

Communism and Human Knowledge

Introduction to a presentation of the Marxist outlook on the science of history, the human and nature

Following the “Elements of the Marxist economy”¹, which explained and commented on the first volume of “Capital”, we published in our journal “Prometeo” the article: “On the dialectical method”, as a transition to a new series, intended to explain what can be called “the philosophical side of Marxism”.

Marxism poses the question of philosophy in a way that is peculiar to it, and in this sense, it evades the attempt to be included in the various philosophies - whether in a historical sequence or, worse still, in a principle of order. We will therefore not say that there is a Marxist philosophy, but neither will we say that Marxism is or has no philosophy. This could lead to a misunderstanding and create a grave danger of believing that Marxism is "outside" the soil that philosophers have mortgaged for millennia. And from this could be mistakenly concluded that the Marxist fighter would be free - after having adopted some guidelines of political and social action and having "confessed" himself to certain economic and historical theories - to take sides for one philosophy or another: realism or idealism, materialism or spiritualism, monism or dualism, or whatever.

Now Marxism does not separate itself from the historically known philosophies in the way that the same ones do, namely to condemn the respective others out of hand; in terms of philosophy it therefore already occupies a specific position on this destructive side.

Many of us will remember Gramsci's statement at the 1926 assembly in Lyon, where he confirmed this position. Although it was thematically about the party's tactics, he explained the following in the long discussion: I would like to say to the Left to, at the end of the day, accept and share their thesis, according to which the commitment to Marxist communism is not only about joining an economic and historical doctrine as well as a political activity, but also implies a clearly defined and different view of the entire - also material - universe.

So, while Gramsci understood that the one who follows Marxism makes a commitment in his scientific and philosophical statements, and resolutely rejects everything that traces back to non-Marxist sources (may it also be the result of serious efforts), his posthumous epigones eclectically more and more tolerate any position, no matter how absurd, whether skeptical or religious, unbelieving or mystical, individualistic or state-idolising. In this manner of indiscriminately accepting everything and ostentatiously turning one's back on all principles, the ideological and theoretical ruin of the bourgeois world is reflected; and this phenomenon is opposed only by a constantly changing lamentation, that is, that the wise traditions and law tablets, or this or that, or the other, have been desecrated.

To remain faithful to our approach, i.e. not to bring these far-reaching questions back to the surface by means of new explanatory or original models of principle, we naturally resorted to key points in the Marxian-Engelsian work in the text “On the dialectical method”; For the sake of clarity, we added a reference point from the opposing camp, one can also say a direction of fire that we found at

¹ “1929-00-00 - Elements of the Marxist economy”: Elementi dell' economia marxista: Prometeo, No. 5, 1947, text written in 1929 as part of a training of political prisoners in exile on the island of Ponza.

Benedetto Croce²; someone who has presented his thoughts with remarkable logic and persistently defended his own, opposed to our, positions, of course without ever deviating from them.

We came across the following passage by Croce: "Dialectics is applied solely to the relationships between the categories of the spirit and seeks to resolve the old, bitter, apparently hopelessly entrenched dualism between value and non-value, the true and the false, the good and the evil, the positive and the negative, the being and the non-being."

We argued, however, that dialectics for Marxists has its place in those representations that reflect human thinking on the processes of nature, and that this way of memorizing, thinking, representing, describing, or "telling" is treated by us like any other group of relationships between material processes - such as between the chemistry of fertilizer and the physiology of the plant cell.

The abyss, the gap is thus between the two views. For Croce, not only is every description and explanation of nature and the world purely coincidental and secondary, but science and truth are to a certain extent the result of a concurrence of thinking with itself, a "Parthenogenesis³ of Spirit", in which at the same time the researcher, the research process and the explored are contained. For Marxists, on the other hand (obviously without stepping onto the slippery ground on which philosophical theory deals with the existence of the world and of things in itself as an object of knowledge, as well as with a fetish matter against a fetish spirit), so for Marxists, thinking and spirit are the last arrivals, the weakest, the - precisely because they are the most sophisticated and complex - most fluctuating and transient arrivals. In the difficult process of species life, of history, of knowledge, of organizing the struggle against the natural environment, people - in a long course of development - bring it about by means of sufficiently precise transmissions of "physical reality", which are therefore regarded as science, to systematize their structures and mechanisms. We believe that the assertion: "Science is possible" is true, and the premise of it is not to be raptured by that unfathomable light which, under certain mysterious circumstances, is set aroused in the thinking I. Or in the "Is"? No one ever really understood that.

Precisely because it is easy to mix a cocktail of technical terminology and specific vocabulary and to contrast them with algorithms composed of different conventions that are therefore not comparable, it is necessary to examine everything calmly from the outset. We will make use of a number of sections by Croce to do this in order to first of all deal with three points: Does he even think science to be possible today? What are the criteria for him? What are the Marxist criteria for him and to what extent do we accept his formulation of our statements, which he rejects?

Since we are not among those who believe that we can save Marxism, which is exposed to the harsh beatings of a hostile world, with the circulars of an organized center which wants to monopolize theoretical orthodoxy and which is enabled by a widespread organization to get parroted (*Class* science needs an organization *too* - which to Croce is unfathomable - but by itself it is of no use at all), though less and less successful, we must identify the greatest danger in denying scientific results, to which science, after bold advances and through the latest major discoveries, is certain to have arrived. This contemporary denial of scientific theses of course fills the bourgeois world with joy; the historical and class reasons for this are obvious.

² Croce, Benedetto (1866-1952): Italian philosopher and politician. Croce, also known as the "lay pope of the bourgeoisie", was an idealist, a disciple of Hegel; in his opinion, the natural sciences had transferred their character of knowledge to philosophy, for only the spirit was capable of knowing the true. As a politician, Croce was leader of the liberal party and antifascist, who in his writings evoked the liberal, "good old Italy" of the 19th century.

³ Parthenogenesis (Greek): Development of offspring from unfertilized eggs (virgin production).

That there can be a proletarian science makes Croce laugh. No one will deny, however, that the struggle of two armed parties during the entire liberal-revolutionary struggle - which he still feels attached to - went hand in hand with the struggle of two philosophies, one authoritarian and the other critical; This was expressed in a variety of literary and national phenomena, but one and the same dualism at European and world level.

The industrial bourgeoisie appreciated to declare science of natural forces beyond social and religious norms as possible, and ruthlessly broke all obstacles. However it was less pleasant to it then, when the claim was raised to become clear with the help of the same weapons - doubt, questioning of authority, criticism, induction - not only about the "skeleton" of substantial nature, but also that of human society and history.

Only in order to ward off this second frightening philosophical revolution did the now ruling capitalism withdraw its bold demand to be able to recognize the inner structure and dynamics of the physical world.

Benedetto Croce (who, in his zeal, repeatedly emphasizes that he is not a special friend of science, which in itself does not weaken his "construction standing on its head") is only too happy to rely on this consensus, which has prevailed in "modern thinking" for about half a century, but it is better to let him speak for himself:

"If I was asked wherein the major philosophical achievement of our age lies (without being all too aware of it), I would say, in the overthrow of positivist beliefs about which there has been such a radical change of opinion that it is hard to believe.

The natural sciences and mathematical disciplines readily granted philosophy the prerogative of the true and assimilatingly, yes even quite relievedly, they admitted that their concepts were useful, of practical use, but had nothing to do with the observation of the true. A German even wrote that the sciences were just a *cookbook* that people received as a gift to produce all the objects useful for life.

I will not mention all the names of the scientists, not least the philosophers, who carried out this necessary conversion, from Bergson and Poincarè in France to Avenarius and Mach in Germany. One can say that the finished work bears a collective character."

In this introduction, we first of all stick to the statements, we will come later to critique and refutation. For Croce it is therefore certain that the sciences - today, 1952, and after a struggle lasting several decades - "have transferred their epistemological character to philosophy". That may surprise the little man from the street. For Croce, at any rate, these are two different camps: that of philosophy and that of science. The citizen, who lived a century before Croce (we will in time go back to Croce's objection that Marxist theorists are also bourgeois; which does not bother us much, when the theoreticians of bourgeois critical philosophy were aristocrats or even priests), this citizen of the classical epoch of the antifeudal liberal revolutions, saw, through his glasses, the positive science conquer an area from which, as a result of groundbreaking discoveries, it first ousted religion, then also theoretical philosophy. This victory was, at least from a conventional point of view, a victory of the experimental method over the research that bowed to the writings of traditional authority, as well as a victory over purely speculative thinking. Priests and philosophers had hitherto been romping about in the realm of fantasy and dreams, but the modern researchers (in their laboratories collaborating more or less with large capitalist companies) were standing on solid ground and had finally led us to the undisputed knowledge of the "true".

We have nothing at all to object to the condemnation of the rhetoric and philistinism of the bourgeois class, which had dedicated itself to the idolatry of the positive sciences and served social purposes,

and, on the other hand, to prevent the powerful instrument of research from being used instead of for the entrepreneur, possibly to the benefit of his workers.

We now have to see how Croce uses the terms to regain the lost ground. Experimental science is first of all downgraded and the term "true" is banished from it. Our little man from the street would have said that priests and philosophers deal with the *abstract*, factory owners and scientists with the *concrete*; practically one understands by "abstract" something that is extracted from the tangible and can only be seen with the "eyes of the mind"; by "concrete" something that cannot be torn and held in our hands like frozen water, hardened clay coming out of the kiln or dry gypsum. The Englishmen as hard-boiled empirists describe with concrete what for us Italians is a cement mix - for the French this is *béton*.

Croce sticks to the concrete[...], he leaves the abstract to engineers, physicists and chemists. As far as biological questions are concerned, his precise thinking deserves to be addressed in more detail later on.

The word *empirical*, which means as much as experimental, is associated with *abstract* by Croce. For him, this is the way things are: A scientific law derived from a series of investigations and tests in the physical world is only a reasonable abstraction, with the help of which the researcher describes nature within his thought model. Since Croce is convinced of the nullity and hollowness of the "laws" that science has found and formulated, there is no reason for him to continue working on it. But of course, every time a certain amount of individual data is "sifted through" and classified into laws and formulas, you come to the universals, to the generalizations that again and again amuse Croce. So, if one wants to grasp all the common in concrete data, one is pushed beyond all the concrete cases that are no longer looked at one by one, but that are rather "abstracted" from. And it is clear that if we did not abstract, we could not read and write, and Benedetto Croce would remain unknown to us poor devils.

The following is now to be expected: Let's confine ourselves to an example from the wicked "mechanics". The law of uniformly accelerated movement goes back to Galileo and is taught in schools in the form that a way to be travelled is proportional to the square of time needed to go through it. The definition of this movement formula can be found by measuring the position of a moving body three times. Abstraction can now be used to anticipate a fourth position. We can now easily admit that - since the world has been turning and no matter whether we have a star a hundred times heavier than the sun or a particle of dust in front of us - four concrete measurements have never been in accordance with the law. If you will, the Galilean formula of uniformly accelerated motion does not exist in concrete terms. But both Poincarè and Einstein had rejected the statement that they had not made good progress with this knowledge and that they had not only built industry and technology, but also pursued science (and philosophy! - one that would have made Aristotle dizzy).

So all this is supposed to have been just a joke? And the cookbook turns out to be just a gimmick? Or are we not in any way summing up knowledge without which we cannot get along, let alone philosophize? In any case, this should be examined in more detail.

For the moment it's enough to faithfully reproduce Croce, nothing more. For him, therefore, science is a totality of abstractions and empirical data, and it does not lead to the recognition of the true. Nevertheless, knowledge is possible, but it does not take the form of a system of laws of nature. Rather, one comes to knowledge through and in the mind, and it reveals itself as the ability to form ethical and aesthetic value judgments. Better we quote him.

Croce eliminates the concept of cause from historical questions. "The concept of cause is undoubtedly the core of the natural sciences, which move in abstraction, and thus contrasts with what is necessary for history that consists in the concrete. With abstractions you can play and attribute a given fact to

one or the other cause. But with the concrete one deals with consciousness, whose voice does not deceive and exposes every deception if one wants to convince oneself or others of something.”

Thus, the causal laws are not inherent in nature, but arise at one's own discretion in the thinking mind of the physicist. There is therefore nothing that is certain, except that which is in *consciousness*. We are here presenting something that we reject strongly, whereby we are still trying to reproduce it correctly.

Through this groundbreaking light of consciousness, which points the direction so much better than that of reason (we forbid any polemics!), the only valid system can be established, it is obvious: “A philosophy of the mind that enables us to understand the world in its trials and tribulations, history.” And then the enemy camp is taken by storm again: “In this new sense history contains much more than is commonly thought, because it encompasses the totality of the so-called natural history.”

Of course, a historiography is possible for Croce, but it is limited to an endless and indefinite registration of concrete data and has to shy away from causal laws. With the historiography of Croce, it is like with a "meteorology of human events" which is forbidden to predict anything. Hence the contrast to Marxism, whose claim to record future historical developments makes him shudder.

“In such a historical reconstruction” (reconstruction, so indeed more than just registration) “I don't look at the people in their so-called personal and private life, but at their *works*, i. e. their *labour*.” We mustn't think we have a point of contact with Croce here. What he means by this is not average social labour, but on the contrary the extraordinary creation, the masterpiece. The author wants to leave the limits of the person behind him by means of an undoubtedly remarkable thought: “One must see that these are works to which the whole world contributes everywhere, so that it would be as simplistic as it is arbitrary to refer them to a certain individual.” They are therefore truly extraordinary, the greatest works “to which the epithet⁴ *divine* is attributed”.

In these extremely rare works, Croce recognises the "objective and facing the universal value", which he categorically rejects the experimental method and the description of the world by means of scientific laws to have. Those works that leave a trace and are milestones in the history of mankind have as mediators an author, artist or poet or, as Croce seems to concede, a legislator or governor. But if the individual is, in a way, too little, the community is too much; the world, both nature and mankind (perhaps the Divine? doesn't seem so), is mysteriously expressed in the works: “The works are certainly also created by the muscles and nerves of people, but they must not be mixed with them, and a kind of aversion grips us when this happens. Personal passions surround the works of men from all sides, but these are separate from and above them.”

Let's go on carefully: In these Plejades of greatest works, the only sphere can be recognised in which general values such as those of art and ethics, as well as logic, are valid; and these are the concrete certainties that can be attained (we all or only the sublime theories of genius, albeit nameless, spirits?). Not only has, always according to Croce, the contribution granted to all other people in their everyday life only a random, incidental and private character, so that any moral value judgement is excluded from the historical as well, because their bearers are masses of people or groups of people or social and political organisations. All right, but we confess that it remains unclear to us whether or not the values of good and evil established in that stratosphere of the mind should be applied to the behaviour of the individual, even if only in its "private affairs".

In other words, by ultimately revealing those highest values, dialectics gives us a compass with which we arrive at a classification and assessment of the deeds of an Orest or Macbeth; This certainly does

⁴ Epitheton (Greek): “the added”, “the later introduced”. An adjunct or an epithet.

not apply to the deed of a Brutus or Walter Audisios⁵; and we wonder whether it would help us with Caterina Fort⁶.

If we have poorly presented the construction of our enemy, we apologize for this. We are certainly the last to regret that, after almost all of science's territory has been disputed, large parts have also been removed from morality, and only aesthetics retains universal importance. We are not interested in rebuilding what has collapsed, but rather in doubting the durability of what is left over.

Let us reaffirm this point with Croce's own words: "First and foremost, I establish a philosophical theory of art, from which all its peculiar truths derive (...), secondarily a power called genius that breathes life into art alone."

Even if such a construction implies a (naturally not random and arbitrary) system of great works, and even if an invisible band connects the works, or if you like, the geniuses, with each other, whereby it is difficult to understand how, seen over time and space, this connection is established (no longer the word but beauty "has become flesh"?), it is clear that such a construction leaves *labour*, without exception of all people, outside and aside, as well as the forms in which this labour leads to production and to the spatially and temporally different modes of production. This activity of the masses has no history with him or forms only their half-exposed background and is not able to express their abilities, which all reside in the mind and are set free by the arrival of the geniuses.

And yet an epic speaks, of which we cannot say whether it is one of the great deeds and the old Hesiod belongs to the masters of poetry (couldn't one also, suddenly comes to mind, introduce a philosophical theory... of sport, with its masters and *exploits*⁷), namely the first Greek epic, of *works* and *days*. The word "erga" stands for both the works of the greatest and the labour of all; Incidentally, we still speak today of the *work* "Valkyrie" as of the daily *work* of the day labourer, and "téchne" means *technics* as well as *art*. Why should technics, the productive activity common to all at a determined social stage, through which technology, experimental physics and mathematics were laboriously created, only lead to vulgar empiricism and abstract "project planning"; and why should the greatness, the sublime, lie only in the art of the very few who are gifted with genius and great abilities, whose knowledge alone makes it possible to establish a doctrine?

Labour and art are the same for us, and since Dante and Scholasticism, violence has been the same sin within it⁸.

We do not say that art, respectively works of art, have no place in the doctrine of the relationship between the human species and friendly- or hostile-minded nature, but that a history of labour, technics and production can be written and on its firm foundation also a history of theoretical and applied science and one of art; their products, however, remain inexplicable if one does not manage to grasp the hard way to which all the living people contribute every day. "Érga kai hémérai!" (works and days).

In art, it is not the wealth of genius that expresses itself, but rather the stage the *wealth of the species* (Marx) has attained.

⁵ Walter Audisio (1909-73): Italian partisan and politician, according to his own statement he shot Mussolini in April 1945 at Lake Como.

⁶ Caterina Fort (1915-88): is said to have killed her lover's wife and children in November 1946.

⁷ exploit (fr.): excellent performance, heroic deed.

⁸ Even today, "l' arte" in Italian still has not only the meaning of art, but also of handicraft, trade, etc., i. e. of all "human works". And since in scholasticism labour is produced by nature, as nature itself is created by God, violence against nature as well as against labour (e. g. at Dante usury is an act of violence against "l' arte") is considered sinful.

The fact that the wealth of genius also goes beyond the narrow-minded limits of the person so deified by spiritualists and jurists is certainly a valuable but by no means sufficient statement.

After this, perhaps somewhat poor presentation of Croce's thinking, the second aspect we are interested in is his assessment of Marxism, which in some cases distinguishes itself from the traditional banalities and in others has to be rejected.

Where Croce speaks of the withdrawal of science in cognitive terms and shows that all contemporary schools of thought have embarked upon it willingly - may they have chosen transcendence or immanence, mysticism or critique as a remedy -, he adds that "one philosophy has kept away from this modern tendency: Karl Marx's historical materialism, a proud building, since it was apparently built already before 1848."

As far as this pride is concerned, and we gladly admit to be, everyone should be astonished, except those for whom theory is created without the help of empiricism. Of course we are empiricists, but on the scale of the centuries, not weeks - of which another time.

He then quotes Lenin, whom he grants the same scientific education as Engels; and with Lenin, "Materialism and Empirio-criticism" comes to mind, a book he knows only from quotations - an honourable confession that only one who has read almost everything can afford.

Well, reading the book would greatly disappoint him. Lenin subjects above all the theories of Mach and Avenarius to a comprehensive and merciless critique, but considers them to be done for reasons that would not be decisive for Croce. Lenin's whole argumentation implies that the "new" doctrine of natural philosophy was already in the old, now defused doctrines. As there are: Fideism, a system founded on religious and extra-worldly faith; Solipsism, so to speak the final destination of idealism, as for example found at Berkeley, i. e. the denial of the objectivity of the world. Lenin can assume that all these directions are unanimously rejected by all the participants in the discussion; In order to dismiss empirio-criticism, he therefore only needs to show that it denies the physical reality of the world, respectively assumes its creation, respectively that it sees in sensation and sense perception a phenomenon that has no connection to the outside world.

This approach is explained by the fact that Lenin turned in particular to members of the party who had taken up that philosophy positively and considered it compatible with Marxism; then also by the fact that the match seemed to be won once and for all in theoretical terms, because against the existence of God, creation, against examinations of the remarks of thought abstracting from biological life, etc. almost half a century earlier, schools as diverse as German critical philosophy, French classical materialism and the newer modern positivism, which only adheres to what we know from experience, were already united - even if the convergence was only negative.

This clarified, Lenin's work remains valid. It is enough to read it through a pair of glasses which is suitable to counteract the later "neo-anti-scientific" attitudes, as well as all other philosophies *founded in the mind*. For Croce, we think the "Anti-Dühring" would have been more conclusive to demonstrate our adherence to our old philosophy. We will come back later to the link between the two historical phases of Marxist struggle against their opponents. That the Marxists are far from and opposed to that *great current of cooks* is therefore a correct statement by Croce.

By the way, the labeling of "reactionary" philosophers still made sense at Lenin's time, when the bourgeois opponent still admitted to need anti-feudal and revolutionary theories or to have used them until recently. Today, on the other hand, when the only possible reaction is to preserve capitalism, it no longer impresses anyone, and Croce would not feel offended in his honour either. Good. So this point is settled.

Another thing is the fierce attack on historiography as Marxists would understand and practice it: "monotonous, hollow and terribly boring." Spare us the stories taught in Russia and elsewhere where Marx is Allah and Stalin his prophet. But how does someone come to judge the "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" or the "Class Struggles in France" as monotonous, hollow and terribly boring? Call them, as you like, drama or poetry, dream or annunciation, if the scientific power of reasoning escapes you or leaves you cold, at least: Hats off to ya!

Let us take a look at his definition, but let us ignore the aesthetic judgement which is actually a testimony of poverty! "The historiography of Karl Marx, whose power could be described as the radiography of history, makes in the great historical body, as the skeleton supporting it, the all-dominating economic structure visible." Let's just leave it as it is, even if it's meant to be ironic. Old schools also wanted to prevent looking into the human body and the argument that the scalpel could chop around in it after death (with the "cadavers of history" this is a lot more difficult) was not only brought under the earth by a memorable "philosophical" struggle, but above all by the discovery of X-rays.

From now on, we will oppose Croce's writing: "Thanks to this concept, Marx does not only interpret with certainty the entire European history of the last two centuries, but without hesitation also the universal one, because its essence is always the same with him: The unworthy exploitation to which the peoples have always been subjected by the ruling minorities". According to its content, the statement is misleading because in certain phases, dominant minorities have freed certain classes from exploitation; formally even more, because "unworthiness" is an ethical judgment that is foreign to Marx. But let's go slowly and let him have his say again: "History is history of struggles, and communism does not want to know anything about struggles, except to put an end once and for all to all struggles through violent action. (...) Its ideal" (sic!) "is peace among men; but since the struggle, according to this belief, comes from evil's actions against good, the means to rid it of it is to put evil out of the world; and since (...) the reason for evil lies in private property, private property - the most evil of evil - must be abolished." And then there's the finale: "When evil is then eliminated, doubts must arise as to whether history, the history of battles, can continue."

We Marxists, on the one hand accused of wanting to "end history", on the other hand, according to Croce, have not even noticed the actual difficulty of not being able to define what is "not exactly a very varied period of history", because aiming at eternity, it is rigid and always the same. So we are placed on the level of Christianity, which seriously assumes that behind the valley of Jehoshaphat there would be no sin, therefore no more penance, life ends just as death ends, and we are blessed or condemned for all eternity.

Come on, now! If a referee were to be there, we would raise our arms like a cyclist sandwiched in the final spurt or a footballer who is being irregularly pushed. But there is no referee, and the quarrels and fights (that may restore our opponent's peace of mind) are not over.

If we want to represent Marxism "literally", we read at the beginning of a certain "Manifesto": "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." And a certain Engels then wrote that with the communist revolution human history ended. So we do not claim that *history* will then be unable to *proceed*. On the contrary, it is the prehistory that is completed, and then history begins! We may well claim the end of *class struggles*. Does that mean a rigid succession of identical days? Just a moment, please, we'll answer right away. In a comment to the first sentence of the Manifesto, it says that *written* history is the history of class struggles, because the original life of the human species, as discovered after 1848, shows epochs in which no class struggles had broken out and the primitive Gemeinwesen lived communist.

You are thus assigning to us a wrong scheme, namely a long history of class struggles between oppressors and the oppressed, and then, after the last battle, a future communist Eden, in which there is an everlasting and eternally constant peace.

Our "official" scheme, however, is a completely different one: *pre-pre-history* of primordial communism (for you: barbarism) - the *pre-history* of humanity told in your belligerent epics, which consists of cruel class struggles (what you call the civilizations which take turns or the actualization of mental values) - *history* that begins with the sublation of classes, for whose immense fertility you are blind and which we can only foresee in a small part.

The mere "unawareness of the sequence" would not be bad: so we have to get closer to the core of the question.

It may be that the oldest utopians reduced the question to the fight against an evil principle that can be found in every human organization, which could be eliminated one fine day after it was finally "isolated" like a virus - thus opening the era of a happy humanity. They could be accused of seeing only a clash between good and evil in history, with the good finally taking victory. But it's Marx, of all people, who has eliminated such shallowness once and for all.

It is not the collision between evil and good that gives birth to the fight: Rather, it is a necessary transition and a prerequisite for a whole series of successive battles, and finally for the decisive struggle that people like to make fun of. Each transition is equally necessary for the others, each fight is "good" for the whole process, i. e. useful. When primitive communism had to step down and the primal proletarian class entered the stage, we did not shout: Back off, evil, let the good endure. If we had bought tickets for the whole history play, we would have applauded and shouted here: Finally! For how could the productive forces have developed if landed property, property in things and even in humans had not been created, from the very moment when the number of people grew larger, the arable land scarcer and the distances between the tribes were reduced.

Croce and his people need a true, yet uninvented radiography à la Röntgen, in order to discern the eternally equal spirit in all people, or the same values, so that they can explain the meaning of domination and freedom, of slavery and liberation. We work with what is *abstract* for him, i. e. with the *empirical* number of inhabitants of fertile soil, the quantity of wheat or rice they are able to extract from it, and other small things and say: When the curtain rose on this act, communism was evil and the division of the land good.

These constant upheavals are the key to history; and each time not only the "values" - what has been considered evil in the ordinary thinking of mankind so far becomes good, or vice versa - are reversed, but the same class that still has the old ideology on its neck becomes the precursor of the now new result.

If we were not denied to make concrete statements, we would call the struggle of the bourgeoisie, in so far as it was the suppression of the feudal institutions, a revolutionary factor. We do not condemn this great battle with the cry that is unbelievably put in our mouths: "Long live peace!" Above all, this struggle *could* not have led to *any* social peace, not even between states - that is clear. On the contrary, we wanted the bourgeoisie to win as quickly as possible in order to begin the *other struggle*, that of the modern proletariat against the bourgeoisie. In history, therefore, the bourgeoisie plays a good and an evil role, its struggles are good and evil, peace is good and evil as long as capitalism exists, neither good nor bad, because it is impossible to realize, etc. and so on. Others may express their opinions and argue with each other on all this, but we do not need any more examples to show that *we have never even dreamed of smuggling good and evil into history; it was Marx who drove them out of it by chasing away the illusions that history had become its actualisation "as a profession"*.

Now then what shall we do with them if they have already been driven out of history?

But our opponent wants to catch us in "mysticism" because it is certain for us that this struggle, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, is the last one and does not lead to the emergence of a new ruling class, but means the end of the division of society into classes.

According to Croce, this statement is arbitrary and taken out of the air, because the determination according to which struggle generates struggle now leads to the opposite conclusion, namely that struggle produces peace. Spare us this bullshit. When two states stand by their feet with guns instead of fighting each other, it is called peace because everyone keeps their territory. If within a state two classes do not clash and the balance of power and the way of production remain unchanged, then this is called social peace, namely class cooperation, which is not only not our "ideal" but what we detest the most.

As little as the proletarian revolution will sign an "employment contract" between capitalists and workers, it will sign a "peace treaty" between the classes. It will first put an end to the class rule of the bourgeoisie, then to the economic relationship between capital and wage-labour.

This transition does not have a new and peculiar character because a Marx or a Marxist party has emerged to explain: We have found out that evil is private property and the highest good is social peace. But because, for the first time, the totality of the conditions that only capitalism was able to create exists: social production and consumption on the world level, breaking through all self-sufficient spheres of life, potentiation of the mechanical and general physical forces applied in production.

Well, so there won't be any more fighting among humans? First of all, the world is vast, capitalist production has not even covered its largest part; There are oases whose sandy and muddy soils have not yet been fortified by the capitalist foundation. And even after the overthrow of bourgeois power, the greatest efforts are needed in the entire industrialized world, thoroughly networked by developed capitalism, so that not only the material fetters are broken, but also the ideological confusion and internal brutalization and atrophy of mankind are overcome; This is a matter that will last for generations, although it is not yet possible to foresee which changes this transition is still "geographically" bearing, across the continents.

But when we say that the military, ideological and political struggle is only the result of economic pressure, it also means: "In the beginning there was the struggle", which will never stop. The economic pressure is a pressure generated by the physiological need, a struggle that every living being fights for its food every day. While one animal competes with the other animal for food, man as a social animal begins his species life in groups that fight together for food and their livelihood in general against nature, and it is only the imbalance between the means of satisfying needs and the way in which they increase that causes the struggle between human groups or classes of people; As soon as the species' ability to accumulate resources grows, every motivation to fight for their distribution disappears.

That is why, after the victory of communism, the struggle does not stop, but is a struggle in solidarity between the united humanity to overcome the difficulties that block the way for the common utility. Of course, you can say that resources are always won by certain groups, while others are only concerned with snatching them back from them; but we will then discuss this on the basis of empirical history.

But don't overlook the fact there that labour is also struggle, that collective production is struggle, as well as the development of natural energy, and it will never end. If, however, battle for you is only associated with trauma and blood, then compare the number of those who died in car accidents in the 20th century A. D. with those killed in the 20th century B.C. by arrow or sword.

No, you philosophers, calm down, with communism history will not end, but mark the beginning of its richest phases. The proof of this is so striking that we do not need to resort to extraterrestrial explorations... or wars with Martians (to enrich the development of future generations with a dash of drama); Such science fiction stories would certainly allow the *spirit* to find peace of mind in the face of the horrible prospect of its imminent retirement.

Let us now drop this subject of good and evil, which was unexpectedly pinned on us, and let us turn our attention to another one that gives Croce, or rather his expertise, a better testimony. "Highly characteristic of the inner essence of communism (...) is the dislike, indeed the aversion, which it has always shown towards a basic concept of spiritual and historical life: that of 'freedom', which not only does not exist in the old utopias of the 'City of the Sun'⁹ type, but is also opposed by the modern communist parties (...)."

And this despite the worldwide contamination caused by nominally communist parties, which talk about *freedom* at every appropriate and inappropriate opportunity. But what is really important is his reasoning: Croce comes at Babeuf, who, in the first communist call of the "Covenant of Equals", in a way allowed bourgeois (formal) "liberty rights" to apply, but insisted on adding "actual freedom". Many anarchists today still talk about conquering social freedom after political freedom. "Fools," says Croce, and he's right about that: "The concept of freedom is *always formal*, i. e. 'moral' and never conditioned by the possession of special economic goods". He could also say more simply: Whoever is free can be poor - and whoever is poor can be free.

The actual turning point is not badly named by Croce: Marx "advised to support the liberal forces against the absolutist regimes in order to separate from the opportunity allies immediately after the victory". Absolutely right. Between bourgeois and proletarians there was a historical - and unique - encounter, but *never* a, let's say, "philosophical" one. There are no common "ideals" and no common "cultural family tree". Croce himself has made it clear that *one cannot rely* on the liberal bourgeois demands in order to move on to the social and economic ones. It is not the case that liberalism has *stopped halfway*, and we now have to move forward alone: it *stands in the way* of our social objective, from the very beginning.

It is therefore pointless to talk about *formal* or *moral* freedom, or freedom even without adjective. It is a hollow word and the Marxist who uses it, even if only for agitatorial purposes, is a swindler of the worst kind, because he mystifies what he pretends to fight for.

Yes, gentlemen, it is indeed the case: for Marx "the entrance door to communism was the dictatorship". You *fear*, not only temporarily? One prefers to answer like Michel Ardan, a figure of Jules Verne, who was asked: How are you going to get back from the moon? Let's get there first, he said, then we'll see.

For Marx, the "transition brings with it the abolition of the state". Quite rightly, the state, "i. e., the first institution that guarantees freedom and this guarantee has a legal form", Croce adds with no less clarity.

Anarchists who, imprudently, want to set foot on the liberal step (as if the great old Babeuf would stand there) - think about it.

We Marxists are playing with open cards in theory: To hell with freedom! And to hell with the state!

⁹ The City of the Sun: Work published by Tommaso Campanella in 1623 about an ideal state without private property.

Croce, who wrongfully ignored our statements about the struggle and history, then comes up with a passage where Marx calls the communist revolution "the leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom".

Where should the contradiction lie? Not the spirit, which is so free that it dissolves into air in one away with the quietest breath of wind, but the individual is to be liberated. We'll explain it to you: The ordinary or extraordinary individual is subject to the law of determination and bound to *necessity*: It not only doesn't do what it wants to do, but it doesn't know what it does either. As long as classes fight against classes, society, the human species, obeys these constraints of *necessity*. But when history leaves behind the drama of class societies, society as a whole - not its individual parts - is freeing itself from powerlessness that has been going on for millennia; it directs technics and labour and colossal human activity, and therein lies the only actual liberation - and also the first, insofar as consciousness and knowledge occur for the first time, which you believe to be attached from the very beginning to the light of the spirit.

Babeuf (again him) was the first to lay the foundation for the devaluation of Marxism, for the disrespect "for all forms of spiritual, religious, philosophical, scientific, poetic life", for he had dared to say (unfortunately we don't know the fantastic passage): "the value of reasoning is a matter of opinion; but it is necessary to examine whether the value of the very natural and physical power is not equal to it".

Well, the pessimism that shimmers through on every side of Croce justifies drawing a negative balance of the work of thinking and consciousness: If they are the absolute "values", i. e. the only variables whose *income* and *expenses* can be reliably registered, this naturally leads to a *balance sheet*. At the summit of this much-vaunted culture, which rightly finds us guilty of being disrespectful and iconoclastic towards it, the balance sheet could hardly be more catastrophic.

Babeuf, who may have expressed himself unhappily as the author of the first revolutionary appeal concerning the illusions of freedom and believed that the *proletariat* would emerge from the deceptive shell of the *bourgeois*, nevertheless gave the signal for the new awakening of the class.

Not the minds, but the bodies need a natural and physical power, which is called struggle, revolution and dictatorship; because when the barriers relentlessly set by necessity are finally broken down, people will be moving towards vast territories in which they will develop an enormous and complex activity; and the deformed and distorted results of the use and abuse of intelligence up to now, as well as the hypocrisy of an examination of conscience, will be overcome, so that they are rightly part of prehistory, in whose darkness and infamy we are still plunging.