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THE CONNOTATIVE ASPECT OF THE CONCEPT OF CLASS

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Introduction

The purpose of this thesis lays in demonstrating that speaking about class does not simply consist in classifying society by income and social status, but it entails also a sociological aspect which requires to be considered when dealing with class concept. Therefore, this thesis aims at analysing the denotative and connotative dimension implied in the concept of class, and the way in which these two aspects interact with one another.

In order this investigation to be supported, Marxian philosophy will be retrieved and it will be analysed in terms of interclass relations.

In particular the thesis will be divided into four main chapters. In the first one, we will consider the origin of the term class and all its contemporary interpretations and, by doing so, we will try to find a proper description of the concept.

In Chapter II, we will investigate Marx's use of class with particular attention to all the social kinds and roles conceived by the philosopher.

Chapter III will be devoted to the analysis of the connotative side of the class concept, by taking into consideration Marxian concept of Alienation and its connection with the demise of Capitalism.

After these investigations having been carried out, we will then introduce Chapter IV, the last one, to show how considering class consciousness and its relatedness with men's freedom and rights is crucial when dealing with the concept of class.

Before carrying out a deeper investigation of the matter, it is seems reasonable to explain why analyzing these two complementary sides is a necessary issue when speaking of class.

The term class intuitively calls back a set of individuals within the society which have some characteristics in common, from the mode of lives to the most general interests.

From the aforementioned definition, we can infer two basic concepts concerning the term class: first, the existence of a class implies the presence of individuals; second, these individuals are grouped together because they present some similarities.

Obviously when some individuals have the same income or share the same mode of life is an objective and visible fact, but what about the relations among these individuals?

Whenever people end up living an identical condition, at work or wherever, they start building some tight relationships which identify them as belonging to the same class. Since the membership is a spontaneous and natural process, people are not aware of the fact that they appertain to the same class, at first. Basically, the class is just a class “In sé”. As the consciousness of being member of the same class gets stronger, so do the links among the members. Individuals start building a consciousness process making them more aware of who they are and of what their goals are; in this sense individuals shift from being a class “In sé” to being a class “Per sé”. As such, they protect their interests; shape their identity and defend their rights.

An outstanding example is the modern society where the most powerful party keeps on dismantling the interpersonal relationships for protecting its own interests. The introduction of mechanized means of production has deeply altered both the work environment and the relational dynamics among individuals. For instance, in the most industrialized countries it can be seen how the production has radically changed: workers who previously worked side by side, have been substituted with small production units in which the personal relations are constantly becoming scarcer. All these changes have inevitably affected the social context and the way in which workers perceive the surrounding environment, resulting in many cases in aggressive protests and strikes.

CHAPTER I

1.1 General overview on class concept and its contemporary interpretations

The term class derives from the latin word “Calassis” meaning the multitude being rallied. In The ancient Rome the classes indicated the groups which were convened to vote during the Universal suffrage. Broadly speaking, it refers to a set of elements having some common characteristics. However, when speaking about class, it is important to notice that it is not merely a word, but it is a real concept, entailing several variables and a variety of connotations.

In the post industrial societies criteria applicable for class theorization are difficult to find. To overcome this obstacle, it seems reasonable to outline how class has been examined throughout the contemporary social theories.

Generally speaking, in identifying classes, researchers appeal to either Karl Marx’s or Max Weber’s theory. According to Max Weber, class is linked to three dimensions: income, prestige and power. To these variables, also living standards and education may be added. This multidimensional system allows higher flexibility and effectiveness in the understanding of the social stratification, even in the most complex societies. For instance, an individual can possess a relative high social prestige, but a correspondent low level of income. Conversely, a person who occupies an egregious social position can have a lower remuneration than that provided to an individual with a lower social status.

Even though these are the most common approaches, finding an absolute definition of the term is still a controversial issue. Also Robert Morrison MacIver’s thought, a Scottish sociologist, political scientist and educator, appears to be contradictory. At first, he explicitly states that what differentiates class from class is the “Economic political or ecclesiastical power (...) distinctive modes of life and cultural expression”¹. However, he broadens his definition at a later time, by adding that the barriers which separate the classes from one another are far from being clear and well definite.

¹ R.M. MacIver, “Society”, New York, 1937,p167

The problem is that the concept of class has not been rigorously defined and it has never been tested empirically. Researchers have tried to explain many discrete and different variables by this term, with the result that none of them has been described successfully. In addition, the inefficiency of the theoretical apparatus used for this kind of investigation does not allow researchers to collect and interpret data properly.²

Provided the difficulty of finding a single definition for the term “Class”, the following paragraph will aim at clarifying the concept of class, by relying on different theories and thoughts.

1.2 Analysis of what constitutes a class. Differences and similarities with respect to: communities, associations, elites and social classes.

- **A Class is not a Community.**

Communities do not possess an objective connotation; in fact, they exist as long as the individuals forming them consciously share mutual goals and common interests.

On the other hand, class implies an objective dimension, depending on similarities in terms of occupation, income and living standards.

Obviously, class does not only consist in grouping individuals in relation to their wealth, but, as said in the previous paragraph, it denotes also a subjective dimension based upon human relations and social ties.

The bottom line is that if the class is a set of individuals sharing same experiences and mode of lives, these individuals will build relationships with one another, and by doing so, they will start developing the sense of class consciousness. So, class can be regarded as a community whenever this sociological aspect and “The ramifications into which class position led these individuals”³ are taken into account.

If the borderline between community and class is pretty fleeting, a more profound difference exists between class and organized group.

- **A Class is not an Association (or organized group).**

² George Simpson, “What Class is Not”, American Sociological Review, Vol.4, No.6 (Dec.,1939) p.827

³ George Simpson, “What Class is Not”, American Sociological Review, Vol.4, No.6 (Dec.,1939) p.830

Associations have well specified interests and goals, unlike class. Probably the only interest of class which is easily definable is that expressed in terms of class position.

Paul Mombert supports this idea by spotting the importance of distinctive characteristics for allowing a class to exist.⁴ In his analysis, defining classes' interests in objective terms represents the starting point for investigating human relations.

For the purpose of our analysis, Paul Mombert's thought results to be crucial. In fact, in his analysis of class, his main concern relies on blending the two dimensions having been mentioned so far: the objective and the subjective one.⁵

At the light of these events, understanding the importance of both of these connotations is imperative. In fact, the aim of this thesis aims at demonstrating that class is not a mere word, that is, it is not only definable from a denotative point of view, but it is a concept which entails a deeper understanding of human condition.

When analysing this concept, the objective and the subjective spheres have to be counterbalanced: after the investigation has been tested as useful for empirical use, it is possible to analyze individuals' actions and reactions.

• A Class is not an elite

Elites conflict against one another for gathering the ruling power and extrapolating resources from a "Non-elite group"⁶. Elites result to be very similar to a ruling class in the act of expropriating someone else of his/her own work. However, unlike classes, they mainly conflict against rival elites, rather than against the oppressed classes.

In their race for power, "The expanding elite may deeply alter the relation of productions through its enhanced organizational capacities and, by doing so, it can be defined as class fraction".⁷

⁴ Paul Mombert, "Class", Ency. Soc. Sciences., Vol.3, New York, 1930.

⁵ George Simpson, "What Class is Not", American Sociological Review, Vol.4, No.6 (Dec., 1939) p.831

⁶ Richard Lachmann, "Class Formation without Class Struggle: An Elite Conflict Theory of the Transition to Capitalism", American Sociological Review, vol.55, No.3 (Jun., 1990), p.401

⁷ Richard Lachmann, "Class Formation without Class Struggle: An Elite Conflict Theory of the Transition to Capitalism", American Sociological Review, vol.55, No.3 (Jun., 1990), p.401

The connection between means of production and conflict is very similar to the model proposed by Marx in his theory of class struggle, even if Marx's model relies on the interclass rivalry and not on the competition among the co-existing elites.

- **“Class” is not “Social” Class**

We find here a situation very similar to that encountered when we have analyzed the relationship between class and organization. In fact, when speaking of social classes, we are referring only to the subjective sphere of human relations, we are reasoning only in terms of feelings and perceptions. Social class has overridden the infinite fragmentations of the social apparatus which, then, appears more as a continuum, rather than a stratified hierarchy with narrow circumscribed class divisions. In fact, unlike class, social class excludes the objective connotation.

Broadly speaking, social class is a standard for investigating subjective interactions with respect to the individuals' emotions and thoughts. Therefore, the concept of class is not entirely explained by social classes, rather they can be considered as one of its subcategories: they catch only a part of the class concept, omitting its objective side.

Werner Sombart, German economist and sociologist, regards individuals' awareness of cohesion as a standard for defining the social classes, by explicitly stating: “So, as long as a community interests have not been impressed in the consciousness of the individuals, social class cannot exist”⁸.

What is the problem in considering only the subjective dimension? If the distinction among classes resided only in the so called “Feeling of class differentiation”⁹, an individual would belong to a class simply because he feels so. Paradoxically, an unemployed man and a full- employed worker could belong to the same class, unless the latter feels otherwise. So, if this criterion of class differentiation was valid, all the differences in living standards among individuals would be negligible and meaningless. Moreover, categorizing a person only by his/her level of consciousness would be too

⁸ Ibid.,p1093

⁹ George Simpson, “What Class is not”, American Sociological Review, Vol.4, No.6(Dec.,1939) p.829

reductionist, since there exists infinite degrees of awareness, varying “Even among those of identical relative modes of life”¹⁰.

From the analysis carried out so far, we can infer that many issues remain unsolved.

In our specific case the reader might be wondering: “What does the term class really stand for?”; “Is there one or multiple criteria for identifying social strata?”

When going into an investigation such this, the lack of a scientific apparatus leaves many questions open. In many cases the attempts to find a comprehensive and a single theory about the exegesis of the class concept has only intensified metaphysical speculations.

What we can know for sure is that a valid criterion has to be universally applicable to any time and history.

In the present case, the objective side of the concept has to be used as mean of investigation for all the subjective ramifications which it entails.

Having ascertained the indissoluble connection existing between class as “social stratum” and class consciousness, the focus of this thesis will now be addressed to the Marxian philosophy, since it appears to be the most suitable one for understanding the concept of class. In fact, for what concerns the objective side of the concept, we will see that the criterion applied by Marx is that of the prevailing means of production, while, for what concern the subjective side, the model of class struggle will be showed.

¹⁰ George Simpson, “What Class is not”, American Sociological Review, Vol.4, No.6(Dec.,1939) p.829

CHAPTER 11

2.1 Marx's use of class

Marx refers to a class as a set of individuals sharing the same relationship with the means of production. The concept of ownership does not define only the "Class", but also its cultural and political resources (the superstructure). In Marx, as the economic materialism influences any other social dimension, classes are the central actors mirroring the change of society and its connections with the dialectic materialism itself. Obviously, the analysis of Marx's use of class is far from being so simplistic, and Marx himself is not clear on this issue. A constant criterion applicable by Marx in distinguishing classes consists in the ownership of the means of production. Through this economic approach, he draws the following main partition of society: capitalists, proletarians and landowners. All the other classes can be regarded as pertaining to one of these three macro-categories which are destined to absorb all the remaining intermediate social strata. This is the hint allowing Marx to admit the existence of the so-called "Transition class"¹¹, mainly all those classes which will disappear in the future because of their precarious nature. The survival of one class or another is context – dependent, since it is deeply affected by the period which is taken into consideration. Concerning the advanced capitalist society, Marx forecasts only the existence of two classes, that of proletarians and that of capitalist.

At the light of these events, we can now proceed by applying the Marxian philosophy to our premise, according to which the term class entails both an objective and a subjective connotation. In Marx's perception, the objectivity of the concept is conveyed through the division of society on the basis of the prevailing mode of production, while its subjectivity lays in the necessary antagonism existing among classes. In fact, what all classes have in common is their respective rivalry toward one another. For capitalists, for instance, this can be found in their contentious relations towards landowners and proletarians which capitalists constantly exploit for gathering resources and produced goods. Class opposition becomes a necessary requisite for class to exist; therefore, a society with no conflict is merely a classless society.

¹¹ Karl Marx, "The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution", Selected Writings, I, 63, "Eighteenth Brumaire", Selected Writings I, 253

At this point, the social connotation being implied by the concept of class results very clear: antagonism implies relationships, even if conflicting, and relationships imply the existence of classes, consequently. It might be derived that class formation relies on the wealth of social relations, on the effective communications among the parties, promoted by the exchange of information and contacts.

In his philosophy, Marx conceives class as a product of capitalism, but if this is true, how can he identify all the histories before Capitalism? What is the criterion used? These flaws in his writings are the umpteenth proof that Marx was not able of finding a satisfactory standard for class division without falling in contradiction.

In many cases also the capitalists and the proletarians, whose identity he was previously convinced, seem to lack of classes' basic requirements. When speaking about proletarians, he believes that they do not constitute a real class since they lack both of class consciousness and political organization¹². Yet, in many occasions the classification standards change from one group to another or within the same group.

Regardless the controversial issue on whether Marx's economic approach can be reliable or not, the most important aspect to be taken into consideration still remains his conception about reality conceived as a whole. Only because he admits the distinction of classes on the basis of the means of production, the existence of a necessary interclass opposition, the gradual acquisition of class consciousness, he is capable of generating a concept of class such as this.

Therefore, the concept of class is not reduced to be a pure identification standard for social stratification, but thanks to the fact that it encompasses a subjective connotation, it becomes a vehicle for expressing Marx's holistic view.

¹² Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow, n.d.), p.195

2.2 All types of classes and kinds of roles conceived by Marx.

Marx is mainly concerned with the role of the capitalist and of the proletarian within the industrialized society. The former owns the means of production and hires the proletarians as employees. In particular, capitalists have a direct relationship to the mode of production and distinct economic interests, which put them in contrast with landowners and proletariat. Moreover, they are conscious of their uniqueness as a class and, therefore, they possess a clear political connotation. For what concerns proletarians, Marx regards them as the suppliers of labour who do not possess any means of production and who live only thanks to the wages provided by capitalists. It is important to stress that Marx's position about social class is quite controversial, and in many passages, unclear. Finding a single criterion applicable to Marx's division of classes would be extremely difficult. In fact, even though he mainly focuses on the two aforementioned classes, he elsewhere admits the existence of other categories in the society. Not by chance, Marx also addresses his attention toward both shopkeepers and peasants. The former possess no means of production or at most employ a small number of workers, while the latter embraces the owners of small tracts of land. In categorizing all these individuals who are generally difficult to place, it becomes clear how the prevailing mode of ownership of means of production is not the only applicable criterion.

First of all, we have to take into consideration all those fragments of the capitalist society which Marx does not account for, among these, we remember the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants. The former is an independent class from the political point of view, deeply aware of their interests and of the ways through which they can be pursued. The lower middle class becomes of extreme importance as an ally for the creation of the bourgeois state during the Jacobinism, and, once again, during the period of reformist democracy, times of more political stability. Yet, with Liberalism, the lower middle class appears to be the class of ideal-typical citizens, because of its political independency. At first glance, it can seem that Marx sees the petty bourgeoisie as a reactionary force, since he considers proletarians as the only party capable of an anti-capitalist revolution. However, as it often occurs in Marx's writings, the issue is more delicate and critical. The history of the 1848 revolution in France and the events of the Germany in 1850, leads Marx to associate the lower middle class with the democracy rather than counterrevolution force. According to him, "The democratic petty bourgeois" is the "Transition class in which the interests of two classes (property

holders and propertyless labourers) are mutually blunted”¹³. What can be inferred from this quotation is that proletarians should ally with petty bourgeois in their struggle against the forces of reaction, always taking into account the differences in their political goals. In Marx’s view, only after the alliance between these two classes has been established and the common enemy defeated, the proletarians will contend the power against petty bourgeois democracy. If the lower middle class and the proletarians constitute the revolutionary force, what are the reactionary classes? In the “Eighteenth Brumaire”, the big bourgeoisie, in alliance with the Lumpenproletariat, is depicted as the class threatening the democracy and establishing the reactionary dictatorship.

Clearly both the big and the petty bourgeoisie belong neither to capitalist nor to proletarian nor to landowners; rather they can be considered as members of another class, that of the small business.

The attempt of using a proper standard for identifying social classes appears even more crucial when focusing on proletarians. From Marx’s point of view, this class is the widest one, as it includes the largest number of members, from factory workers to farm labourers. In Marx, the explicit claim that labourer is a proletarian, conflicts with his principle of identifying the latter with the industrial worker.

Yet, Marx presents an extension of proletarian class by including the small holding peasants in it. Even in this case, a clarification is necessary. The philosopher is quite peremptory in assessing the lack of consciousness arising from small peasants whenever they are included in the proletarian class. He firmly believes that the farmhands do not consider themselves as belonging to this class, since they do not really own their means of production. In fact, they end up working for someone else, the capitalists, by farming a plot of land which does not really belong to them.

Including peasantry into proletarians helps Marx’s division of advanced capitalist society into two main classes, landowners and petty bourgeoisie. In particular, huge attention is addressed to the role of the latter one. Marx’s economic approach makes difficult to categorize the “Intelligentsia” as class. Under this name, he includes: doctors, professors and writers, defined as “The ideological representatives and spokesmen”¹⁴. Referring to the petty bourgeois politicians and writers, “Is the fact that

¹³ Jonathan M. Wiener, *Marxism and the Lower Middle Class. A response to Arno Mayer*, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.48, No.4 (Dec, 1967) pp666-671.

¹⁴ Karl Marx, *the Class struggle in France, 1848-1850*

in their minds they do not get beyond the limits which the latter do not get beyond in life, that they are consequently driven, theoretically, to the same problem and solutions to which material interest and social position drive the latter practically”.¹⁵ In clarifying the distinction between capitalists and intelligentsia, Marx, once again, explains the basic difference between these two classes in terms of performed work. In particular, he recognizes that intellectuals are the product of the bourgeois society, underlying the fact that what makes ideologists differ from the rest of society is their constant mental work, the main source of their existence. Intellectuals turn out to be a separated class with a “High level of self consciousness”, a sort of “Middle stratum between capitalists and proletarians”¹⁶.

The role of Intelligentsia within the society is quite fleeting. Even though ideologists belong neither to capitalists nor to proletarians, they do not constitute a real independent class, but they only convey the illusion of it, since “De facto” their mental work is constantly exploited by capitalists.

As usual, in order the analysis to be complete, the inquiry on who really makes up this class is imperative. In this specific case, the division of labor will be used as standard for identifying the different kinds of members belonging to Intelligentsia.

To better understand the concept, the practical separation between practitioners and theoreticians could be reported. Generally speaking, it is easy to find theoreticians of aesthetics who have never produced a work of art, and, vice versa, it is likely that a painter has never theorized his own work. The same analogy can be made in the field of politics between “Practical politicians and professors of politics, scientists and laboratory scientists, experimental and mathematical physicists”¹⁷.

Speculation is then the most remarkable function of this class and it is what makes it differ from the rest of society. Not by chance, whenever a practitioner consciously theorizes about a particular subject, he /she becomes an intellectual. Ideologists, as microcosm of capitalist society, generate ideas and diffuse them among classes and, by doing so, they acquire social prestige. Basically, these individuals do not live on their means of production, but they take advantage on the role they play within the society.

¹⁵ Karl Marx, Eighteenth Brumaire, 1852

¹⁶ The New International, New York, Volume II Number 7, December 1935 pp 227-232

¹⁷ The New International, New York Volume II Number 7, December 1935 pp 227-232

However, given the wide heterogeneity of individuals forming the Intelligentsia class, Marx often changes his criterion of division, sometimes categorizing them as a separated class and sometimes as capitalists.

In his concern about who should rule the country and who is supposed to take decisions about society, Marx makes the distinction among: "Aristocracy," mainly capitalists and landowners, "Moneyocracy," including bankers and big money lenders, and "Millocracy.", the owners of factories¹⁸.

Marx also speaks of a "Lower middle class", essentially shopkeepers, peasants and artisans. This is the most mobile class since it does not entail a specific category of individuals, but it embraces members with different experiences and aspirations. By looking at the composition of the class, it may be derived that the criterion used by Marx is probably income or power, or ultimately the degree of involvement in class struggle¹⁹.

Last, but not least, is the "Lumpen –proletariat class" which is the most degraded class from both economic and cultural point of view, which lacks of political consciousness. Its members acquire their revenues from activities very similar to those of the proletariat, sometimes leading to illegal actions. In fact, unlike the proletarians, these individuals do not have a stable financial situation and for this reason they are usually isolated from the social life. It can be regarded as a "Dangereous class"²⁰, including: vagabonds, criminals and unemployed people who are hindered in reaching their self consciousness as class, and, for this reason, who are not useful for a class revolution to occur. Essentially, as long as this class exists, the whole society will never reach its acme, its completeness and, therefore, it will never be able to overcome the infinite fragmentations which constitute it.

Before moving to next chapter which will be addressed to a particular analysis of the class polarization and class struggle, it seems reasonable to draw some conclusion from the previous paragraphs. When speaking about class in Marxian terms, the concept has

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¹⁹ Bertell Olmann, "Marx's Use of Class", American Journal of Sociology vol.73, No 5, Mar, 1968 p575

²⁰ Engels, it is worth noting, has even more referents for "Class" than Marx, especially in Germany: Revolution and Counter Revolution

to be analyzed from both the “Fact” and the “Meaning” point of view. With the first term, we refer to the condition of social life, arisen from the unequal distribution of the means of production, while, with the second one, we indicate the formation of a class as collective action²¹.

Social classes are not merely community of interests, but they originate organized actions. In Marx’s view, ruling classes own the means of production and they are aware of their common interests, while the oppressed ones lack of consciousness. Through this economic analysis of social class, he believes that the hegemony gained by capitalists create a common interest among labourers which leads to the formation of an opponent class, the proletarians. This polarization promotes “Reason in history”, that is a more rational order overriding the infinite fragmentation of interests and resulting into only two distinct factions in the long run.

Marx’s economic approach is enlightening for having spotted property ownership and division of labour as basis for the formation of class. The conditions under which these groups are constituted are still matter of investigation.

Although the main contribution provided by the philosopher in this field, some clarifications have to be made.

First of all, the connection between *class situation*, as similarity in the “Control over goods and skills”, and *class organization*, as “Involvement of the opponent class with well-articulated goals”²² is not a “Law”, as Marx derived by simply observing the tendencies in his period.

Secondly, his theory results reductionist, since the trichotomy land-labour-capital seems more applicable to a feudal order, than to the more complex and industrialized society. Marx’s unfinished definition of class is implemented by Max Weber, who suggests the presence of different types of classes from “Property classes” to “Earnings”. Unlike Marx, he admits the existence of classes without antagonism, that is, a more static version of society. According to him, the possibility for social classes to exist without

²¹ Reinhard Bendix, “Inequality and Social Structure: A Comparison of Marx and Weber”, American Sociological Review, Vol.39 No.2(Apr,1974),p151

²² Reinhard Bendix, “Inequality and Social Structure: A Comparison of Marx and Weber”, American Sociological Review, Vol.39 No.2(Apr,1974),p151

antagonism may be found in the harmonic coexistence between the “Poor white trash” and the planters of the Southern States.²³

Unfortunately, also Weber’s explanation appears too narrow: in his view classes are mere classifications, and they are not inspected in their sociological dimension.

At this point, the investigation being carried out so far becomes more subtle and requires a broader knowledge of the context in which it is set. This is why the next chapters will be devoted to the inspection of the concept of class in connotative terms, with particular attention to the Marxian perspective on individuals’ freedom and man’s rights.

²³ *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Vol.I,p178

CHAPTER III

3.1 Alienation

In this second chapter the intent will be inspecting the class concept from another point of view, by taking into consideration the connotative side of the matter. What is intended to demonstrate from now on is the indispensability of social relations for a class to be formed. The main issue will consist in juxtaposing the aforesaid objectivity of the concept with its connotative dimension, and we will do so by dealing with a crucial subject, that of the alienation.

Generally speaking, it has been witnessed how modern industrialized societies tend to dehumanize workers. Technological development increases capitalists' thirst for power whose natural consequence will be labourers' exploitation. In fact, the more individuals produce, the less is left to them: excess of production generates surplus which is not equally distributed among society, but it will be totally appropriated by capitalists. This process renders individuals detached from their labour, as they perceive it as not belonging to them, and, therefore, as they were estranged from their effort.

In specifying this argument, Marx totally reverses the Hegelian idealistic dialectic: the opposition between concepts and their explication in the reality does not exist anymore. On the contrary, the first step of contradiction is generated within the relation between the produced good and its producer, in the way as specified above.

Mankind loses its liberty because of alienation, and other way out does not exist except for that of setting themselves free from slavery.

To better understand the concept, we will go to the Marxian philosophy once again. Particularly, we will now open a debate about the fine interpretation of Alienation. Subsequently, the result of the discussion will be applied to our thesis as umpteenth proof in support of our argumentation.

That proposed by Marx is a materialist analysis of alienation: in the "Capital", the philosopher explicitly talks about the "Human nature" to be realized in a "Future rationally organized society".²⁴

²⁴ Gajo Petrovic, "Marx's Theory of Alienation", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.23, No.3 (Mar.,1963),p.419

When considering the Marxian materialistic view of history, it seems sensible to clarify many gaps existing in the philosopher's writings.

The primary clarification to be made is that of alienation deemed as detachment of human being from himself rather than from something.²⁵ The subtle resolution to this controversy resides in the fact that alienation of individuals from the object is concurrently alienation of the object ("The something") from the individual, meaning that individuals actually alienate themselves from themselves.

When speaking about alienation of the labour from the worker, we are actually referring to the loss of objectification of the product. Paradoxically, in the communist society such as that conceived by Marx, objectification (the externality of the object) could persist, but without its alienation (the loss of the objectification itself). Therefore, whenever man loses his connection with his product, alienation arises. In this sense, it results sensible to specify that alienation of the object is part of individuals' broader alienation from the labour activity itself. Individual does not feel his activity as belonging to him and, consequently, perceives the fruit of this activity as something external, which he cannot control, and by which he is dominated. At the light of these events, the interpretation of alienation results to be far from being as simplistic as many authors have presented it. It has become an ontological issue, since, alienation of man from himself concludes with the loss of his essence. Hence, man maintains his existence but not his essence, meaning that he abandons his humanity. In losing his humanity, individuals are not capable of building social relationships anymore and they end up alienating themselves from the others too.²⁶

From this last reasoning it is easily inferable that essence and existence do not have to be separated in the real man. But what is essence exactly? From what can be drawn from Marx's philosophy, essence may be the historical human realization. Not by chance, it is the core conception in Marx's writings: man will totally and deeply realize himself when he will be given his identity and this will occur only when he is totally free. Man has to create the necessary conditions for this occurrence to be facilitated, mainly experiencing all the possibilities which will help him achieve this goal. Therefore, when man loses their essence, it does not mean that he has not exploited the

²⁵ Gajo Petrovic, "Marx's Theory of Alienation", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.23, No.3 (Mar.,1963),p.420

²⁶ Gajo Petrovic, "Marx's Theory of Alienation", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.23, No.3 (Mar.,1963),p.421

existing possibilities, but, rather, that he has created new ones, by widening the distance from his freedom.²⁷

Obviously not all the possibilities are those doomed to set man free, but there exist some specific possibilities, the human ones, which are those that constitute human essence.

To conclude our analysis about Alienation another issue remains to be clarified: how Marx regards alienation with respect to the historical framework. The question to be asked is the following: “Is Alienation a specific and necessary moment in human beings’ life or is it a permanent condition?” By studying Marx’s philosophy, authors have appeared more incline to support the first case, that of the temporariness of alienation. In fact, Marx regards the state of estrangement as the transition lost of human identity due to the present social structure. Unlike Martin Hidgger, though, he spots the possibility of overcoming this condition, since he is convinced that human beings were uncorrupted in the past and that they can conquer that state of “Social human life”²⁸ again.

This last reasoning is of crucial importance for our thesis to be validated: individuals’ ultimate goal is not human life, but social human life, meaning that when referring to a community, the social aspect cannot be avoided.

We have started by asserting (this is of common sense) that class is a set of people sharing some similarities. As long as individuals belong to the same class, they construct some relationships which shape their identity as class itself. How? Whenever individuals share the same condition of life and work, they develop the sense of consciousness which will lead them to understand what their interests are. If these relationships were not established, they would not be able of recognizing themselves as members of a community and they would keep on working without incentives and passively, losing the focus of their being. (This is what will be defined as alienation in Marx, as we have just seen).

²⁷ Gajo Petrovic, “Marx’s Theroy of Alienation”, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.23, No.3 (Mar.,1963),p.422

²⁸ Gajo Petrovic, “Marx’s Theroy of Alienation”, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol.23, No.3 (Mar.,1963),p.425

It is clear how alienation directly flows from the assumption of class polarization between capitalists and proletarians. This is why providing the reader with a better knowledge about class struggle could result of huge relevance for the discussion of this thesis.

Therefore, the next paragraph will be devoted to the conditions causing the formation and the decline of Capitalism, deemed as the main motive for social revolution to be undertaken.

3.2 Capitalism's Creative Destruction

In this paragraph the relations existing between Capitalists and proletarians will be considered, and they will be assumed as fertile ground on which class consciousness grows.

When speaking about Capitalism, referring to a developed industrialized society is imperative. In fact, the base concept of a capitalist society is the idea of an incessant technological progress occurring within it, meaning that the old structures are constantly threaten by the creation of new ones.

In Marx's view the forces of production are the drivers for the old barriers to be knocked down and for the limits to innovation to be overcome, as he explicitly states in the "*Grundrisse*". Hence, accumulation of capital and technological changes are the basis for triggering the evolutionary process.

Marx's pre-capitalist economic approach results quite simplistic: he deals with a pure exchange economy in which the labour-capital division does not exist, and therefore, competition drives profits to zero.

As long as capitalist society develops, the separation between employer and labourer occurs and capitalists' surplus is generated.

When talking about surplus, we are referring to the excess of production beyond the limits of subsistence which will be appropriated by the "Class monopoly", basically the owner of the means of production.

This is a crucial difference from the competitive market in which surplus does not exist. In fact, in the latter case, the cyclical increase and decrease of the army of

unemployment during the periods of expansion and recession, makes wages be set at a level below the value of output. .²⁹

Another remarkable reason, for which perfect competition lacks surplus, consists in the fact that this kind of market does not account for tough competition of innovations, and if innovations are not generated, surplus value cannot exist as well.

Competition among actors operating within this economy is not sufficient for eliminating surplus. Why? Although innovation enlarges everyone's share, increase in wealth mostly favours the most "Established firms". At the light of these events, benefiting from surplus would imply an interclass shift which is not allowed in a society such as that conceived by Marx.³⁰

If, on one hand, Capitalism sinks its roots in the dynamism of the technological progress, on the other hand, it contains the seeds of an inevitable self-destruction.

As Capitalism evolves, so does its thirst for accumulation: the more the society develops, the harsher the exploitation, and the huger the need for the social revolution to occur.

Anyway, it is remarkable to understand that the essence of Capitalism relies exactly on the counterbalance of these two aspects. Actually Marx cannot admit the technological and social development without previously allowing for the existence of exploitation.

The basic principle is that, as long as the work does not belong to the labourer, capitalists may exploit this opportunity, by appropriating of someone else's effort. By obtaining this surplus, capitalists start their race for power centralization and they trigger a process of rapid expansion through large investments and capital accumulation.

When the industrialized society is enough developed, workers start experiencing the sense of estrangement generated by their activity of production, and alienation arises.

Referring to the aforementioned analysis about what alienation is and where it comes from, it appears quite clear that the progress of a society, such as the capitalist one,

²⁹ John E. Elliott, "Marx and Shumpeter on Capitalism's Creative Destruction: A Comparative Restatement", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.95, No.1 (Aug,1980), pp. 50-52

³⁰ John E. Elliott, "Marx and Shumpeter on Capitalism's Creative Destruction: A Comparative Restatement", *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.95, No.1 (Aug,1980), pp. 50-52

cannot exist if the opposition between exploiters and exploited ones is not previously provided.

Alienation becomes both the cause and the effect for Capitalism being brought into existence. In fact, how can surplus be generated if exploiters do not previously take advantage on workers? On the other hand, how can alienation exist without exploitation?

Anyway, referring to alienation only as the main source and consequence of the capitalist society would be too reductive for the purpose of our analysis on Capitalists' creative destruction. In fact, alienation is not only the product of a well-established industrialized society, but it is the tangible proof that some remarkable advancements have actually occurred within this society.

This is why, in this present case, it seems reasonable to support Schumpeter's point of view rather than that of Marx. Reasonably, Schumpeter regards the demise of Capitalism not as its failure, but as its success, which is exactly the focal point of our discussion.

The socialist revolution which will lead to the disappearing of capitalist society will depend on the huge advances in technological progress rather than the inability of reaching them. Why? The centralization of capital boosts investments in innovations and instruments "Usable only in common"³¹, and this unintentionally lays the foundations for the socialism apparatus to be constructed.

When Marx deals with the issue of centralization of capital as natural consequence of industrialization, he also faces the problem of social and political changes arising from it. To Marx, large-scale economies and the creation of big businesses lead workers to take awareness of their interests as class; this is why class struggle is regarded as the key element for socialist revolution to occur.

In Marx's perspective, the transition from capitalist to socialist society is quite natural: capital accumulation, monopolistic power and cyclical crisis incentives the formation of labour unions which shapes the political framework of the working class. It is exactly this unity among workers the chief engine of social transformation.

The model of revolution presented by Marx relies on three basic stages:

³¹ Marx, 1906, p.836

- In order this revolution to occur proletariat has to “Win the battle of democracy”³²
- Workers have to appeal to certain measures capable of dismantling the existing social order and capable of drastically changing the means of production.
- Workers’ appropriation of the new means of production

This model results to be very sophisticated and refined. It is easily inferable that the social revolution that we are concerning with, is not an abrupt transformation flowing from workers’ insurrection, but a gradual change embracing the whole society. Workers’ appropriation of the means of production is actually the last stage, meaning that the real success of the proletariat is a progressive and late achievement. Given the gradual nature of this attainment, there must exist a period in which private industries keep on living with the changing external environment which will progressively constraint their survivorship. This explains both the simultaneous “Transformation and socialization” of the process of Capitalism’s self destruction.³³

Therefore, alienation stemming directly from capitalist success helps workers in finding their identity as class, whenever they stay stick together for defending their rights.

This is a further proof of the fact that separating the connotative dimension from the concept of class is almost impossible, since the formation of classes primarily relies upon the idea of class consciousness and self-identity.

Not by chance, the next chapter will address its attention to the investigation of class consciousness and to the process through which human beings can become capable of conquering their own freedom.

³² John E.Elliott, “Marx and Schumpeter on Capitalism’s Creative Destruction: A Comparative Restatement”, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.95, No. 1/Aug.1980), p.63

³³ John E.Elliott, “Marx and Schumpeter on Capitalism’s Creative Destruction: A Comparative Restatement”, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol.95, No. 1/Aug.1980),p.64

CHAPTER IV

4.1 Class consciousness

The analysis on class consciousness carried out insofar has basically concerned the relationships among individuals. In this paragraph, the investigation will be amplified and further clarified, with particular regard to the relationship existing between individuals and social structure.

Class consciousness theorization is the result of an intense analysis about the sense of frustration which workers experience within the industrialized society, mostly consequence of the perceived alienation. Whenever this feeling arises, individuals start observing the social structure and they begin to take awareness of the distortions within the system. The more their consciousness about the “Social dysfunction”, the more intense the mass action will be.

At the light of these events, it seems reasonable to clarify that as long as individuals perceive this feeling of estrangement, they generate an inner desire of self-identification as class and they start conflicting against the established social organization in order to defend it. A similar reasoning can be found in Ralf Gustav Dahrendorf’s writings, in which he spots structural blame as the main cause of the shift from “Class in sè” to “Class per sè”.³⁴ Anyway, gathering self –consciousness is not a sudden occurrence, but a gradual evolution concerning the transformation of individuals’ from “Latent interests into manifest ones.”³⁵ Where this transformation is function of the intensification of class polarization and of its related class struggle.

It has been studied how the macro-separation between the class of workers and that of the capitalists is the main engine of social transformation. In their attempt for gathering their rights and for their interests to be recognized, proletarians become the “De facto” instrument used for achieving this goal.

However, in Marx’s view, proletarians’ actions are not enough for triggering drastic social changes, but they need to be shaped by a higher consciousness of the matter.

³⁴ Alejandro Portes, “On the interpretation of Class Consciousness”, American Journal of Sociology, Vo.77, No. 2(Sep.,1971),p229

³⁵ Alejandro Portes, “On the interpretation of Class Consciousness”, American Journal of Sociology, Vo.77, No. 2(Sep.,1971),p 231

Therefore, the social and political transformation has to occur both at physical and mental level. In order these two sides to be blended, intellectuals have to take part in the revolutionary action. In fact, according to Marx, intellectuals possess the “Philosophical ratio” capable of addressing proletarians’ movements toward a more channelled goal.

Basically, revolution can be successful only when a gradual, planned and organized work has been previously established.³⁶ If it was otherwise, proletarians would revolt without any critical judgement and would be doomed to a certain failure. The idea of a gradual revolution was a direct consequence of the failure of the uprisings in 1848. Not by chance, Marx deeply criticizes the Jacobin-Blanquist tradition, regarding it as a mere period in which conspirators, moved by the rush for revolution, lose the focus of the social action itself, ending up continuous failures and never experiencing real freedom ³⁷ (Marx, “Neue Rheinische Revue”No.4,1850). This is why a theoretical apparatus capable of shaping proletarians’ actions is an essential condition whenever social rollovers are supposed to be played out. Whenever workers’ goals are revolutionary-oriented and well-directed, workers start acquiring a feeling of self-consciousness which they would not have been able to gather otherwise. Yet, this is what makes intellectuals differ from the rest of society: the possibility to choose regardless the economic conditions.

They may argue that this principle contradicts Marx’s concept of class formation (which is function of the ownership of the means of production), but this would be a criticism too hasty and, even more, unfounded. In fact, intellectuals can be regarded such as “Intellectual leaders” only in the case in which their “Social being” is previously admitted. Their unconditional possibility of choice cannot exist without a social configuration: it is this necessary connection rendering intellectuals so indispensable for the acquisition of workers’ self-consciousness. In fact, individuals are hindered in the gain of their identity and, ultimately, of their freedom, if they do not previously reach gradually the feeling of class membership.

This is one of the most remarkable turning points in Marx’ philosophy and it is also a noteworthy proof in support of our thesis. Once again, we look at a situation where

³⁶ Shlomo Avineri, Marx and the Intellectuals, Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol.28, No.2 (Apr-Jun., 1967)p.271

³⁷ Shlomo Avineri, Marx and the Intellectuals, Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol.28, No.2 (Apr-Jun., 1967),p.273

considering the class concept just in denotative terms would be a mere approximation, as too many variables would be left out. In the present case, excluding the whole subjective side of the class concept would nullify all its content.

As many other subjects in Marxian philosophy, even in this specific case the incisive Hegelian influence needs to be recognized in the tight splitting between the physical side, that of the proletarians, and the mental side, that of the intellectuals. In fact, when referring to social revolution, their dialectical opposition would be the only way through which proletarians could succeed; yet, each of the faction would be deprived of any meaning without the existence of the other one. This is why Marx spots an imminent failure in the Russian revolution, as he considers it too much focused on the intellectual side and too little on the material one.

4.2 Freedom and Right of Men

Given provided a clear view on what alienation is and what it consists of, we will now proceed our discussion by deeply studying the causes and the effects concerning the concept of alienation. First of all, it seems reasonable to clarify the concept of “Right”, defined by the French Constitution of 1793, as “Citizens’ enjoyment and disposition...as he will of his goods and revenues”.³⁸How is this concept related to that of alienation? As the way in which it has just been illustrated, right leads to the emergence of private property, and consequently, to the men’s desire of appropriation of the good for maximizing their utility. In the Marxian materialistic view, the modes of production entails individuals’ mode of life, and to the extent, their being. Hence, given the structure of capitalist society, proletarians, who do not hold any property, result to be totally dehumanized.

As general thought, the theory of private property may be deemed as the general framework of the dialectical conflict between inalienable rights and the individuals’ search of freedom. The freedom about which Marx talks is not a *freedom of*, but a

³⁸ Betty A. Sichel, “Karl Marx and the Rights of Man”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.32, No.3(Mar.,1972)p.355

freedom from: basically, the liberty from any form of social constraints or belief which may negatively affect human beings' choices.

Arguing about the notion of right and freedom is a really tough purpose, tough. In fact, when taking into consideration this theme, falling into illogical difficulties is quite likely. We may assume that the act of production, supporting individuals in shaping their own life, is, in turn, mirrored by the external reality. This means that the whole realm is part of a constant change. The logical difficulty lays mainly in this: if the property is included in the transformation process (which embraces the whole reality), its denial will be implied and, therefore, that of the entire doctrine of Rights of Man.³⁹

It is clear how the debate on the Right of Man is not exempted from ambiguities and it still remains a delicate issue. Anyway discussing about the nature of the private property is not our main concern. Rather, we will rely on the idea of Right only in relation to the concept of Freedom, which is the essential theme to be dealt with.

The previous chapters have mostly concerned how the class is brought into being as long as workers develop a sense of class consciousness after having taken awareness of their condition of alienation. For this analysis to be carried out, Marx's economic approach has been investigated, that is, the study of classes with respect to the ownership of the means of production. As long as class polarization intensifies through capital accumulation and monopolistic centralization, individuals' actions are directed toward a social revolution which will overthrow the capitalist power and which will result in the triumph of the Communism, entailing the abolition of the private property.

For those who have argued that the theory of private property is not far from moral connotation, it can be easily confuted that Capitalism, as described by Marx, naturally follows the rules of an industrialized society, therefore it cannot be considered as immoral system. On the other hand, we can infer that Marx mainly concerns with a principle of justice according to which the distribution of capital has to be equitable

³⁹ Betty A. Sichel, "Karl Marx and the Rights of Man", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol.32, No.3(Mar.,1972),p.360.

among people. The idea of justice regarded as quality is obviously related to the transactions occurring among participants. These kinds of economic relations identifies the “labor-power” of workers on one hand, and the “Full use-value” of this labor received by capitalists on the other hand. This is why in a society such as that communist one, thinking about a principle of justice is almost impossible, since it would imply an exchange value which does not exist .The kind of justice presented by Marx does not only follow a distributive ratio, but it involves also a degree of historical relativism according to which justice can emerge only from certain modes of production belonging to some societies. Therefore, the capitalist’s act of exploitation is not unjust “Per se”, since it is the necessary consequence of the social structure of the industrialized society.

In this case, the main issue to be concerned with is not the capitalist, but the laborers’ condition and the constraints with which he is forced to live because of the social structure. Provided this clarification, we shall analyze how deep the impact of these limitations will be on individuals’ freedom, rather than wondering whether the modern society is immoral or not.⁴⁰

From the previous reasoning, it appears clear that debating whether or not exploitation and surplus appropriation could be immoral or unjust would be totally misleading. To be precise, Marx has never mentioned the problem of morality throughout his writings, rather he has mainly concerned with the issue of freedom. Like justice, also freedom is the result of the means of production, but its implication is broader than that of justice. In fact, when speaking about freedom, the effect of the means of production on individuals has to be taken into account. Human beings shape their mode of life through the activity of production, by kicking off the process of consciousness acquisition which will set the individual free at the end. Yet, the development of the modes of production across societies and times moves along with the development of both the forces of production and the relations in which they are set. Ultimately, this is the most remarkable difference between justice and freedom: the former ensures distribution among classes, but it still remains an exogenous factor to society; the latter, instead,

⁴⁰ “George G. Brenkert , “Freedom and Private Property in Marx”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol.8, No. 2 (Winter, 1979), pp.122-147.

entails also an ontological dimension when considering the development of individuals' power and abilities.

What has to be underlined is the fact that the process leading to freedom is not a mere mental act, but it has to assume certain historical conditions for being realized. This is why being free is almost impossible in the capitalist society, for the way in which it is structured: workers are under the condition of slavery, they possess divergent interests and do not live in a harmonic and unified system. Individuals could think that the condition of the bourgeois society is totally free, given its accidental nature, but they are actually less free because of the state of subjection in which they are forced to live.

Therefore freedom will exist as long as there is no contradiction between the forces of production and relations of productions. Social harmony is, then, the necessary condition for freedom to be brought into being and, as we define social harmony as the cooperation among individuals and the convergence of their interests, it turns out to be that capitalist is the biggest impediment to freedom. However, for full freedom to be conquered, capitalism is a necessary condition, since it is the only historical period in which the conflict between forces of production and relations of productions reaches its acme. Not by chance, Marx supports the British interference in Indian society, by underlying the improvements in production means and the consciousness of social relations which English dominion is bringing there. This is another relevant difference from the way Marx conceives justice: unlike the latter, freedom is transcultural applicable.

According to the Marxian philosophy, Freedom can occur under different forms and for several reasons. Obviously, the most common is that related to the individual's possibility of owning the means of production. In this case, the act of appropriation itself becomes the first step toward liberty. By doing so, individuals do not suffer the natural constraints due to condition of subordination, but they finally acquire the consciousness of their own identities and tend to the state of self-realization. It can be derived that Freedom arises whenever the individual is no longer identified with the object of his production and he can acquire his specific qualities. The consciousness, which people acquire, is itself a material manifestation of human activity, since it is

through these activities that people acquire the sense of their being. Hence, self – consciousness is both the cause and the effect of the free human production activity.

In the capitalist society, private property is the hugest obstacle to be overcome since it encourages labor productivity whose advantages will primarily follow on capitalists themselves. Hence, antithesis exists between the product of the labor and its control: workers cannot enjoy the fruit of their effort which will be exploited by the monopolistic power.

Moreover, private property breaks the relations among individuals by forcing individuals to be locked in isolated cages and to pursue dissimilar goals.

The concept of social ties is of remarkable importance in this context, since Marx does not account for the achievement of Freedom if a sense of community has not been previously established. This idea finds its explanation in the fact that, whenever individuals reach their self-realization, they deeply comprehend their being and, therefore, their social nature. Hence, community becomes the cause for the emancipation to be accomplished.

For concluding the analysis about Freedom, only one question remains opened: “Does Marx apply a moral criterion to the investigation of individuals’ freedom?”. This has been a controversial issue throughout the contemporary studies. It is acknowledged that if we consider morality as constraints of life, then, we cannot admit a moral principle in Marx’s view. On the other hand, if we take morality from a broader point of view, by considering it as the main good to which humans tend, then Marx is surely a moralist thinker.

CONCLUSION

In the last part of this dissertation we will briefly recap all the concepts having been previously analyzed and we will demonstrate the validity of our thesis.

The starting point of the whole reasoning has concerned the idea that the term “Class” entails both a denotative and connotative dimension. For what concerns the objective side of the concept, finding a proper standard for class division has been our main goal. We have seen how the term class is often used ambiguously and we have tried to provide the reader with the as clearest as possible definition of the term. Coming up with an elucidation on the contemporary controversy existing on this matter has been far from being effortless. Given these impediments, we have accepted the application of a standard identifying the class on the basis of: income, social status and relative background. Obviously, this resolution has been appeared too reductive to all of us, since it relies only on one of the two sides entailed in class concept, that is, the denotative one.

At this point of our investigation, for a more complete analysis to be provided, examining the connotative aspect of the term has seemed to be indispensable. By this latter analysis the field of the discussion has been broaden: mainly, we have shifted from a linguistic and empirical issue to an ontological one.

The basic idea is that for a class to be made up, social ties have to be established. Starting from the assumption that a class consists of individuals grouped together by some similarities, it can be inferred that its existence is not allowed as long as individuals do not develop the sense of membership. However, this sense of belonging can grow only when laborers create social relationships, basically only in the case in which they collectively take awareness of their condition of life. If it was otherwise, they would be deprived of their identities as human beings and they could not avoid the process of exploitation. In fact, as soon as individuals sharp their interests and goals as class, they are able to defend themselves from the external threats. This is why we have stressed the importance of strikes and protests as result of the acquisition of class consciousness.

Given this reasoning, the Marxian philosophy has appeared as the most suitable for supporting our thesis. At this point, we have intensified the dissertation, by analyzing the concepts of Capitalism’s self destruction, Alienation and Class consciousness.

In this conclusion, we will retrieve the logical link we have constructed among the aforementioned themes, for showing the process of class formation when it is caught in its connotative dimension.

The reference to the capitalist society has resulted necessary to catch the effects of an industrialized society on individuals. We have seen how the capitalists' power tends to take advantage on the laborers' condition and to exploit the effort of their work. Moreover, the increase in technological development strengthens capitalists' position at the expense of that of the proletarians: the more the worker is exploited, the more the sense of alienation.

We have analyzed how the condition of frustration and slavery in which people are forced to live is fundamental for the capitalism destruction to occur. In fact, under capitalist society alienation reaches its peak, workers cannot bear this situation anymore and they enter conflict with the monopolistic power. Basically the demise of Capitalism relies on its success.

We have then explained how Capitalism's self destruction and Alienation are related to one another and we have proceeded by showing how these concepts are related to that of Class consciousness.

Marx firmly clarifies how workers have to take awareness of the extremeness of their condition of life, before conflicting against Capitalist power.

Speaking about this sense of consciousness is not trivial at all. Whenever proletarians really understand the severity of their position, they start maturing a sense of class consciousness which allow them to act in the name of their rights.

The necessity of being supported by Marx's philosophy has appeared very clear, as it has revealed the indestructible tie between individuals as "Social human beings" and the existence of the class, which is the thesis we wanted to demonstrate with this argumentation.

The last paragraph has addressed its attention to the idea of Freedom, workers' ultimate goal. It has been a quite consequential subject to be brought up, as it is the final step for individuals to be achieved when undertaking the social revolution. "Freedom from" is

function of the all contradictions existing within social process propelling each class toward a specific direction.⁴¹

Like in the Marxian view, we have proposed a theory relating the concept of class to that of social change. From our argumentation, we have derived that the condition of work shapes human beings' nature, their perception of the social and, ultimately, the class consciousness. Hence, our main concern has been that of the social collectivity and of the relations flowing from it.

We have appealed to Marx's historical materialist framework for bailing out the most interior implications embedded in the class concept and, by doing so, we have succeeded in demonstrating the necessary coexistence of individual and collective actions.

In conclusion, it can be stated that this last step of reasoning has been the most incisive proof for our thesis to be validated: although the controversy existing around the class concept, we have demonstrated that the detachment of the denotative dimension from its subjective connotation is inadmissible, since it would have deprived the class concept of its inner meaning, totally denying its real nature, the social one.

Although the huge attempt of Marxian philosophy in researching the causes of historical social development, many questions have remained opened and they are still matters of debate. Therefore, in this conclusion we shall propose an investigation of all the problems remained unsolved and for which we cannot take Marx's philosophy as granted.

The first critique to be moved concerns Marxian socialism. In fact, conceiving reality as moving toward an already known end has permeated the whole philosophy of deterministic qualifications. In this sense, individuals are unconditionally doomed to be perpetrators of the social revolution. If it was so, how could human actions still participate in the creation and in the development of history, if history itself is already determined? Logically, every individual's action would be deprived of all its meaning, at the expense of what Marx shows.

⁴¹ Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, "A reformulation of Marxian Theory and Historical Analysis", *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol.42, No. 1, the Tasks of Economic History (Mar., 1982) p.54

In fact, what Marx presents is more a prediction of the future society, rather than a scientific explanation of the historical changes. Not by chance, when speaking about communism, he talks about a society where individuals' enjoyment coincides with the labor activity and where "Can society inscribe upon its banners" (Marx, "The Critique of the Gotha Program"). If the method used by Marx had been scientific, he would have never used the word "Can", as intending a possibility in which the future society could stand, but, rather, the word "Must", as consequential result of his investigation.⁴²

A society such as that pictured by Marx is more a utopia: in this society, the State does not exist anymore, since it collapses under the power of the revolutionary forces. This is a direct consequence of the reverse relationship which Marx establishes between individual and reality.

With reference to the modern society, the State is controlled by the most powerful class, that is that of the capitalists. Therefore, as soon as the capitalist system is overthrown by the social revolution, the State is not allowed to exist any longer.

The flaw in Marx's reasoning lays in the belief that economic power dominates the political apparatus and not vice versa. To Marx, the State is a reflection of the social actions and, therefore, it does not have an existence "Per se", but it just mirrors the economic power. (Karl Popper)

About this issue, two more elucidations are required; the first one concerning the conception of State, and the second one referring to the role of economic field in the explanation of social changes.

Indeed, when Marx speaks about a future society where the State is absent and only two classes will survive, he clearly draws this conclusion from the analysis of the present capitalist structure. This means that he starts from a specific situation for deducting an absolute ontological law (the holistic one) which he assumes to be applicable to the whole history.

With regard to the clarification about the superiority of the economic sector, we may infer that Marx regards it as the only one capable of describing the existing social

⁴² Stanley Moore, "Marx and Lenin as Historical Materialists", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, No. 2(Winter, 1975),pp.191-192.

context, by leaving out so many other variables which ultimately affect human beings' life. From this point of view, the economic nature of reality is the most representative example. Marx admits the existence of reality only as function of the labor activity performed by individuals. By assuming that the whole realm is amenable to the economic sector, implies that also society, possess an economic origin. Actually Marx excludes many other variables which may affect human beings' life, ending up a solution which appears too reductive.

According to this view, reality consists of a persistent social change which is described by the prevailing modes of production.

Differences in the ownership of the means of production creates class conflict, and, therefore, historical evolution.

However, to Marx, this evolution should embrace the whole history, end, therefore, both class and classless societies. At the light of these considerations, a new question arises: "How the development of a classless society, in which class conflict does not exist, is justified?" Specifically, this kind of contradiction is verifiable when Marx speaks of the Asiatic society for which he assumes the absence of the means of production and, consequently, of the class polarization.⁴³

Marx is not immune from some contradictions even when he deals with social revolutions. He seems to rely on distinct standards for justifying different historical periods. Indeed, when dealing with the bourgeoisie social revolution, he talks about the establishment of a new political setting requested by the transformed economic system. On the other hand, when he focuses on proletarian revolution, he considers only the technological development as the basis for economic and political changes to occur. In this case, what Marx defines economic system, which is the set of forces of production and of the economic structure, is reduced to the pure technological development.⁴⁴

The second huge critique to be retrieved in this discussion is the lack of a scientific method used by Marx and his claim of explaining social and political changes through

⁴³ Stanley Moore, "Marx and Lenin as Historical Materialists", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, No. 2(Winter, 1975),p173-175

⁴⁴ Stanley Moore, "Marx and Lenin as Historical Materialists", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, No. 2(Winter, 1975),pp.182-184

this standard. In particular, for the analysis of this argumentation, we shall start from Marx's materialism.

Actually Marxist Materialism does not allow for the distinction between empirical evidence and metaphysical information: the external reality is assumed to exist, but Marx has never explained on which ground the metaphysical sphere is incorporated into the empirical one.⁴⁵

Moreover, Marx's argumentation on social development results far from being an explanatory scientific method: it does not have any empirical confirmation, but, even more, it is assumed to be true with no verification. Marx just postulates the ultimate resolution for mankind's existence, but he never has empirical evidences that this will be actually achieved. Not by chance, the events of the Russian revolution of 1917 concluded in a totally different way from which Marx would have expected: the triumph of the communism did not lead to the freedom of the society, but, on the contrary, to a different form of oppression.

At the light of these events, what we may infer is that the Marxian philosophy lacks of a solid ground for which it can be validated. About this concern, we shall support Stanley Rosen's point of view. In fact, as he firmly believes, the fact that society is continually changing prevents from finding any objective standard for the explanation of social development. If we conceive a society such as that pictured by Marx, we will allow for a never-ending process of evolution which would change from time to time. It would be derived that a scientific criterion to determine the actual causes of this change cannot be spotted, and, consequently, any fact explained by Marx would lose its scientific foundation.⁴⁶

Having showed some controversial issues concerning Marx's materialism and historical development, it appears reasonable to move a third and last critique to Marx's philosophy, by taking into consideration human beings and their state of alienation.

⁴⁵ Joan Huber Rytina and Charles P. Loomis, "Marxist Dialectic and Pragmatism: Power as Knowledge", *American Sociology Review*, Vol.35, No.2 (Apr, 1970),p311.

⁴⁶ David B. of Nihilism, "Mar and the Problem of Nihilism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 37, No.(Dec.,1976),p.193

We may start from Marx's admission of individuals' self-creation by their means of production. Basically, if man creates himself during the course of history (self-creation), as Marx suggests, it would mean that his essence does not exist "A priori", which is exactly what Marx does when he speaks about the "Uncorrupted man."⁴⁷ Moreover, if the essence was just related to the human beings' conscious actions, it would be derived that every act aims at the single scope of self-realization, so Marx could not admit the existence of "Inhuman possibilities" as, instead, he does.

On the other hand, the fact that mankind has to necessarily undergo the state of alienation would imply a human essence from which individuals may be separated and, therefore, which could be a permanent impediment to human beings' self-realization. This is not the only contradiction found in Marx's philosophy concerning this issue. Not by chance, we may consider that if men realize the surrounding realm through their actions, private property is actually a product of these actions themselves⁴⁸. But if this reasoning holds, on which basis can Marx account for the abolition of private property? Would it not be a denial of the manifestation of individuals themselves? Surely, this is an argumentation which has never been clarified by Marx and about which he probably has never debated. Thinking about mankind's manifestation within the reality, if we follow the Marxian pattern, we should acknowledge that man creates his life only through his actions, but if it was so, why do human beings, which are the artifices of their lives, do not react to the state of alienation?⁴⁹

They may counter that living in a state of exploitation and slavery is not a conscious choice for individuals, and, as soon as they take awareness of this condition, they promptly action for a social revolution. But if we take this interpretation as granted, it would mean that all men's actions antecedent to the moment of self-consciousness do not possess any validity at all and, therefore, there would not be any difference from human beings' actions and those of the animals, as, instead, Marx underlines.

From the aforesaid critiques, we can draw that the presence of some logical difficulties renders Marx's writings hard to be deeply understood. However, these problems of

⁴⁷ David B. of Nihilism, "Mar and the Problem of Nihilism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 37, No.(Dec.,1976),p.194

⁴⁸ David B. of Nihilism, "Mar and the Problem of Nihilism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 37, No.(Dec.,1976),p.201

⁴⁹ David B. of Nihilism, "Mar and the Problem of Nihilism", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 37, No.(Dec.,1976),p.196

interpretation do not prevent us from stressing Marx's great contribution in the sociological sphere.

His major concern was that of trying to explain the course of history and how its evolution impacts on societies as a whole. He clearly left some issues unsolved in his studies, but he was also capable of studying the class concept from a new and revolutionary point of view. In fact, having spotted the relatedness of the class concept with that of human beings' existence has been the basis for our thesis to be carried out and demonstrated.

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