all, because in it is contained the essence of the revolution underway towards a communist society. Rarely do we read appropriate comments on those pages of the Grundrisse. Marx was not interested in tracing the historiography of why and wherefore man leaves a social stage without property, without classes, without social division of labour and without a state to plunge into a society that is the exact opposite and entails, as recorded in Genesis, slavery, forced labour and suffering. He was interested in understanding what this meant in the overall arc of human history: the history unfolded, the history in progress and especially the history yet to unfold.

The history of the transition from original communism to class-divided societies is revolutionary history. Man certainly de-humanises himself in the course of perfecting class relations, up to the maximum point reached with capitalism, but this de-humanisation is the necessary, revolutionary premise for a re-humanisation at an infinitely higher level. Marx approaches the problem by noting the steps in history that mark the progressive dissolution of the relationship between man and his means of production and reproduction. As the

dissolution proceeds, certain social forms correspond to the degree it reaches. Even in feudalism the process is not over, there are substantial traces of the original ancient relationship, common lands, shared resources, complementary interests between the subordinate and ruling classes. With capitalism the process of dissolution reaches its peak, but at the same time it begins to reverse itself. Production, although alien to the producer, is completely socialised. Private property itself gives way to social property, the capitalist becomes superfluous. The social productive force is more than sufficient and indeed excessive to provide humanity with what is useful to it. In the productive sphere, the degree of design of objects and events, i.e. the pursuit of the desired result, is very high, even though at the level of the economy and relations between human groups it is almost zero.

For the Left, sinking the detector into a history of millions of years means identifying a symmetry. The process of dissolving old relationships is countered by a process of recomposition at a higher level. At the extremes are original communism and developed communism. In between is the brief parenthesis of proprietary societies divided into classes. This scheme, which we have explored in more detail elsewhere (see e.g. n+1 nos. 27 and 28), demolishes the bourgeois one, based on an oriented, progressive 'arrow of time' from the primitive stage of animalistic humanity to the evolved stage of bourgeois humanity. Which is held to be naturally eternal, progressively ascending forever. This conception of history is shared by the entire loo-communist landscape, which conceives communism as a particular form of government, a super-reform of what exists today. For the loo-communist, history proceeds from the bottom upwards with technical, scientific and social progress, through indefinite 'change', but still in a linear process. Even revolution, as long as he still talks about it, sees it in the same way: instead of the catastrophic course he imagines a gradual preparation until the 'conquest of the masses' culminating in the seizure of power. On the contrary, the identification of symmetry is a break with common sense. Instead of time flowing unidirectionally, a perception shared by billions of people, symmetry brings the revolutionary process back to a 'space of phases', which can only be identified by abandoning common sense and adopting the scientific method.

We perceive the space around us as a continuum. We take two matches, tie them in the shape of a '+' and we have a formalisation of space in two dimensions. We add a third match by placing it at right angles in the intersection and we have described space in three dimensions. We cannot introduce a further match that is at right angles to the others, so we say that space has three dimensions and that this is a law of nature. Let us replace the matches with an abstraction we call x , y , z and make a mental diagram of continuous infinite space stretching over three dimensions. In nature, this space is full of objects, alas discrete ones. That nature functions on two incompatible planes? Never fear, each object is located at a point where the three matches, pardon me, the three

coordinates x, y, z , pass through. We can know the exact position of each object, placed at one of the infinite points in space. Have we discretized continuous space? Well, that little word 'infinite' brings us back to the logical paradoxes of the Eleatic school, but the scheme works: we can calculate the position of anything in space. As we move, a problem pops up and we have to add: as long as it is understood that we can only do this for one point relative to another. Speaking of movement: some objects are stationary, others move. Some are only stationary in relation to the planet on which we place our feet, others move in relation to... the planet and stars and galaxies etc. The matter becomes complicated. The matter becomes complicated; but, to make a long story short, we manage to reconcile discrete and continuous, i.e. we also manage to calculate relative motion in time, accelerations, then we discover the concept of mass and see that it varies with the variation of energy, and we arrive at establishing that mass and energy, space and time are not separate things but form a whole. We have just found a kind of theory of the absolute (which we call relativity, by the way) and we realise that, investigating the structure of matter, our beautiful theory of the continuum goes out the window: in the infinitely small, perhaps precisely because matter and energy are the same thing, as we have just demonstrated with extraordinary efficiency in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the scenario is completely different. Microscopic particles rebel against the usual calculations of the macroscopic world, photons and electrons behave as waves or particles depending on whether we observe them or not, we cannot reconcile position and motion, and we find that we have two incompatible theories about the universe.

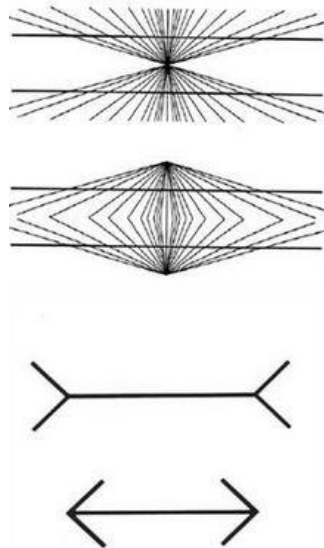
In the cognitive process that we have just summarised, man has gradually had to overcome the stumbling block of anti-intuitive solutions. Weight is not mass and gravity is not a property of matter but a deformation of space. The millennia-long history of science is the history of overcoming immediate perception, despite the fact that it itself cannot arise from anything other than our primary perceptions. While we wait for human knowledge to overcome the stumbling block of the new dichotomy between macro and microscopic, between continuous and discrete (probably in the future society), we keep this achievement. How will it be possible for so-called political activity to even resemble scientific activity? As the physicist Feynman used to say, knowing that in nature mass and energy are equivalent does not apparently change one's daily life, but it does change one's conception of the world and this in the long run has an effect on humanity, of which we are a part.

In order to emphasise the objective difficulty of bringing the study of human and inter-class relations at least to the level reached by bourgeois science, despite its basic tare of being developed and used under the sign of the ruling class and its ideology, we will resort to a very simple experiment. On the facing page, the two figures on the left show parallels that appear deformed due to the context. In those on the right, the lines appear of different sizes. If we

took a ruler and, in accordance with the experimental method, checked, we would see that the lines in one case are straight, in the other have the same measurement. In the natural context, the same determinations come into play, so our senses almost always lead to similarly distorted results. One might say: 'Just know it and everything is solved'. Not quite so. In the case of drawings, we know very well that it is a perceptual deformation, we have chosen them on purpose. Well, despite this, we continue to see the deformation. What prevents us from perceiving reality as it is is not just a Galilean fog, removed from which our thought runs free to operate its abstractions to transform observation into science. There is something deeper, which Galileo could not assume. It is our brain that over millions of years, between hunting, gathering and being hunted, has evolved this way; therefore it needs to operate an enormous forcing to force itself to explore hidden anti-intuitive phenomena. It is not the brain that 'creates' reality, as the subtitle of the book from which we have taken the images (cf. *Something, Out There*) states. Brain and reality, having co-evolved for needs that in the current evolution are no longer essential, are complementary aspects of the same reality.

Therefore, in spite of any theory of free will, we do not have the freedom to interpret nature, we cannot help but undergo a kind of constriction due to our biological constitution. Breaking this constraint requires a social change, and even then it is not certain that the changed perception will stabilise. With Christianity, for example, the advent of an oriented conception of time required no less epistemological effort to demolish sensitive evidence than it took to accept the wave/particle dualism in quantum mechanics.

For millennia, time was marked by the cyclical succession of seasons that had a correspondence in the celestial vault, just as for millennia light and heat were considered incorporeal radiation as opposed to matter (of which, by the way, atoms were also made, at least for those who had hypothesised them). Once Christianity became established (and this must be seen in relation to a social movement that upset class relations), the conception of oriented time also became established. The conception of time flowing, from Creation to the Last Judgement, becomes normal. But, on the eve of another revolution, the bourgeois revolution, the mathematicians of the 18th century shake things up again and take things a step further: time is neither circular nor oriented, it is symmetrical to a point. Deriving a series of observations from Newton's mechanics to formalise his theory, they realised that in physics, time is not as perceived in everyday (Christian) life. The speed of a body, Newton said, depends on the space travelled in the unit of time, so we need to establish a starting point and an end point, measure both space and time, and divide one by the other.



For the Religions of the Book, time begins with Genesis and everything runs smoothly: before creation there was nothing, not even the theory/perception problem. But Christians introduce oriented time, which has a zero point, namely the birth of Christ. Before and after, the counting of years can be expressed with a number preceded by a + or a - sign. For example: battle of Thermopylae, - 480; storming of the Bastille: + 1789. At this point we can take any point on the timeline, not just the Christian zero. Ti with Zero, which is also the title of a book by Calvin, we can set it whenever we want, at will. The before/after division can be generalised to any dynamic in time, and Newton's mechanics reveals that in physics the equations are symmetrical with respect to time zero, i.e. they do not allow a distinction between past and future. The implication is rather shocking: in physics, any calculation for the solution of a problem leads to the said solution only if there is an exchange between $-t$ and $+t$ within it. We are again faced with a contradiction to common sense, due to the fact that we perceive time as something flowing in one direction only, a reality to be sworn to. Things get much more complicated by introducing later discoveries such as thermodynamics; but the symmetry remains (Newton, by the way, intuitively a universal decrease in motion, a 'freezing' process very similar to entropy).

Let us now make a little connection effort: let us imagine treating the whole of human history according to the criteria of symmetry. Let us place class societies (a few thousand years, a point in comparison to the past and future millions) at the zero point. We will have a 'minus series' in the original communist past and a 'plus series' in the developed communist future. A communist symmetry of the history of our species. It is not intuitive, but once we come to the powerful demonstration, it is no longer possible to continue in the so to speak perceptive politicking.

We are told: but how can you be so sure that there will be a communist society and not something else? The answer is: the future society may be called no matter what, but it cannot represent a break in symmetry. Let's take an example: we insert a film into a projector and let half the film run. We have a series of events, or scenes, leading up to the point where we stopped the projection. We can try to guess how it will end based on what has already happened, but that would not be the best way to get results. We will have to project the whole film. And we will know, for example, who the murderer is. Our 'filmic determinism' was limited because of the partial knowledge of the whole, and the prediction was based on assumptions. But now the film is all turned around, we find ourselves with the ending in our hands and the credits on the opposite side. If we project the film backwards, everything that happens has a perfect explanation, not only because we have already seen it, but because the mechanics of the projection are given. In the same reel of celluloid we have the +film and the -film. The symmetry is perfect.

The complete cycle, symmetrical with respect to time, is the revolution of species. Communism is inscribed in our genetic code. The perception that it has to be achieved as if it were a regime to be established, to be built with materials offered for sale by today's society, is simply ludicrous. On closer inspection, the term 'revolution' is synonymous with 'communism'. Let us quote once again, in full, the famous definition of Marx and Engels that is somewhat the motto of our journal:

'Communism for us is not a state of affairs that must be established, an ideal to which reality must conform. We call communism the real movement that abolishes the present state of affairs. The conditions of this movement result from the presupposition that now exists' (German Ideology).

A few lines but of such power as to sweep away mountains of lucubrations expressed in Bolshevized third-internationalist political language. Communism therefore already exists, and it operates on the basis of a capitalism that denies itself. The revolution is underway, it does not have to be 'made'. Instead, what is the normally perceived revolutionary temperature? It is said to be low, close to zero. That the class is lagging behind the capitalist crisis 'situation'. That said situation is favourable but unfortunately there is no party. That the class struggle is one-sided, led by the capitalists while the proletarians endure an unprecedented level of enslavement. In short, the revolution would miss the train of history. A superficial revolutionary who plunges into this atmosphere of defeat jumps out of the window or at the very least goes into depression. The consequential revolutionary, on the other hand, sets off calmly: he knows with certainty that the world station, as Einstein said, will relativistically stop at that train. To set off again completely changed.

Democracy? Does not Exist.

We have spoken of perceptions in a very general way, but today it is possible to analyse our relationship with the environment with sufficient precision through a fairly in-depth knowledge of our sensory apparatus. To find out more, we refer you to two booklets, two very important syntheses, which we reviewed in issue 30 of this magazine and which serve as a starting point for more demanding readings. Obviously, the above apparatus cannot be modified individually. It is part of our genetic inheritance, and we have seen with the deceptive figures that it is not even possible to train it. However, our knowledge changes despite biological limitations, and we are able to produce powerful abstractions that help us overcome them. It is worth remembering that we share 98.4 per cent of the genetic heritage with the chimpanzee and that that 1.6 per cent gap is solely due to the co-evolution of man-environment-work-language, so that our existence as humans hangs on the possibility of abstraction, while otherwise we are 'naked apes'. We have seen that the evolutionary process cannot immediately affect the totality of a species: it asserts itself through mutations that, regardless of the speed of genetic propagation, necessarily affect a small initial minority. If we relied on a kind of genetic vote for evolutionary processes, non-evolution would always win, we would still be at the level of the trilobites, stopped half a billion years ago. Democracy in nature does not exist.

However, one of the main elements working against the subjective maturation of the protagonists on the stage of revolution is precisely democracy. This perfectly perceptive phenomenon has existed for almost three thousand years and has obviously been experienced in various ways depending on the epochs. In ours, the capitalist era, it is deeply embedded in the dominant ideology and has taken on particular aspects, linking itself more than in other eras to the mode of production: *liberté* and *égalité* are today terms closely linked to the market (free commodities, freedom to sell labour-power on the market) and to value (money is the general equivalent that makes commodities of very different qualities comparable). It is less easy to classify the term *fraternité*, but we can refer it to social cohesion within the ruling class, cohesion due to common political interests (which, however, competition reduces to mystification).

The enormous problem of democracy seriously hampers the subjective factor of revolution, both as far as individuals are concerned, and as far as the development of the collective will of the proletariat (then of the species), which for us is represented by the party. Before the advent of writing, we do not know how decisions were made. Texts recording ancient events and the persistence of so-called primitive societies today show that within a given society the need to make decisions arose only when bifurcations arose, whereas in everyday life an elementary technical division of labour was more than sufficient. In the case of abnormal events, the decision was taken in consultation between those

responsible for social balance (chiefs, shamans, matriarchs) and a 'senate', i.e. a council of elders. The representatives of social activity and those of memory could vote or not, we do not know, but they certainly reached agreement within a homogeneous social group, which did not yet know the social division of labour and directly represented the whole of society. In all other epochs, even in monarchical absolutism, some form of consultation, the king's councillors, etc., remained.

In the course of our work on the first great transition, we have argued, on the basis of archaeological evidence shared even by some bourgeois scientists, that the original communism ended not with prehistory but with the advent of even highly developed urban civilisations, not yet classifiable as ancient-classical forms, not even as particular variants. We have thus seen that our early evolution took place in the absence of classes, property, and the social division of labour until relatively recently compared to the traditionally accepted periodisation. We are still the product of that era, so we unconsciously apply the criteria of then to the things of now. So we believe we are using criteria of equality between individuals when in fact for at least three or four millennia we have not been equal at all, we are divided into classes and some possess what others produce. We are facing a tragic evolutionary schizophrenia, not at all 'psychological', induced by a material condition. Communism is in our genetic inheritance, as some naturalists (cf. Edward Wilson) are trying to point out without obviously using these terms; but the advent of new social relations has forced us to distort ourselves, even though atavistic memories of the original communism probably persist in us and in society. Egalitarian democracy would be nothing more than a memory of the old relations, mystified however by the advent of the new ones, namely the formation of private property and the development of a complete social division of labour.

Indeed, in the period around the end of the 2nd millennium B.C., a generalised social change took hold, and the civilisations of Europe, the Middle East and the Mediterranean partly collapsed, partly transformed. There are clear signs of violent transition, with destruction, fires, looting, as if there had been resistance from the populations in the face of change. The new social form that emerged was more hierarchical, pyramidal, headed by a monarch as an exponent of a dynasty. Forms of personal dependence turned into institutionalised slavery and the first forms of extended private property took hold. As a reference we can take the Trojan War, the collapse of the Hittites, the Mycenaean expansion and the so-called Dorian invasion (in reality a complex phenomenon of populations moving under the impetus of social change that they themselves contributed to).

In addition to the archaeological evidence, there are attempts at sociological explanations, and at least one, rather interesting one, at a psychological explanation, due to a very controversial author, Julian Jaynes (we

discuss his theory in detail in the following article). The psychological interpretation is, of course, wrong for us, but this author, in order to prove his thesis, lists a great deal of data demonstrating the actual change that took place in the period we mentioned. In practice, until then man would have acted under the impetus of natural drives, oriented by a religious superstructure, as if the brain had a 'bicameral' structure. Using our language, one part of the brain would have been dedicated to praxis and the other to the reversal of praxis. This reversal would have occurred with the perception of a direct connection between the individual and the deity, and this would explain all the mythical or historical literature about various heroes who 'hear voices' capable of guiding them to a goal. The collapse of the bicameral mind would take place within a few centuries, right around the middle of the 2nd millennium BC, and in its place 'consciousness' would be born. Rather than a modern scientific thesis, this 'explanation' seems to us more like an ancient cosmogony, and the author mentioned has attracted all kinds of criticism, first and foremost that no biological evolution is possible in just a few centuries; whereas from a psychological point of view, i.e. a change of mentality, we are undoubtedly facing a reversal of cause and effect. Nevertheless, the material supporting the thesis, although clearly incorrect, is very interesting from our point of view.

This is because something did indeed change in the period in question, and we refer to our articles on the first great transition in issues 27 and 28 of the journal. The populations of a vast area probably tried to defend the societies of the original late communism and had to abandon the ancient unitary conception of nature to adapt to the rise of property, class ideology, and individualism. The appearance of monarchs and dynasties in place of local basileis, hence of power conquered and handed down by violence in place of the previous organic and 'elective' power, disrupted the tradition. The kings were either dethroned and replaced with collegiate bodies or flanked by consultative bodies. In any case, the new forms of collegial power could only be a caricature of the ancient ones. Athens before the classical era was Mycenaean, and it is not known whether it knew an earlier late communistic age; but myth tells of a king, Theseus, who unified Attica. Archaeological finds confirm the Mycenaean origins, however it is certain that the monarchy was soon replaced by a republican proprietary aristocracy flanked by guardians of the laws. The ancient communistic order could not be re-established, but at the advent of ancient-classical society it survived in a mystified form, laying the foundations for democracy (in all Greek urban communities there was the bouleuterion, or gerontikon, where the city's representation met; and Greek historians already well describe the level of corruption and scheming achieved). This iridescent mystification, which has survived republics, monarchies, empires, heresies and revolutions for 2,500 years, possesses an intrinsic vitality precisely because it originated in a reaction to the upheaval that marked the boundary between original communism and class-divided societies. From mystified communism in the service of the first landed aristocracy to tout court mystification today,

democracy is one of the most toxic sources of perception, it is today's true religion that permeates everything and tames everything, at least as long as we remain in 'human prehistory'. It impregnates our consciousness with the same power as biological evolution, and overcoming it requires a greater leap forward than that taken by Galileo.

Perception, Mother of All Revolutions

The preceding pages would all be wasted if we did not end the present work with an effort to dialectically unify two apparently contradictory aspects:

1) the theory of revolution develops prior to the overcoming of subjective perceptions with the consequent possibility of doing science;

2) the occurrence of revolutionary rupture (or insurrection) following the growth of explosive class potential is due to subjective (mass) perceptions rather than scientific rationalisation.

As we said at the outset, before even beginning to address the subject, every revolution achieves victory when the unity of theory and action, of programme and instinctual spontaneity, occurs. In this sense the science appropriated first by a historical current, then by the formal organ of the revolutionary class

'is not bourgeois, although the developed and conservative bourgeoisie is quick to reduce it to class issues. Science is nothing but the spontaneous construction of the results of the technique of labour in its most advantageous processes, which is irreversible insofar as no one will be able to renounce it on principled and purely ideological grounds. Just as associated labour is a resource that transcends all frontiers, so is the recording and description of natural processes, once the obstacles of the old theological and non-theological schools and coteries have been removed for the work of critical demolition, which has become the overthrow of state powers' (Blooming Springs of Capital).

Social explosions are certainly not due to the consciousness of a clash between modes of production, nor to the desire to achieve a certain social order. The strongest impetus always comes from society in crisis, when men are materially prevented from preserving what they have achieved in the past. It has been said in our classics in all sorts of ways: when contradictions become irremediable, the existing society no longer permits living in the old way, but the new way of living is not yet on the horizon. This causes an unbearable perception of insecurity, precariousness, denied future, as if one were at a crossroads. It is in view of bifurcations such as these that the welding together of the historical party and the class movement takes place, hence the development of the formal party that can physically direct social tension towards expected and desired outlets.

Before these bifurcations of history occur, singularities that lead directly into the future, the flesh-and-blood representatives of the historical party can do very little, despite all the science identified on the basis of past achievements. Evidently, it is not just a matter of doing archaeology of the historical party, that is, of clarifying the 'red thread' linking revolutions or revolutionary episodes within a revolution. It is a question of representing, as far as possible, a bridge between generations, between past and future, a bridge between the perception of the need for change and the theoretical and practical tools that can make it viable. Theoretical as in programme, practical as in the development of the formal party in the negation of bourgeois categories. To summarise to the utmost: neither the party of science nor the party of revolution can limit itself to having consciousness of the world through the perception of reality without theoretical mediation; the social energy of millions of men cannot be transformed from potential to kinetic except through the unmediated perception of an unbearable reality.

At the level of 'experimental verification', in order to show how tenacious the effect of subjective perception is and how necessary a generalised social reversal of the phenomenon is (since, as we have seen, certain physical determinations cannot be eliminated), field observation of the multiple forms under which the current political movement presents itself can be useful. Even if we eliminate everything that is part of pure and simple conservation, the other great ensemble that would like to represent 'change', even today, indeed more today than in the past, clings to what does not change in order to... change. Which way will such an ensemble ever head when a bifurcation occurs?

It is normally thought that, in the face of a revolution that will disrupt the entire planet, small current behaviours of individuals or small groups cannot influence events. This is completely false. René Thom, with his formalisation of catastrophes and in criticism of the indeterminism that some would find in the theories of complexity and chaos, has shown that bifurcations are the precise formalisation of a deterministic reality: the line of events that leads to a bifurcation does not lead to indetermination at all but, on the contrary, determines the outcome. The victory of the revolution is strictly dependent on what happens first, and it does not matter whether the triggers are large or small:

'The artifice lies in making believe that the evolution [of the system at the bifurcation] is actually created by the triggering 'fluctuation'. A sufficiently complete examination of the basis on which the system develops makes it possible to predict a priori the possible outcomes of the bifurcation, which pre-exist the triggering fluctuation. It is the latter's role to trigger the process and possibly determine, with an apparently arbitrary choice, among all the possible outcomes the further evolution. But it certainly does not create it' (cf. Determinism).

Recommended Readings

- Marx Karl, Engels Friedrich, *The German Ideology* , Bompiani 2011.
- Marx Karl, *Theses on Feuerbach* , Complete Works vol. V, Editori Riuniti, 1972.
- Marx Karl, *Economic-philosophical manuscripts* , Einaudi 2004.
- PCInt., *Party and class* (the texts of the PCd'I, the PCInt. and *n +1* they are on our web).
- PCd'I, *Party and class action*.
- PCd'I, *The opportunist danger and the International*.
- PCd'I, *The democratic principle* .
- PCInt., *Elements of Marxist economics*.
- PCInt., *Origin and function of the party form*.
- PCInt., *The reversal of practice*.
- PCInt., *Notes for organizational issues*.
- PCInt., *Naples thesis*.
- PCInt., *Milan thesis*.
- *n +1*, *For a revolutionary theory of knowledge*, n. 15-16.
- PCInt., *lections of counterrevolutions*.
- PCInt., *The corpse is still walking*.
- PCInt., *Flowering Springtimes of Capital*.
- PCInt., *Russia and revolution*.
- *n +1*, *Fractal structure of revolutions* , n. 26/2009.
- *n +1*, *The first great revolution* , n. 27/2010.
- *n +1*, *Structural stability and morphogenesis in social forms of transition* n. 28/2010.
- *n+1*, *Einstein and some schemes for reversal of practice* , n. 4/2001.
- Bellone Enrico, *Something, out there* , Codice editions 2011.
- Bronowski Jacob, *The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination* , Newton Compton, 1980.
- Calvino Italo, *Ti con Zero* , Mondadori 1994.
- Kelly Kevin, *Out of Control* , Apogee Urta, 1994.
- Jaynes Julian, *The Collapse of the Bicameral Mind* , Adelphi 1984.
- Wilson Edward, *The social conquest of the Earth* , Raffaello Cortina, 2012.