

THE BLACK RHETORIC OF MARXISM

Ion MILITARU*

Abstract: *The Black Rhetoric of Marxism* represents a study applied to the Marxist rationalism and materialism. Essentially, the study points to a breach within this monolithic block, the involuntary, and yet different manner, in which Marx was exceeded by his poetical temper, and the way in which, in this case, predominated his scientific programme. The use of the dark metaphors, of a certain Jewish and Christian tradition, shows how, for supporting the scientific programme, it is required the presence of elements that are external to it.

Keywords: spectre, the dead, ghosts, communism, proletariat.

a) *We do not suffer only because of the living, but also because of the dead.*

*Le mort saisit le vif!*¹.

The issue concerning the dead always obsessed Marx. They did not seem to leave him to peace, more than the living did. From their territory, and their multitude meaning world, Marx extracted not only his rhetoric, but his specific way of constructing the weltanschauung.

The map of this territory with its entire display of creatures was always at his disposal. His inspiration found in it the fecund nutrient of his manifestation.

There were not only the dead that obsessed Marx. Moreover, there were the dead as spirits, ghosts, the dead seen from the point of view of the entire active features of their realm: **spectres, vampires, mysteries, unseen forces, powers of the dark...** All the dwellers of the other-side world are found in the world of Marx, and the roles that they are attributed do not disclose their original function: the world brought to light by Marx – the world of the capital that has to disappear and the communist world that needs to be born – bears, in his acceptance, the dark spirit of the other-side world.

Marx relied on this power of the dead, of the spirits and ghosts in a manner that cannot be described simply as mythical. *The Capital* is not just a plain use of a mythical structure, the final expression of a mind organised around an archetype.

* 1st Degree Scientific Researcher, PhD., “C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor” Institute for Research in Social Studies and Humanities from Craiova, of the Romanian Academy; Email: militaruiou_1@yahoo.com.

¹ Marx, *Capitalul*, vol. 1, p. 3.

Robert C. Tucker tries to accredit such a manner of understanding². Yet, the presenting of this kind of interpretation is based on a conclusive order: a mind organised around a firm and absolute mythical structure.

Nonetheless, there is no such order in Marx's way of thinking. His spirit is indebted to a world of the shadows from which he extracted his vigour, in an unorganised manner, and the unseen face of his thinking is for the preserving of this landmark within his entire work. Marx's whole philosophy, in its essence, is due to this original world. The description of the world in terms of Iranian religion, haunted by two forces: Ormuzd and Ahriman, the eternal tension, described as class struggle, final confrontation through violent revolution and the definitive ruling of Ormuzd, is obscured in itself. The Manicheanism of history, beyond which Marx did not see anything else, does not make the history more pleasant; but on the contrary.

There can be nothing found here from the serenity used by Hegel to describe the universal history process. The same description is also made by Marx, but the way in which it is made, leads to the transformation of the universal history into a vast stage of the useless things. Before the communist revolution, at Marx, there is nothing but alienation, an alienated world, both for the workers and the capitalists, for all the social classes. The man from this world, the man of the passed eras, was a mutilated human being.

It is something that Hegel never mentioned. The alienation that he used to refer to did not exclude the chance to humanity. Hegel's spirit, that was the subject of history, although encompassed the stages of its alienation, was not an unhappy spirit. In its alienation, there was found happiness: the one that would manage to serve a superior purpose, to be a stage in the advancement of the universal spirit towards itself.

In Hegel's world, the historical ages are rigorously necessary, they are useful for the affirmation of the spirit, for the crossing of all the stages. His man is constituted from the entirety of the ages, not from the final stage, that of reaching the self. All the anterior stages are equally necessary and, therefore, equally important.

For Marx, the situation differs. What took place before the communist revolution does not represent a necessity. It is legitimated only as unnecessary sufferance. The mutilated human being, depreciated by the class differentiation and exploitation, does not have any type of necessities and does not serve anyone. History is also divided in two: a perfectly useless, inhuman part, and a truly human one. There is no third age, in which the two could meet and reveal their importance. There no synthesis in the description made by Marx.

b) *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* starts with the evoking of the ghosts and ends with an incentive, addressed to all the communists: *A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism*³; *Proletarians of all countries, unite!*⁴.

² Robert C. Tucker, *Filosofie și mit la Karl Marx*, Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2011.

³ Marx, Engels, *Opere*, vol. 4, Bucharest, Politic Publishing House, 1963, p. 465.

The transition from *the spectres that are wandering through Europe*, to *the proletarians that **have to unite*** is not done without considering intermediary steps. Along the way, there are *powers of the dark, wizards, magic* etc. *The manufacturing and exchange bourgeois relations, the ownership bourgeois relations, the modern bourgeois society that produced, as if by **magic**, the **huge** manufacturing and exchange means, resemble the **wizard** that can no longer dominate the **powers of the dark**, which he unleashed⁵.*

A little before the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx was offering the most famous definition of the communism: *the communism is the solved enigma of history*. There were two elements present in this definition: the enigma and its solution, in the occult language signifying: the light and the darkness. Where there is an enigma, there is, on the one hand, the undecipherable positioning, and, there is, on the other hand, the definition, representing the perspective from which it is defined the enigma: the attitude of knowledge.

c) The criticism of Hegel is projected by Marx from a totally realistic basis. He talks about a sort of overthrowing, an upside-down positioning of the dialectics, about mystification and so on. *For Hegel... The Capital*, vol. I.

Is this not the mystification of Marx himself? On addressing the fact that, concealed under an apparent realistic and rational criticism, there is actually a more profound attitude, as an expression of the desire to outstrip itself from what is considered to be a mystery. On addressing the fact that, under his repulsion of seeing the world through the demiurgic aspect of the idea, the world subjected to the spirit, there is, basically, the incapacity of the spirit to detach itself from the original world that, owing to this incapacity, rejects it through the rational attitude of the realist refuse due to the history and objects. *We begin from the objects themselves, from the flesh-and-bone human being...* he says. The others, headed by Hegel, can start from another direction – from outside the objects, from the human who lost the flesh and bones, from the spectre-man. But the flesh-and-bone man starts, besides history, in their turn, from another point: from a mystery, from a belief, from anywhere else – which Marx, following Feuerbach, does not hesitate and does not linger to unmask and denounce the mystification, the alienation, the dehumanisation.

On the next level of the expositive organisation of the world, of the described *weltanschauung*, it is acknowledged as starting point itself the most concrete aspect of the concrete, the historical concrete. Any *weltanschauung* starts from something concrete and relies on something abstract. Yet, what supports the Marxist *weltanschauung* is this anterior world that Marx quotes continuously. The specific revealed by the presence of this world is the fact that it is diffused, lacking a face, not being assumed and, therefore, perceived as shapeless, anarchic, in chaos and

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 500.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 471.

disorder. Nonetheless, its presence is manifest. It is frequented, quoted, identified. In the principles enounced by Marx, the presence of this world is not felt. It misses from the stated order, within the jurisdiction of reason. Yet, it is tremendously present when these principles work, when, in the description of the world governed by them, it is resorted to art, rhetoric, primary perception.

d) There is a black rhetoric in the case of Marx in which the presences of the dead: spectres, mysteries, powers of the dark, are not just rhetoric figures, equal to others, without a correspondence with the reference to another world, an unstated one, perceived in terms of mystery and enigma.

Marx owns to such a rhetoric more than is usually due in its usual, common form. In Marx's stylistics, the ingredients of rhetoric, the metaphors, the personifications, the comparisons belong to an original territory that cannot be simply subordinated to the aesthetics. More than the origin of this rhetoric, it is its unusual result.

It is time, maybe, to determine, in the case of Marx, this type of approach.

*

The relations of Marx with the rationalism are paradoxical and ambiguous. The strict rationalist thinkers, assimilated to the idealist ones, and pursuing a spirit situated at the origin of the world, of reason, contradicted his most intimate principles. Of all, he was mostly attracted to those whose thinking was predominated by theological, esoteric aspects – for example Leibniz. His regard of the present world, as being the best of the possible worlds, lured Marx. Obviously, he enjoyed the paradoxical formula: the oxymoron.

Such a formula attracted Marx, in the first instance, not necessarily for the intrinsic virtues related to what he intended, but for its stylistics.

The best of the worlds... how greatly he must have been impressed, as long as his own analysis would not lead him to a different direction, and his own desire was nonetheless that of discovering the best of the worlds.

On the other side, such a formulation, in its historical variant – obviously, because this is what separates Marx from Leibniz⁶ – could be better evidenced through the connection with its own antithesis: the worst of the worlds. For Leibniz, the believer, such a completion was simple: the worst of the worlds was nothing else but the hell. That is the metaphysically transfigured variant of the world.

Yet, Marx is not involved in metaphysics and he is not preoccupied, as part of his thinking, with the metaphysical variants of the world. His target is a real one, its laws. The ground on which he acts resembles with something from Leibniz's manner of thought.

⁶ Leibniz was preoccupied to find, for such a world, a supra-historical, theological and metaphysical justification!

The best of the possible worlds cannot be another, in the historical acceptations, but the communist world. To the support of such a world comes the history itself, its laws, its latter consciousness – the philosophy: *for us, communism is not something expected... it is the law of the history itself.*

There are not brought arguments in favour of this world, *the best of the worlds...* Which world is it opposed to? To all, understandably. However, more than any of them, it is opposed to the bourgeois world, the worst of the bad worlds.

All the other worlds are essentially bad, thus, the bourgeois world, the capitalism, is the foulest of them. In it, more than in any other, there are hidden the class contradictions between exploiters and exploited, between rich and poor; alienation, man's dehumanisation – what can be worse?

The capitalist world is the hell. If the communist world is the heaven, the bourgeois world must mandatorily be the hell. Marx speaks of it in the worst of the terms that can be used to be depicted. It is the worst of the worlds and, nevertheless, on addressing it, its description, a certain poetical language is preferred by Marx.

Following Marx's rhetoric in portraying the worst of the worlds, an inventory of rhetorical figures: oxymoron, inversions, paradox, metaphor, not only is the world extensively grasped, but new contents are obtained too, which go far beyond the mere intention of description.

When the adversaries of Marx talk about *the philosophy of the poverty*, he talks about *the poverty of the philosophy*. Where Hegel's philosophy proves to be upside down, he turns it upside. If the previous philosophers considered that *the consciousness determines the existence*, for him, *the existence determines the consciousness*. Finally, in the last hour of the history, *the expropriators are the expropriated*, and so on.

Who was the audience of his rhetoric, the rhetoric in which there were found all the ingredients of religion, paganism, esotericism and alchemy? And which was the time that he targeted: the present, or the future? If we are to consider the fact that Marx published a little, except for the journalistic writings (practiced especially from financial reasons, rather than as scientific uprightness!), we infer that the target audience was the future one. Furthermore, Marx was more convincing in the future than in the present, as the future was the one that followed his ideas, and made from them the key solution of its history. It was the future that ascertained the Marxism in practice.

Marx was more convincing in the future than in the present, his rhetoric was one elaborated for another time than the one of his circumstantial living.

Marx's rhetoric is subjected to the same aesthetic determinations: the truth of the words encompassed in their stylistics. In addition, it is the beneficiary of a different dimension: it speaks of the world from which it originates. In his rhetoric, Marx shows the belonging to a world that does not unravel what he says, the things that he talks about.

Speaking of the worst of the worlds, the capitalism seen in the hypostasis of the historical hell, the *scientific* technique used by Marx does not dispense from the unscientific services provided by art, especially by rhetoric – art in the form of its practise! There is a poetry of the Marxist text, a *magic* for the description of *the worst of the worlds*... there is the seduction of this description. If the description is not valid, and the worst of the worlds does not confirm in this attributed truth, it cannot be refused the beauty, the art, the craftsmanship... Under the strength provided by art, hell becomes seductive!

When Marx talks of capitalism he depicts it in terms of the worst of the worlds. Thus, his discourse has fluctuations. Quite often, the capitalist hell does not seem to be the worst of the worlds, especially when, in its evolution, the relations of production contribute to the improvement of the civilisation, of the practical life, in relation to the old feudal forces of production that maintain the people in a poor material condition.

The rhetoric of hell seems to be tamed now and then: sometimes severe, then a bit more concessive. The historical referent is decisive in evaluation: in itself, the capitalist world represents the absolute evil, the terrestrial hell. Related to the anterior worlds, its meanness is being diminished, becomes less evil than the others. The growth of industry that it brought, the increased comfort, the evolution, the civilisation are influences on all the worlds.

Perhaps the rhetoric serves other purposes within Marxism, than in general, and its function belongs to other areas than the common ones.

Nevertheless, the evil does not show clear features. To a greater extent than the good, its face is invisible, is a mystery. Beyond the private property, a simple and classic expression of a long-lasting tradition, there are obscure sources of it, its metaphysics that was not one of Marx's preoccupations!

*

If the present idea is a valid one, and the entire Marxist rhetoric is due to a dark background, in which there are vetero-testamentary, Jewish, Christian and pagan origins, the future itself, of this way of thinking, is marked by the past. The proposed *Weltaunschauung*, the totalitarian vision on history: the class struggle, the violent revolution, the communism are themselves expressions of the sufficient, dominant root.

Consequently, the second great sentence, on addressing the fame, in the row and, maybe, equally famous with the statement regarding the philosophy that only interprets the world, does not change it, is that referring to spectres: *a spectre is wandering through Europe, it is the spectre of communism*.

To this ghost, Jacques Derrida devotes the work called *Spectres of Marx*⁷. What is missing from the book of Derrida is the stating of Marx's position: his

⁷ Jaques Derrida, *Spectrele lui Marx*, Polirom Publishing House, 1999.

attraction towards occultism. Instead of this strange discovery, Derrida talks about the cultural force of the ghost in *Hamlet*, and the rest of the European culture. Nonetheless, this statement is not an arbitrary one, as it is not arbitrary the invocation of the ghost in relation to the manner in which the communism had already imposed upon this culture, policy, history...

If the term as such had remained just stated in a sentence, there would have been known just as a figure of speech, a metaphor, a form, part of vocabulary. Yet, the statistics of this term refutes such a reason. The spectre, the ghost, the wraith are some of the most frequently used words in the Marxist vocabulary. There is not just a stylistically endowed term, for a better comparison. It is evident a presence that announces a method of thinking, its creed and a metaphysics!

*

In Marx's interpretation, the entire history is an exposition of the alienation. The beings that live in it, its subjects, the humans, are alienated beings. Only when the enigma of history is solved, when communism performs the great liberation, the alienation shall be abolished. Until then, the history shall be the history of the pathetic, ruined, humble creature... the tragic performance of the decayed human being.

During this falling, there shall be nothing but disorder, confusion; the history shall mark the tragic destiny of the individual being, who, helpless, shall not hesitate to raise continuously against the debilitating factor. History, as the archive of this continuous falling, will not lack mystery: why is it late? Why does not the maturing, of which Marx talks, occur faster? Why does not history leap over some stages, burning them, or interfering in other ways? All in due time, *the owl of Minerva is flying at dusk*.

The mythology is, nevertheless, left behind, and the history that moves forward, at the same pace with its clock, is not an explanation. The spirits that ask, that find the disorder in history, cannot be reassured with mythological expedients or simple, tautological enunciations: the Marxism, as an enunciation about the unavoidably enounced communism, in the Marxist enunciation.

There is a categorical course of Marx's choice between religion and mythology. Although the target of the critics is religion – especially Christianity (the rest of the religions: Islamism, Hinduism, Buddhism or Confucianism, are barely mentioned in diverse contexts!) – to a great extent, it is the ferment of his thought, the territory of mystery, of the Providence that governs according to his hidden plans.

Christianity is, in the explicit ontology, the mystification of the world, the darkening of the historical horizon and the obstacle due to which the man cannot reach towards themselves, the substitution of the truth of world through the construction of the heavenly truth. Christianity is, nonetheless, the mystery in its mundane attribute, the first pedagogy of the world, the world itself in the primary function of its appearance. Or, the first appearance, in its original epistemological honesty, is represented by the mystery, the Christianity as its forum.

In mythology, there is clarity: meanings, lively figures, ideas. It is not just the figure of Prometheus that exhausts the register of its invocations. Tragedy, myth, antic figures that are governed by the myth (Oedipus, Antigone) are all clear in the world of the fable. Closer to the thinking, owing to the fact that they are obsolete, do not generate problems on addressing the faith, their treatment is a historical one: treated as dead things of which their meaning is the only survivor. They are dead and Marx prefers, as always, the dead because, from death, the energies cannot be resuscitated. The dead's lack of word, the myth in itself, does not govern anything more. The world of the present is far away from any danger, through the attention given to the myth.

As regarding the Christianity, there is a different perspective. The faith in it and its values leaves little space for another manner of governing. One cannot serve two masters, the same as one cannot govern the world with two distinctive *weltanschauung*.