

# When Death is Not Scary

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Bourgeois society is that of ultimate and perfect individualism; it makes every man a stranger to another, granting him only the modes of existence of exploiter or exploited. Already Marx in the past century denounced:

*"It is this society in which one finds the deepest loneliness in the midst of millions and millions of men, in which one can be overwhelmed by an irrepressible desire to kill oneself without anyone noticing. This society is not a society; it is, as Rousseau says, a wilderness inhabited by wild beasts... The relations between interests and temperaments, the true relations between individuals are yet to be created from end to end". Never as nowadays do men feel lonely, abandoned, atoms that capitalist productive forces disperse in an unaccountable universe and in an adverse, step-motherly nature."*

*"The recognition of human rights by the modern State has no different meaning from the recognition of slavery by the ancient State. The basis of the ancient State was slavery; the basis of bourgeois society is the man of bourgeois society, that is, the independent man, connected to other men by the sole bond of private interest and unconscious natural necessity, the slavery of utilitarian labor, of his own needs and the selfish needs of others. This natural basis, the modern State recognized it as such in the universal rights of man. And it did not create them. A product of bourgeois society driven by its evolution beyond its political strains, it merely recognized for its part its own origin and basis by proclaiming the rights of man" ("The Holy Family").*

*The more the traitorous bourgeois ideology glorifies the individual and nurtures the cult of personality, the more men, enslaved to capital, are crushed; never has the human person been so hailed and bowed down as in this age that "crushes it into masses like dust in a mortar".*

*"In the society of capital it happens that all relations between men and between them and nature are presented in an inverted way, as relations between things, commodities. Human relations themselves become multiple and highly mobile; the unity of consciousness and the generality of knowledge (formerly dominated) are shattered; the individual is particularized to the utmost. The more the product dominates the producers, the more the alienation of man increases... It is true that the category individual the category personality is not original and exclusive to society and the capitalist mode of production. But it was necessary for the advent of bourgeois class domination for individualism to reach its maximum historical expansion and for the individual to reveal all its monodistic and anti-human nature. Bourgeois individualism touches the greatest depth of human alienation" ("Il Programma Comunista", No.5, 1964).*

As Marxist theory well explains, it is private property that has alienated man, *"by the lending of his labor against money wages man has come out of his person and changed into a material form, the commodity"*.

No wonder that in this society, divided into classes and dominated by private property, religions still have such a hold, for as Lenin quotes,

*"where there is suffering there is religion. Fear and despair: hence the consolidation of religion. Fear in the face of the blind force of capital, blind because it cannot be foreseen by the masses of the people, and which, at every moment of the proletariat's life, threatens to bring it and leads it to the sudden, unexpected, accidental catastrophe, which ruins it, turns it into a beggar, into a pauper, into a prostitute, which reduces it to starvation"*.

As in Marx:

*"this state of this society produces religion, an upside-down consciousness of the world, since men are an upside-down world... It is the fantastic realization of human essence, since human essence possesses no true reality.... Religious misery is both the expression of real misery and the protest against real misery"* (*"For the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right"*).

Lenin again,

*"The weakness of the exploited classes in the struggle against the exploiters inevitably generates belief in a better afterlife... Religion preaches humility and resignation in this world to those who spend their whole lives in labor and misery, consoling them with the hope of a heavenly reward. Instead, to those who live off the labor of others, religion teaches beneficence in this world, thus offering an easy justification for their exploitative existence and selling them cheap entry tickets into heavenly bliss"*.

The individualism of capitalist society finds full correspondence with the religious concept of the immortality of the personal soul.

*"In no religion has the most blatant bourgeois egoism, fiercely contemptuous of the life of the species and charity for the species, been better grafted than in those which claim the soul immortal and in this fantastic form foreground the fate of the subjective person in spite of that of all others. It pains us to think of the transience of the wiggling of our poor carcass, and the refuge if it is not in the certainty of life beyond the grave finds a good substitute in intellectualist, and now existentialist, illusions about the unmistakable stigma that every subject has, or believes he has, even when it fits in the most sheepish way"* (*"I fattori di razza e nazione nella teoria marxista"*, *"Il Programma Comunista"*, Nos.16 to 20, 1953).

*"In the form of the exchange of currency and classes, the sense of the perpetuity of the species disappears and there arises the ignoble sense of the perpetuity of peculium, translated into the immortality of the soul that contracts its out-of-nature happiness with a loan-shark God who keeps this exorbitant*

bank" (*"Ad Janitzio la morte non fa paura"*, *"Il Programma Comunista"*, No.23, 1961).

In the earliest stages of human society, the age of primitive barbarism, when private property, family and State did not yet exist, quite another way was considered individual death, and another thing was also religion. Religiosity represented the *"higher stage of the evolution of animal psychology that had reached the human level and had not yet become an instrument of class domination"* (*"La chiesa del Patto Atlantico"*, *"Il Programma Comunista"* No. 22, 1959).

Not yet the class-divided society, religion was *"a historical bridge by which we pass from the instinct of the brute to the awareness of the laws of species behavior... one of the modes of human knowledge and representation, an initial stage, but not therefore less important and necessary in the long series of successive modifications to the enunciations of truth which one to the other are substituted"*.

It was then religion of the dead: from the burial rites of the dead, primitive tribes originated beliefs and myths, their religion. A bourgeois historian writes about it that the primitives *"had no other religion than the religion of the dead, and by the dead they swore, and to the dead they addressed their prayers, they fell asleep on their graves"*.

This was the age of primitive communism, and the common burial place for all members of the gens, regardless of sex or age of course, represented the tangible awareness of group membership and that *"life is of the species and for the species, eternal as nature and not as a foolish swarm of wandering souls in the extraworlds, for which, and for its development, the experiences of the dead, the living and the unborn in a historical series whose succession is not mourning, but joy at all times of the material cycle"* (*"Ad Janitzio"*) are worthwhile.

Death was still by men, society not being divided into classes, appreciated *"destruction of the forms of individuality"*, as Pisacane writes. In the system of reproductive relations and tribal social organization, men did not yet know the alienation and loneliness of individual life, and personal death was not feared; dying was not something obscure but the natural succession of generations, since for *"man, like any other species of animal, the individual like any other zoological specimen passes away and disappears"*.

There were elevated places, chosen for their special natural appeal, used as necropolises for the whole gens; here all tribes converged to accompany their dead and to perform burial rites and life ceremonies together since, in the presence of the dead, the continuity of the species was clear: funeral rites and life ceremonies, such as the collective ceremonies of fertilization, in a collective continuity, biological and labor.

These sacred places of worship have been found for all the primitive peoples of the Mediterranean basin and Asia, while similar customs have been found in peoples still living in our age in a primitive way. These cities of the dead testify to the care taken by our ancestors in arranging tombs similar to the huts of the living: life and death were aspects of the same reality. Sometimes, to close the cycle, the dead were curled up in a fetal pose.

Entire rock walls were excavated with great skill, megalithic stones were raised skyward to build the collective tombs of the gens.

A vestibule in front of the burial chamber was often found: it was intended for the ritual of incubation, that is, the custom of sleeping next to the dead found in all prehistoric peoples and among modern savages. The living sleep next to the dead to draw auspices or advice or for therapeutic purposes, for healing from diseases, which current non-science considers only individual. Evidence of how deep-rooted this custom was is the fact that, as the historian writes, *"all the way through the Middle Ages and beyond, from Syria to Ireland persisted the custom of going to churches to fall asleep there and obtain in sleep graces and healings"*.

In past communism, death is not an opposite, life-denying fact, because man is not a person but species. Evidence of this is the practice present in prehistoric peoples and today's savage tribes of killing the old, the sick, the incapacitated or infants when it is deemed necessary for collective survival. Thus writes the historian, failing to understand,

*"it is said that among the pre-Nuragic Sardis the old who had passed the age of seventy were killed by their own children, who armed with rods and sticks by dint of beating, pushing them to the brink of pits as deep as chasms, barbarously made them die and the cruel operation accompanied with inhuman laughter.... At some tribe in Australia, when old men fall ill or can no longer accompany the tribe on its wanderings, they are wont to be strangled with a rope made of herbs; then they are burned by lighting a great fire. In some islands of Melanesia they put old men to death by burying them alive. And in Fiji it is the children and relatives themselves who kill their old men by strangling them with a halter. The natives of Brazil also draw old people to death by beating them with clubs on the head. And a similar rite was already in force in Sweden, where old men were killed by their own relatives with heavy wooden clubs, some of which were later preserved in churches"*.

And he concludes that *"in antiquity the custom of killing over-aged individuals, as well as incurable individuals and the sick, is attested among many peoples"*.

The same mastery of life, and thus of all its manifestations and necessities including dying, is observed among the American Indians or Eskimos in the custom of old people who spontaneously go off to die, departing from the tribe, when they decide the time has come, after serenely taking leave of the living. But again these are societies that are not divided into classes, that do not know

the hell of the capitalist mode of production, and that is why men can so serenely see and feel their individual deaths.

The bourgeois historian in reporting the fact of these practices is scandalized, does not fail to mark his disapproval, to express his dissent for such inhuman customs. In his upbringing as a civilized man, he sees only the individual and his very narrow sphere of existence, and it is impossible for him to grasp the significance of this extreme act of love of the old towards the younger generation. Just as he does not understand the lesson that comes from past communism, neither does he realize the truly inhumane condemnation of the old in the modern, civilized age in the name of the vicious capitalist machine. Today old people are condemned to a social death far harsher than physical death. After a life of exploitation, after being squeezed by capital, for our old people comes the moment of condemnation to non-labor and total separation from the other generations, dead economically as a labor commodity even if biologically valid. In this sense, the CGIL has also modernized itself, which has not long been organizing apart from pensioners, in the Pensioners' Union separating their struggles and demands from the claims of other workers. There is nothing more pathetic than the parades of pensioners, old men who have been denied the prerogative of the elderly as always, that of passing on their class experience to the younger generation, and to the latter to learn.

Ownership of land, of hosts of slaves, of armies in arms, the rise of the monogamous family, the establishment of the State ruins primitive matriarchal communism; with the transition to civilization begins for men the process of alienation from self and nature, they lose their primitive sense of species, consequently the dissension between life and death becomes more and more dramatic. From then on, men fear personal death, and the various religions, closely linked to the interests of the ruling classes, instruments of social oppression, are powerless to relieve them from such punishment. It is capital and commodities that now dominate modern bourgeois society. And it is precisely the rise of the capitalist mode of production that makes the rift between life and death final for modern humans.

The very idea of the Last Judgment typical of the Middle Ages, which first emphasizes the individuality of dying and the personal account to be settled in the afterlife, still postpones everything to the end of time, to the last day of the world: precisely because individual death still does not mean the end of being: the end was that of the whole species. Only with the advent of the modern era, with the absolutization of the mode of production, death becomes an absolute personal fact, we come to the total reversal of the life-death relationship: "*in the mirror of his own death, every man covers the secret of his individuality*"; dying becomes romantic extreme affirmation, the last triumph of the individual. Today, finally,

*"the taboo cast on death paralyzes (see the insoluble impasse on euthanasia), inhibits the reactions of the medical and family environment; in our society death has lost the eminent place that custom has given it for millennia and is solitary and aseptic, inhuman and cruel".*

So come the Communist Revolution to restore wholeness, to restore men to life and death.

*"In communism (...) the identity of the individual and his lot with that of the species is regained, destroyed within it all the limits of family, race and nation (...) All fear of personal death (...) being for the first time society organized on well-being and joy and on the reduction to the rational minimum of pain, suffering and sacrifice, removing all mysterious and sinister character from the harmonious vicissitude of the succession of generations, the natural condition of the flourishing of the species" ("Ad Janitzio").*

*"Private property alienated man from himself: first step. Communism as negation of negation suppresses private property from the root. Result: man returns to himself, in himself; but as he had not started at the origin of his long history, but disposing at last of all the perfections of an immense development, albeit acquired in the form of all the successive techniques, customs, ideologies, religions, philosophies captured in the zone of alienation (...) Man is no longer individual man, but social man i.e. human man" ("Economic and Social Structure of Russia Today").*

No longer individual as a human person, a cell of society, but *"human society treated as a single organism, living a single life: in this form enters science the naive and sublime myth of immortality, attributed by child human thought to the individual"* ("Trivial Regurgitation of Enlightenment").

Conquered, then, is death, in the future communist society, as Francis sang, *"sister our bodily death, from which no living man can escape"*, which, together with brother sun, moon and stars, wind and water, fire and earth, represents the flow of species life in all its forms of energy.

Religion will no longer have any *raison d'être* in the future communist society, *"it will not be able to survive the environment from which it draws its life-blood: the class-divided society, of which the otherworldly world divided into hell and heaven is a fantastic copy in inverted parts"*. Marx writes in this regard,

*"The religious reflection of the real world can only disappear when the relations of daily practical life present men, day by day, with clearly rational relations among themselves and between them and nature. The figure of the social life process, that is, of the material process of production removes its mystical veil of mists only when it stands, as the product of men freely united in society, under conscious control and conducted according to a plan".*

*"In private property it was necessary to call oneself an atheist in order to assume that man existed, a different thing from natural matter. Having put man*

*back into nature, as an integral part of it, there became as useless to us religion, that affirms God, as atheism, that denies him. In Retirement God and His Denial" ("Tavole immutabili della teoria comunista del partito, Altri ponti su abissi", "Il Programma Comunista" No.5, 1960).*