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## Marxism and bourgeois democracy. Reflections on a debate after the Second World War in Italy

**Annotation:** In this paper is illustrated a debate about the form of State and democracy between N. Bobbio, some Italian Marxist philosophers and intellectuals. The debate took place in 1970s, that is in a period of intense philosophical confrontation, hosted by cultural reviews like „Mondoperaio” and marked by a strong ideological opposition linked to the world bipolar system. The paper presents the general lines of that debate, which highlighted the inadequacies of the Marxist doctrine of State, consistently determining the end of any hegemonic ambitions in the Italian culture of those intellectuals linked to international communism.

**Keywords:** Marxism, democracy, State, Italian philosophy, hegemony, Norberto Bobbio.

### **Marksizm i burżuazyjna demokracja. Refleksje na temat debaty po drugiej wojnie światowej we Włoszech**

**Streszczenie:** W artykule przedstawiono debatę o kształcie państwa i demokracji, która toczyła się pomiędzy N. Bobbio i niektórymi marksistowskimi filozofami włoskimi w latach siedemdziesiątych XX wieku. Okres ten cechuje intensywna konfrontacja filozoficzna we Włoszech związana z sytuacją polityczną na świecie. Debata miała miejsce na łamach czasopisma „Mondoperaio”. W artykule zostały zilustrowane podstawowe tezy owej debaty, które podkreślają niedostatki marksistowskiej doktryny o państwie, konsekwentnie wyznaczając koniec wszelkich hegemonicznych ambicji włoskich intelektualistów związanych z międzynarodowym komunizmem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** marksizm, demokracja, państwo, filozofia włoska, hegemonia, Norberto Bobbio.

### **Марксизм и буржуазная демократия. Размышления о дискуссии после Второй мировой войны в Италии**

**Аннотация:** В этой статье представлено дискуссии о форме государства и демократии, в том числе между Н. Боббио и некоторыми марксистскими философами итальянскими,

в 70-е гг. XX века. Этот период характеризует усиленная философская конфронтация связанная с политической обстановкой в мире. Дискуссии имели место посредством статей в журнале „Mondoperaio“. В нынешней статье указано основные тезисы этих дискуссий, которые подчеркивают недостатки марксистской доктрины о государстве, последовательно отмечая конец всех гегемонистских амбиций итальянских интеллектуалов, связанных с международным коммунизмом

**Ключевые слова:** марксизм, демократия, государство, итальянская философия, гегемония, Норберто Боббио.

### 1. The two-party system and the hegemony of Marxism

To understand the importance of a controversy on the paradoxes of democracy and the inadequacies of Marxism in Italy at the end of the last century, it is necessary to describe the historical frameworks that is its background, and the motives, not only exclusively theoretical but also political, that had characterized the development and the affirmation of Marxism in Italy. The controversy, which had found a place mostly in the columns of the review "Mondoperaio"<sup>1</sup> in the late seventies, was around topics such as "the democratic rules of the game"; the function of intellectuals; the role of parties and the relevance of Marxist elaborations within a liberal-democratic system. The controversy has developed in a context of profound social transformation, towards which Marxism seemed to be a cultural current in crisis in regard to the problems of the State and, more generally, relative to the organization of law in an advanced capitalist society<sup>2</sup>.

The end of the second world war marked in Italy the emergence of the supremacy of the party of Catholics gathered, with the support of hierarchical Vatican spheres, around an innovative political program inspired by the social doctrine of the Church and political thought of the Sicilian priest Luigi Sturzo<sup>3</sup>, who urged an administrative decentralization and a limitation of the powers of the State towards the spontaneous organization of society. The Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana-DC*) became the party around which the government coalitions rotate since the proclamation of the republic until the beginning of the 1990s.

The substantial monopoly in the direction of the State by the Christian Democrats marks the progressive marginalization from the area of government of the parties which referred to the Marxist doctrine. Although the end of the war had been characterized by the substantial collaboration of all parties, Christian Democracy, and the post-war Catholic culture in general, were characterized by a hard anti-communism and a clear choice in the international field in favour of the United States. A very large gap was

<sup>1</sup> The review was founded in 1948 by the socialist leader Pietro Nenni in memory of the glorious Spanish antifascist review „Mondo Obrero“ and still existing, stands out towards the end of the Seventies of the twentieth century for its cultural vivacity. F. Coen, P. Bortioni, *Le cassandre di Mondoperaio*, Venice Marsilio, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> M. Gervasoni, *Le insidie della „modernizzazione“*. „Mondoperaio“, la cultura socialista e la tentazione della „seconda repubblica“ (1973-1982), in *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni settanta. Sistema politico e istituzioni*. Edited by G. De Rosa and G. Monina, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino 2003, ss.203-234.

<sup>3</sup> F. Felice, *Il contributo di Luigi Sturzo alle scienze sociali*, in *L'opera di Luigi Sturzo nelle scienze sociali*, edit by F. Felice, Torino Effatà, 2006, ss.7-34.

created in the Italian political system<sup>4</sup>. On the one hand, the Christian Democracy as the „government party“ which was managing, together with its „satellite parties“, public policies in a sense that safeguarded private property and the market economy; on the other, the Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano-PCI*), which declared itself the promoter of „progressive democracy“, that is an Italian way to socialism, based on democracy and that excluded the conquest of power by revolution. On the one hand, therefore, a „state party“ (*DC*), linked to the Atlantic pact and, on the other, a party (*PCI*) inspired by the works of Antonio Gramsci and actively involved to acquire a hegemonic role among the intellectuals in the field of culture, although unlikely in relation to the Yalta agreements, conquest of power. Government and opposition indicated not only different constitutional roles, but also the boundaries of a clash that transcended the parliamentary aspect and was connected to powers, international agreements and opposing visions of the world.

The split between *DC* and *PCI* deeply penetrated Italian society. The party of Catholics, despite the support that came from the Vatican, had to consider the cultural initiative of the communist party, that is of a party able to exert a remarkable fascination upon various intellectuals, cultural reviews and foundations, magazines, publishing houses, etc. A fascination derived primarily from the international prestige of one country, which more than any other had contributed to annihilating the „Nazi Beast“: the Soviet Union.

Marxism from a „neglected philosophy“<sup>5</sup> as it had been in Italy until the Second World War, became, consistently in agreement with the thought of Antonio Gramsci, the cultural instrument of a party that criticizing the state of existing things tended to transform them. The influence of Marxism in Italy in the second post-war period has therefore an essentially political cause: the role of opposition, of „criticism of the existent“, that an antagonistic culture exercised towards a representative party firmly in power for decades. The imperfect bipartisanship (*il bipartitismo imperfetto*)<sup>6</sup> i.e. the inability of the opposition culture to become a culture of government and to conquests power, characterizes the phase of a political system's stabilization after fascism. What was missing in a system of this type was the alternation between majority and opposition typical of mature democracies. In this context, Marxist culture, especially from the point of view of political elaboration, increasingly became a „culture of protest“ that had no possibility to perform its program. At the same time, the party of Catholics somehow betrayed Don Sturzo's political program regarding the decentralization of State powers and the separation between civil society and central administration. The State and the party that represented it to the highest degree, became increasingly an „invader“ of public policies in the field of economics, in the organization of relations between private individuals, in the organs of formation of public opinion such as the mass-media.

The date that marks the crisis of the „paradigm of the division of power“ between government and opposition (*DC-PCI*), between Marxist culture and Catholic culture has to be found in a precise historical period, that is in the second part of the 1970s. The structural causes are essentially linked to the change in Italian society from an economic

<sup>4</sup> F. Bonini, *Storia costituzionale della repubblica*, Roma Carocci, 2008, ss.15-29

<sup>5</sup> G. Bedeschi, *La parabola del marxismo in Italia 1945-1983*, Bari Laterza, 1983, ss.33-40.

<sup>6</sup> G. Galli, *Il bipartitismo imperfetto*, Bologna Il Mulino, 1967.

point of view. The level of welfare achieved following the impetuous development of the 1960s thanks to redistribution policies gave way to a society in which unemployment grew. Beyond that emerged political movements claiming representation, often conflicting with the ideology of the party of Catholics and the parties of the left. A strong crisis of representation was opening up. The old Marxist categories that had inspired the *PCI* seemed unfit to understand social complexity. The hegemonic function of Marxism in the area of culture suffered. The progressive function of Marxism seemed now a memory of the past and Marxism itself an ideology of power, functional only to the interests of a party composed mainly of officials.

## 2. Marxism and Marx

The Italian Marxists tried to make Marx's lesson relevant to the times following the questions raised by the development of a complex society. The division of powers between *DC* and *PCI* seemed obsolete. In this period arose the numerous adjectives of Marxism: „existentialist Marxism“, „critical Marxism“ and finally „neopositivist Marxism“<sup>7</sup>. These expressions indicated, on the one hand, the confusion in to which many of the interpreters of Marxism had fallen, on the other the inability to replace so called „wet powders“ of Marxism with a theory of society less oriented to *politique politicienne* or party politics. The crisis of Italian Marxism was examined by Norberto Bobbio from the point of view of the relationship of Marxism with democracy. This question implied a more careful examination of the heuristic potential of Marxism in relation to the forms and tasks of the State; the possibility of realizing „a society of equals“ and, above all, the plausibility of Marxism as „political science“. Bobbio's reflections on Marxism were hosted by the review „Mondoperaio“. Ideologically connected with the socialist party (*PSI*), it distinguished itself as an open place of confrontation between political cultures. Bobbio's papers immediately found numerous interlocutors among the ranks of Italian Marxism<sup>8</sup>.

The essay by Bobbio that opened the debate was entitled „Does a Marxist doctrine of the state exist?“ (*Esiste una dottrina marxista dello Stato?*)<sup>9</sup>. The title reflected the intellectual habit of Bobbio, characterized by the search for dialogue and by asking questions openly, without preconceived ideological schemes. Bobbio reproached Marxism, not only Italian Marxism, for not possessing a political theory of the State. The attention of the Marxists, according to Bobbio, focussed mainly on the problem of the conquest of power and on considering the State as a transitional phenomenon destined to wither away, after the dictatorship of the proletariat in a communist society. The interest in the aforementioned questions was accompanied by a continuous reference by Marxists to the „sacred texts“ of Marx and Engels<sup>10</sup>. They attempt in other words to explain any phenomenon or social transformation using the writings of two authors who dated back to the previous century and to a phase of development of the pre-industrial or simply industrial type of society.

<sup>7</sup> C. Cases, *Marxismo e neopositivismo*, Torino Einaudi, 1958, s.3.

<sup>8</sup> Norberto Bobbio had the opportunity in 1955 to discuss the insufficiencies of the communist doctrine with various intellectuals of the Marxist area, such as Palmiro Togliatti and Galvano Della Volpe. N. Bobbio, *Politica e cultura*, Torino Einaudi, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> N. Bobbio, *Esiste una dottrina marxista dello stato?*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, edyted di F. Coen, „Quaderni di Mondoperaio“ Roma 1976, ss.1-17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, s.2.

The abuse of the principle of Marx's authority explained, both an attitude or a form of „neo-scholastic“ thinking, linked to a truth that has to be affirmed; and to, the fact that „Marxians are not Marxists“, just as Marx himself had, in another context, stigmatized<sup>11</sup>. The philosophy of Marx, stated Bobbio, is linked to praxis and its results have an empirical value connected to the capacity of the theory to change society<sup>12</sup>. Unlike Leibniz or Hume, the discussion around the theses of the philosopher of Trier cannot be purely theoretical. Marxism is a philosophy that interprets society to change it, its object becomes itself as capable of fulfilling this task<sup>13</sup>. Bobbio reproached the Marxists for having locked themselves into an ideological frame of mind and for failing to understand why the theory fails not only to change, but even to explain society exhaustively. The Marxist faced with the problems of the State is led to go and see what Marx, Engels and a few other elected authors said and persuade the interlocutors that everything has been said or written in the most effective and true form in the „sacred books“. The Marxist invests his energies in a pedantic and philological work of exegesis and interpretation of the texts of Lenin or Gramsci and omits the study, for example, of sociology, of theory of law and modern political science denigrating them as „bourgeois sciences“,<sup>14</sup>. The philosophy itself for the Marxists, as indeed for the idealists, was an intellectual activity that had to remain „pure“ in regard to the empirical sciences. The liberal state could therefore be explained by reading Locke or Kant and the conservative state by simply studying Hegel.

The most striking limit that Italian Marxism inherited from Croce's idealism, however, consisted in the lack of interest in the form it should have taken and which institutions should have characterized democracy in socialist society. Since representative democracy was considered bourgeois and therefore constituted an inadequate form of organization of political decisions in the socialist society, how then should decisions for the whole society be organized? In other words, on what should the law be based once the bourgeois representative institutions have been eliminated? The problem that Marxism fails to resolve, Bobbio notes, is the main question of the history of political thought. The whole history of political thought, according to Bobbio, „can be considered as a sometimes bitter (*amaro*), sometimes trustful comment, sometimes resigned and at times combative, to the problem of power and its possible degeneration (...) Anyone who has a certain familiarity with the classics of political thought is well aware that the fundamental problems of every political theory have always been two: the problem we will define of the „who“ rules (...) and the problem of „how“ (...). And I have no doubt that the two most important problems have always been the second and not the first“<sup>15</sup>. According to Bobbio, the theoretical insufficiency of Marxism concerns the aspect of control of power. Moreover, according to him, both Marx and Engels or Lenin had reduced politics to the sphere of force and to the question of what the historical subject of this force should be. The main question of the classics of Marxism referred to the conquest of power and the problem of the party, rather than the ways in which force had to be exercised.

<sup>11</sup> K. Marx, *Critica al programma di Ghota*, (1875) edited by G. Sgrò, Bolsena Massari, 2008, s.45.

<sup>12</sup> N. Bobbio, *Né con Marx né contro Marx*, Roma editori Riuniti, 1998, s.23.

<sup>13</sup> N. Bobbio, *Esiste una dottrina marxista dello stato?*, cit., s.11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, s.3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, s.14.

Marx, more than other authors who refer to him, is part, according to Bobbio, of the great current of political realism<sup>16</sup>, since he considers the State as an „organization of force” (or of legitimate violence) by a social subject, the bourgeoisie, according to its own interests. The State has no divine attributes and does not realize the common good, the collective interest or justice, but constitutes the projection of a political interest of the ruling class and its strength to be able to affirm them. Unlike the conservative realists, like Machiavelli and Luther, Marx does not have a pessimistic conception of man, since his analysis develops at the level of classes and social order, i.e. at a level where the magnanimity or moral virtues of each individual is an aspect, and not the most important, of politics understood as „the organization of force”. Whether the State or society is good or bad depends on the class that has the power.

The description of the State by Marxism is, it could be said, sociological and not ethical-political. Marx overturns his previous conception of the relations between society and state. From Hobbes to Hegel, the society antecedent to the State, both considered as a society of nature and as a civil society, was the place of passions and interests in perennial conflict. The society coincided with a situation of permanent disorder. The State was the antidote to disorder, the highest form of rational coexistence among men. For Marx however the State is the perpetuation of the state of nature<sup>17</sup>, the instrument at the service of the interests of the bourgeoisie. Since these interests are „partisan”, the destiny of the State is to accentuate the disorder of society or to oppress the demands of change at the top of political organizations. The State, according to Marx, must disappear along with the class society and its rules, including the representative bourgeois democracy.

### 3. Democracy as a complex of „rules of the game” and its „necessary evils”

From this point of view, Bobbio’s question would remain unanswered: what kind of democracy— considering that the bourgeoisie causes disorder – must be realized in a communist society? In the second essay published in „Mondoperaio” entitled *What alternatives to representative democracy? (Quali alternative alla democrazia rappresentativa?)*<sup>18</sup>, Bobbio writes there is no doubt that perfect and ideal democracy is direct democracy, that is to say the government of the people and not in the name of the people<sup>19</sup>. This kind of democracy is unimaginable for Bobbio in a modern society. For democracy, according to the Italian philosopher, we can also understand a set of „rules of the game” that allow the widest participation of the majority of citizens, both directly and indirectly, in political decisions have to do with the whole community. This definition of democracy, which we can call representative, contains, as we can see, some contradictions. It is not clear, in the definition proposed by Bobbio, who the citizens are and whether the „status” of citizen must be the subject of democratic decision or not. If yes, it means that some decide what it means to „be a citizen” even for others, those who are not yet citizens and could become so. In other words, the sovereign subject becomes both subject and object of decision.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, s.15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, s.16.

<sup>18</sup> N. Bobbio, *Quali alternative alla democrazia rappresentativa?*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, cit., ss.19-38.

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, s.22.

Bobbio states that democracy has some paradoxes. The most obvious paradox arises from the fact that the emergence of the modern democratic State has led to the enormous growth of the bureaucratic apparatus, that is, of an apparatus formed by a hierarchical (and therefore undemocratic) structure in which decisions are taken in terms of functionality according to parameters that are not subject to democratic decision<sup>20</sup>. Bureaucracy, in other words, in a certain sense represents the fruit of democracy. A fruit necessary for democracy's survival however, bureaucracy is also a limitation of democracy itself. Where the democratic State has grown, the bureaucratization process has intensified. Universal suffrage, for example, as a typically democratic institution, has raised demands and claims on the State.

In the sphere of representation, the most varied and conflicting demands come together. Greater democracy means therefore a greater number of demands for performance by the State. Greater number of demands leads to a proportional increase of the apparatus, the bureaucracy, which must fulfill the new and more numerous requests coming from society.

The other paradox of democracy – in fact strictly connected to the first – is a consequence of technical development. There are more and more questions that, in order to be resolved, require, beyond the intervention of the State, technical solutions, or solutions resulting from the specialized work of competent people<sup>21</sup>. The economic problems of a modern state, for example, can be solved only through the intervention of those who, due to their culture and profession, have a competence different from that of the ordinary citizen. This aspect, which we can define as technocracy of advanced societies, represents an obstacle to the sovereignty of citizens with regard to some particular problems that concern them. The people, to put in another way, cannot be sovereign, and therefore decide, according to democratic rules and on the basis of the majority, on matters of fundamental importance for the life of the state. Both the bureaucracy and the technocratic aspect of modern states are therefore „necessary evils“ or paradoxes of democracy, representing at the same time the product and the condition of democracy; the threat and the necessary basis for its functioning.

The third paradox described by Bobbio concerns the relationship between mass media and mass society. According to the Italian thinker, propaganda and political marketing tend to broaden the number of decisions based on momentary emotions or on the passive imitation of the behaviour of others by citizens. The enlargement of the bases of democratic decision implies the growth of techniques of potential manipulation of public opinion and falsification of the conscience of individuals<sup>22</sup>. Every citizen is, from this point of view, at the same time the subject of political decision and the object of political propaganda and techniques of conquest of power that in fact have little to do with democracy. Political propaganda, Bobbio observes, can be regulated but not eliminated just as the risk or temptation of populism cannot be eliminated.

Having identified the paradoxes of democracy, Bobbio analyses the relationship between democracy and socialism and, above all, tries to answer whether socialism can be a form of democracy without paradoxes and therefore higher than the existing ones.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibidem, s.23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, s.25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, s.26.

Bobbio starts from an apparently banal observation, but of great cultural significance. He writes: „It would be necessary to go all the way to the problem and to understand why where socialism was realized, there is no democracy (...) and where the rules of the democratic game have been observed socialism has not yet come and does not even seem imminent.”<sup>23</sup>

Democracy, says Bobbio, does not lead to socialism and, beyond that, socialism, in its Marxist version, does not have a convincing model of a democratic State. The supporters of Marxism have mainly focused on the criticism of the bourgeois state, but have not offered a way out or an alternative model of democracy that was not identifiable with direct democracy. The direct democracy according to Bobbio is in fact in a complex society impossible. Between direct and unrealizable democracy and democracy exposed to the paradoxes, Bobbio does not see, until proven otherwise, the space for a Marxist theory of democracy<sup>24</sup>. The response by the Italian Marxist philosophers to Bobbio's analysis of the inadequacies of socialism and the paradoxes of bourgeois democracy was not long in coming. Bobbio with his „philosophy of dialogue” had achieved the goal of opening a discussion on specific issues. The Marxists, for their part, accepted „the attitude of openness” of Bobbio, reiterating, however, the need for a third way between direct democracy and representative-bourgeois democracy that was to take the form of „economic democracy or of producers”.

Umberto Cerroni<sup>25</sup> responds to Bobbio by stating, at least at the theoretical level, that representative democracy and socialism are not incompatible. „It is true - writes Cerroni - that this (bourgeois democracy) is a typical form of the bourgeois State, but how can we forget that the socialist State was defined by Lenin as «a bourgeois State without bourgeoisie in power?». The socialist State is a state of transition to the new stateless society”. According to Cerroni Stateless society must be replaced, in developed communism, „by the direct self-management of the producers”<sup>26</sup>. Cerroni emphasizes that representative democracy is characterized by an ever deeper separation between civil society and representative institutions, between bureaucratic activities of the State and real needs of citizens. According to the Marxist scholar, the strong separation between civil society and the State is destined to be accentuated with the growth of state bureaucracy. According to Cerroni only the „socialization of power” can make possible a „socialization of the economy”<sup>27</sup> consistent with Lenin's motto that „when everyone participates in the management of the State, capitalism cannot maintain itself”<sup>28</sup>. From this point of view, democracy is the best ground for the struggle for the socialist movement as it uses the institutions of bourgeois democracy to overcome them. The goal is „producer democracy” and the elimination of the dichotomy between civil society and the state. It is not clear, however, if according to Cerroni the communist society represents an organic body that marches like one man and in which the contradictions that can be resolved through the majority decision disappear. It is

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, s.27.

<sup>24</sup> N. Colajanni, *I pentiti del socialismo*, Milano Sperling & Kupfer, 1992, s.20.

<sup>25</sup> U. Cerroni, *Esiste una scienza politica marxista?*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, ss.39-53.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, s.43

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, s.46

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem s. 49.



not clear, in short, except at a purely intuitive level, what the boundaries are between society and state and how they will disappear in the „producer society“.

According to another Marxist intellectual, Roberto Guiducci<sup>29</sup>, the progressive self-management achieved in many sectors of public life and the decentralization of central power in favour of municipalities, regions and provinces would be useful experiments to be consolidated in a possible socialist society. Valentino Gerratana, one of the leading expert in Italy of Rousseau and Labriola, affirms the need to stop growing bureaucratization in the capitalist States through direct democracy and recognizes the substantial fiasco of socialist countries in achieving socialism<sup>30</sup>. The transitory dictatorship of the proletariat has resulted, in a country like the USSR, in the dictatorship of the party and in the exponential growth of an inefficient bureaucracy<sup>31</sup>.

The most articulated answer to Bobbio's observations comes Giuseppe Vacca<sup>32</sup>, who criticizes in an absolute manner Bobbio for supporting the model of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and for having „hypostatized“ a type of democracy that presents various shadows. Vacca's reasoning is based on the theme of „political recomposition“, i.e. the ways in which civil society integrates with the State, the ways in which expectations or instances in society are transformed into collectively binding decisions<sup>33</sup>. Vacca states that the problem of socialism consists in the appropriation by the masses of political power: an appropriation that is possible only through the elimination of private property. Citizens would then become producers and the sphere of politics would be reduced to the organization of a planned economy, that is, of an economy without class interests and without the resulting conflicts. The political recomposition in a producer society coincides for Vacca with the integration between the needs of organization on the part of producers and decentralized planning<sup>34</sup>. It is not clear in Vacca's article who, besides the goodwill of everyone, should guarantee the realization of planning in a communist society. It is also not clear if the absence of conflicts is the result of the planned economy or the functionality of the economy is the consequence of a forced harmony. And, in any case, forced by whom?

According to Vacca, socialist democracy should be characterized by the protection of individual liberties, that is, of freedom that: „begins to be constituted in the elimination of the antagonism between politics and the economy, which represents the fundamental cell of all forms of domination of the present society.“<sup>35</sup> Vacca admits a cultural delay of the labour movement in elaborating a political theory that is not simply the listing of the strengths and weaknesses of a juridical-institutional model with respect to another. However, Vacca's Marxism does not coincide with the „Marxism of philosophers“, but with the action of party leaders.

According to him, political leaders like Gramsci and Togliatti, forged in the political struggle and in the daily interpretation of the historical fact in order to elaborate tactics and strategy, can better than the representatives of „academic Marxism“,

<sup>29</sup> R. Guiducci, *La città dei cittadini e la società dei socialisti*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, cit., ss.53-63.

<sup>30</sup> V. Gerratana, *La democrazia sovversiva*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, cit. ss.81-91

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p.82.

<sup>32</sup> G. Vacca, *Discorrendo di socialismo e democrazia*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, cit, ss.117-153.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, s.119.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p.122.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p.123.

define an adequate model of social development in the socialist sense<sup>36</sup>. According to Vacca, the „Marxism of the academics“ would be reiterated as a simple criticism of authoritarianism and alienation, not understanding that Marx’s lesson is essentially a historical critique and a philosophy of praxis. Intellectuals cannot be detached from the masses; political recomposition also occurs at the level of the relationship between politics and culture, philosophy and practice, party and political context, ideas and communist transformation of society. He writes: „The Marxist doctrine of the State cannot be separated from the theory of revolution. And therefore Marxist political science elaborates principles rather than models. Then the institutional and procedural techniques are traced back to them“<sup>37</sup>. Vacca, finally, states that Bobbio’s analysis of the paradoxes of democracy is founded and, in some way, constitutes proof of the need for a search for „socialist roads“ to get out of the crisis from the system of the bourgeois state<sup>38</sup>.

Giorgio Ruffolo, economist and liberal socialist, says that Vacca „describes the questions of the socialist model and strategy as false disembodied problems (...) Vacca renounces his own responsibilities, in favor of party and its political leadership“<sup>39</sup>. Ruffolo believes that to overcome dogmatism an „Marxist scholasticism“ it is necessary to use new economic and sociological tools. In advanced industrial societies, which are characterized by increased information, it would be necessary to elaborate political solutions to the new inequalities that are gradually being produced: those between those who own and disseminate information<sup>40</sup> and those who somehow are the recipients of this information. Ruffolo emphasizes the asymmetry, already highlighted by Bobbio, which is created in complex societies between those who control the sources of information and public opinion in general, and the difficulty of regulating this asymmetry with classical instruments of traditional political science and philosophy such as, for example, representation, parliamentary democracy, political parties, etc.

Despite his efforts Ruffolo remains, however, anchored to the Marxian idea of class society. He writes: „the control that the dominating class exercises over the production process and the State that allows the imprisonment of the new energies within new and increasingly complex authoritarian structures in which the source of power is constituted by information and the means to maintain the monopoly, is no longer private property but a direct control by authoritarian structures.“<sup>41</sup> In a complex society Ruffolo believes that the organizational monopoly of a party is not desirable. Such an eventuality would only lead to the accentuation of the asymmetry between

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, s.133.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem, s.134.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, s.150.

<sup>39</sup> G. Ruffolo, *Eguaglianza e democrazia nel progetto socialista*, in *Il marxismo e lo stato*, cit, ss. 171-191. It is necessary to specify that in the Italian socialism at the end of the Seventies „a genetic mutation“ is realized. Having abandoned Marx and Engels, the new „founding fathers“ become not only thinkers linked to the tradition of social democracy, such as Bernstein, but also Proudhon. Democratic socialism as a political and cultural movement seeks new tools to interpret the transformations of alternative societies to those of traditional Marxism. Thus we rediscover Gobetti and Roselli, Ernesto Rossi and foreign sociologies and philosophies. Ruffolo is one of the protagonists of the process of renewal by the Italian reformist area. *La questione socialista*, edited by V. Foa i A. Giolitti, Torino Einaudi, 1987, ss.44.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, s.173.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, s.176.

owners and users of information and, finally, to an artificial and unnatural simplification of social complexity<sup>42</sup>. The scenario that would open up would be similar to that of the countries of „realized socialism“ in which party decisions constitute a tombstone on the potential of advanced industrial societies.

The debate ends with a last essay by Bobbio entitled, once again in the form of a question, *Which socialism? (Quale socialismo?)*<sup>43</sup>. The Italian philosopher does not hide his satisfaction at having triggered a non-trivial and interdisciplinary discussion on the topicality of Marxism in regard to democracy in complex societies. He reiterates that the spreading Marxist conformism in the academic world does not render a good service to the cause he claims to want to support. He defines it as a real case of Aristotelianism<sup>44</sup> that a left-wing culture should have at least suspected. He reproaches Vacca for his dislike of the positive sciences and of the juridical formulas, typical of a neoidealist intellectual attitude, that is to say of a humanistic culture that has „separated from the great stock of scientific culture of the modern world starting from Vico“<sup>45</sup>. Bobbio reiterates that bourgeois and parliamentary democracy is a democracy based on the formal equality of citizens and on their material inequality. This model of democracy does not lead to socialism, but to the accentuation of some paradoxes that cancel the objective conditions of a simply formal equality. Unlike the Italian Marxists, Bobbio maintains that democracy is therefore not the best path towards socialism and could even constitute a possible negation of the ideals of equality and freedom that seem to animate the writings of old and new Marxists. Above all, says Bobbio, we should ask ourselves which socialism we want to achieve? In other words, how will the socialist system be similar to or different from the models that history has given us? If the socialism of the Soviet Union no longer represents for Marxists, not only Italian Marxists, the homeland of the „sun of the future“ which socialism can be contrasted with the distortions and gaps in the Soviet model? In short, which socialism?

Faced with these questions, which Bobbio relentlessly poses to his interlocutors in the manner of Socrates, the Italian Marxists react with the revival of formulas and „reasons“ that are often incomprehensible. In the socialist society that must come, Bobbio is still questioning, will there be room for the constitution, for the principle of majority, for fundamental rights and for the separation between constitutional court and parliament? The reduction of these questions to empty juridical formulas linked to a „class culture“ means, according to Bobbio to be sick of idealism. A disease from which in fact he, among the few empiricists of Italian culture, claims to be immune. Among the chimerical constructions and the apology of the existing Bobbio affirms the value of open and free dialogue, that is the incontestable value of democracy. Democracy is a way out of the dreamlike dimension of one's own suggestions and pragmatic and realistic cynicism. „But where to?“ he asks.

The analysis of the debate in Italy on democracy and socialism allows me, in these conclusions, to briefly describe the role of Norberto Bobbio in Italian culture after

<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, s.188.

<sup>43</sup> N. Bobbio, *Quale socialismo? In Il marxismo e lo stato*, ss.199-215.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, s.200

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, s.203.

World War II<sup>46</sup>. A part of Italian philosophy and, in general, of political studies suffered the strong influence of idealism. Gramscian (derived from Antonio Gramsci's surname) Marxism represented a „leftist“ variant, still vitiated by humanism and rejection of „positive bourgeois sciences“. The intellectual provocations of Bobbio had as their object the philosophy of Marx and that of his followers and aimed to emphasize the inadequacy of a certain way of understanding political philosophy in the face of what Hegel would have called „harsh replicas of history“.

Bobbio had contributed to bringing to life neo-Enlightenment in the second post-war period, claiming to introduce in Italy the acquisitions of sciences in the field of law studies and politics that came from Anglo-Saxon-speaking countries. He distinguished himself by the ability to dialogue with positions contrary to his own and above all, to highlight, with arguments often based on a stringent logic, the shortcomings and errors of his interlocutors. This he did with the Marxists, asking them: what democracy they wanted to achieve? What exactly does socialism consist of (since Soviet socialism was not considered to be such? Why does democracy not lead to socialism? Why socialism when it is realized that it is be undemocratic?

Bobbio had no certainty at hand. Its fundamental contribution to the culture of the time is constituted by the „philosophy of meekness“, a philosophy permanently in search; more willing to ask new questions than to certify truth. Italian culture in the late seventies was full of tensions that marked the push towards modernization. Bobbio for many was a point of reference, a supporter of the clear and distinct ideas of Descartes who preferred to confront reality rather than, in the manner of Plato, interpret the shadows on the wall of the cave of ideology; shadows that could reflect the existence of models of peace and order, but also of tragedies and ruins.

The legacy of „Mondoperaio's debate“ between Bobbio and some Italian Marxists is still present within Italian political culture, also in this historical phase characterized by the renaissance of Marxism, perhaps generated by the international capitalist crisis of the decade 2007-2017<sup>47</sup>. The critique of political economy and Marx's methodology appear for this reason to be still contemporary. Bobbio's lesson nevertheless, his doubt about the form of State and democracy in a socialist society, still represents insurmountable questions for supporters of a political theory that does not simply want to be a mere criticism of what exists but an authentic program of human emancipation.

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<sup>46</sup> G. Pecora, *Per Norberto Bobbio*, Napoli Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2004, s.50.

<sup>47</sup> A. Negri, *Starting again from Marx*, in <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/starting-again-from-marx>. See also D.Stasi, D.Fusaro, *Neoliberalizm a demokracja. Rozważania o przyszłości Europy*, Rzeszów Wydawnictwo UR, 2015, ss.34-45.

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