



Nahuel Moreno

About Marxism

Reconstruction and research by
Mercedes Petit and Reynaldo Saccone

Appendix: Works by Karl Marx
Theses on Feuerbach, Estranged work

Nahuel Moreno

About Marxism

Reconstruction and research by
Mercedes Petit and Reynaldo Saccone

English Translation: Daniel Iglesias

Cover design: Isabel Lorca, Daniel Iglesias

Interior design: Daniel Iglesias

Editor notes: Mercedes Petit, Reynaldo Saccone, Daniel Iglesias

www.nahuelmoreno.org

www.uit-ci.org

www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar

Copyright by CEHuS Centro de Estudios Humanos y Sociales

Buenos Aires, 2023

cehus2014@gmail.com



Contents

Why this book?	1
Mercedes Petit and Reynaldo Saccone	
What is Marxism.....	7
I. There are different answers.....	7
II. Marx and Engels and their time.....	9
The revolutionary wave of 1830.....	10
German emigration	11
Young Germany	11
The Hegelian Left.....	12
David Strauss	13
August von Cieszkowski.....	13
The Bauer brothers	14
The great materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach.....	15
Marx and Engels	17
III. Our definition of Marxism: The revolutionary movement of the workers for their liberation	18
Marxism as an open totality	19
The social movement of workers that fights to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism	22
Theses on Feuerbach: study and discussion sentence by sentence.....	24
I. Placement of the work	24
Three major themes of philosophy.....	24
German Idealism and Ludwig Feuerbach	25
II. Reading them thesis by thesis and phrase by phrase.....	26
III. Synthesis of the theses	44
Critique of materialism	44
Critique of idealism.....	44
On knowledge and the criterion of truth.....	44
Conception of history	44
About society	45
Conception of man	45
About ethics or duty to be	45
Marx and his concept of alienation.....	47
I. What the topic is about	47
Marx wrote about happiness and unhappiness	47
II. The birth of the concept and different interpretations	48
The great religions and happiness after death.....	48

Alienation in the Earthly World: Rousseau	48
Alienation in Hegel	50
III. What does Marx say in the work "Estranged Labour"?	52
First step: the produced object turns against the worker	52
Second step: the relationship between the worker and his activity at work, which turns against him.....	52
Third step: man alienates himself from nature and his "generic being".....	53
Fourth step: man alienates himself from the other men	53
The mess of the "species-being" in the third step	53
IV. The fourth step and the interpretation that philosopher Erich Fromm makes of this work	59
V. The dialectic between the legal property (<i>Eigentum</i>) and what belongs to each individual (<i>Eigenschaft</i>)	63
VI. On the overcoming of private property, the pleasures and the needs.....	64
VII. Free time under communism.....	66
VIII. Other definitions of alienation	67
Alienation and exploitation	69
IX. On de-alienation today	71
Party building and de-alienation	72
Historical materialism	77
I. Historical materialism and dialectical materialism?	77
II. Change and functioning of human society: historical materialism	77
III. The different conceptions of history.....	78
The Marxist interpretation	79
IV. Different conceptions of the functioning of society.....	79
Where to start? The infrastructure or productive forces	80
The structure: the relations between men and the means of production	80
The discussion about the modern middle class.....	81
The Superstructure: Institutions and ideologies and beliefs.....	82
V. Science and art.....	84
VI. The engine of history is the development of the productive forces.....	84
VII. A look at the prehistory of humanity: Primitive communism.....	85
The Origin of Man: Primitive Communism	86
VIII. The emergence of exploitation and the different economic systems.....	89
The Asian mode of production: the state and bureaucracy emerge	90
The slave mode of production: classes and private property emerge.....	95
The feudal mode of production	98
The capitalist mode of production.....	101
IX. More about science and art.....	103
X. Relationship between the state, the regime and the government	106
The regime in the transition from feudalism to capitalism: absolute monarchies	107

The different sectors of the bourgeoisie, the political regimes and the governments....	108
The bourgeois democratic regime.....	111
Napoleon’s armies and the first Bonapartist regime.....	113
Bonapartism sui generis.....	115
More about Bonapartist regimes.....	117
XI. The weight of the state bureaucracy in capitalist countries	118

Appendix:

Works by Karl Marx	119
Thesis on Feuerbach (1845).....	119
Estranged labour.....	121
Biographical Appendix	129
The League of Communists and the First International	135
The Second International and pro-imperialist reformist socialism	135
International Glossary.....	135
The communist parties and the Third International.....	136
The Fourth International and Trotskyism	136
The Socialist Workers Party of the United States.....	137
The Morenoist current, the PST and MAS in Argentina	137
The bourgeois counter-revolution in the imperialist epoch: the birth of fascism	138
The Soviet bureaucracy and the Stalinist counter-revolution	138
Second World War.....	138
Yalta and Potsdam conferences and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in the post-war period.....	139
Works by Nahuel Moreno	141

Why this book?

Mercedes Petit and Reynaldo Saccone¹

Nahuel Moreno was part of the generation that came to the revolutionary struggle after Trotsky's assassination in 1940 and became an important leader of Argentine and Latin American Trotskyism.

His name is directly linked to experiences of party building, such as the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (PST, Socialist Workers Party) in Argentina between 1972 and 1982 and then the MAS (Movement to Socialism), which he led until he died in 1987. There are often students or researchers who vindicate his activities from the 1940s to the 1960s in works on the first years of Argentine Trotskyism, their first steps in the industrial workers' movement when their support of Peronism was born. Also, the activity of Palabra Obrera (Workers' Word), during the proscription of Peronism. Also, his efforts to actively contribute since 1948 to the construction of the Fourth International.

The editorial house Capital Intelectual, which publishes *Le Monde Diplomatique* in the Southern Cone, included him in the collection "Founders of the Argentine Left", which it published in 2006. There are eight books of biographical and political reviews of leaders such as, among others, Victorio Codovilla (a reference of Stalinist communism), Severino Di Giovanni (anarchist), and John W. Cooke ("revolutionary" Peronism). Moreno has his own, as the founder of "Creole" Trotskyism.²

When talking about the contributions to Marxist elaboration in areas such as theory, logic or our country's history, a series of authors who are considered canonical from different perspectives are usually mentioned. Thus, Hector Agosti is usually mentioned in the sphere of the Stalinist Communist Party, in the so-called "national left" Jorge Abelardo Ramos, or in Trotskyism Milcíades Peña. In the field of so-called post-Marxism, Ernesto Laclau is named. The enumeration is not exhaustive; We could add a whole series of independent Marxists, such as those who made up the Past and Present group (Juan Carlos Portantiero, Jose Arico), or even recall that, at the time, Ricardo Piglia, Carlos Altamirano or Beatriz Sarlo herself were considered Marxist intellectuals of the Maoist camp.

1 Both joined the PRT (Revolutionary Workers' Party) in 1965. They took part in the theoretical schools that Moreno taught since then. They currently collaborate with *El Socialista* (www.izquierdasocialista.org.ar) and with the magazine *International Correspondence* (www.uit-ci.org).

Mercedes Petit is a leader of Izquierda Socialista (Socialist Left, IWU-FI) in Argentina. She collaborated for years, with Moreno, in the tasks of theoretical elaboration and in courses and schools for training cadres. Since the 1976 military coup, they shared exile in Colombia. Petit published *Elementary Political Concepts* (together with Nahuel Moreno) in 1986; Notes for a history of Trotskyism, in 2005 and *Working Women and Marxism*, in 2009 (with Carmen Carrasco).

Reynaldo Saccone is a member of Izquierda Socialista. He was studying medicine when he joined the PRT. He collaborated with the party newspapers *La Verdad* and *Avanzada Socialista*. and then the magazine *Correo Internacional*. During the dictatorship, when the PST was banned, he participated in organisations of public opposition to the regime. He was part of the leadership of the Union of Health Professionals of the Province of Buenos Aires (CICOP), of whose foundation he participated in and of which he was president.

2 Its author is Hernan Brienza. The other four leaders are Jorge Abelardo Ramos (the "national" left), Rene Salamanca (Maoism), Silvio Frondizi ("Marxist sniper"), and Liborio Justo, an "eccentric", according to the foreword by Andrew Graham-Yooll, journalist and former editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald*.

Nahuel Moreno does not show up on any of these lists. He is placed as a historical leader of Trotskyism; he is recognised as having political and organisational capacities. Even his ability to bring Trotskyism to the working class and turn it into a small but politically recognised revolutionary current in the Argentine reality of the last half-century. However, Moreno also made contributions in the more general and theoretical field that enrich the elaborations of Trotskyism and Marxism as a whole. For example, in the fields of historiography (*Feudalism and Capitalism in the Colonisation of the Americas*, 1948; *Method of Interpretation of Argentine History*, 1965) and epistemology (*Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences*, 1973).³ Some of his research and statements were even ahead of those of other researchers who would advance in the same direction.

Moreno's vast written work stems, for the most part, from the concerns and needs of the *most concrete and immediate* political intervention. From there, his theoretical approaches and contributions arise and develop, which makes it difficult to assess his elaborations from the point of view of abstract theory. For example, by fighting the distortions and falsifications of Marx and Engels's thought that began with Stalinist totalitarianism, he advanced in his definition of what Marxism is, what revolutionary praxis is, and the importance of Marx's concept of alienation.

Another example is his public criticism of several of Ernesto Che Guevara's strongest statements in 1964, at the height of his prestige and that of the Latin American guerrillas, in the long article in the magazine *Estrategia*: "Two methods for the Latin American revolution."

Something similar can be said of his strong polemics —beyond his friendship and mutual respect— with Ernest Mandel, whose name is quite well-known in academic circles. Much of Moreno's more theoretical elaboration emerged in the heat of the concrete political combat against Mandel's conceptions, which led to mistaken and opportunistic positions in Trotskyism. We can recall the political and programmatic debate, which expands to the more general and theoretical terrain, on Mandel's conception of bourgeois democracy —the so-called "socialist democracy"— at the end of the 1970s.

In the heat of these needs, Moreno advanced in numerous own and original elaborations, always faithful to the revolutionary Marxist legacy. Let us add his contributions regarding the characteristics of the triumphant post-war revolutions (China, Cuba, Nicaragua...), of the bourgeois governments of class collaboration —called the "popular front"—, the more general validity of the theory of the permanent revolution or the relations between political and economic factors in the imperialist era.

There is in Moreno an originality to "read" reality from the point of view of Marxism that deserves to be highlighted. Without departing from what we could call "orthodoxy" (Moreno defined himself as a part of "orthodox Trotskyism"), class fidelity and principles to the "red thread" of the teachers, he insisted that Marxism is the opposite of the dogma of the Stalinist bureaucracy, it has no "bible", it is an open totality. He promoted critical readings and was not afraid to say that one of our great teachers had made a mistake in this or that specific definition, or that changes in the reality led to modifying one of his statements. He also used this criterion for himself, pointing out errors or rectifications in his own work.

In this simultaneous game of openness and fidelity to "orthodoxy" and principles, Moreno produced his original Marxist elaboration always linked to the strict monitoring of reality and its changes, to the development of the class struggle and the construction of revolutionary and internationalist parties. He sought to respond to the new phenomena of reality since the Second World War and Trotsky's assassination, boldly and seriously intervening in the political debates and struggles since the post-war period. First of all, against the Stalinist left and bourgeois nationalism of the Peronist type. But also, against opportunist revisionism and against sectarianism within the Fourth International that was giving rise to the crisis, division and marginalisation of the Trotskyist movement.

³ Moreno's works to which we refer in this work are accessible at www.nahuelmoreno.org. The page contains over a hundred of his writings, both internal and archival as well as published as books, pamphlets, and articles in the party press and magazines. We have not wanted to load these brief lines with exhaustive references to the works of other cited authors, but they can be easily located with the data.

In recent years, a few works have appeared by authors that have placed Moreno as one of the Argentine Marxist theorists who should be read and studied. Elias Palti (*Verdades y saberes del marxismo* [Truths and learnings of Marxism], 2005) and Julia Exposito (*El marxismo inquieto* [Restless Marxism], 2018) deserve to be highlighted. Both Palti and Exposito, beyond the fact that we do not share many of their approaches and conclusions, have made Moreno dialogue —faithfully taking his positions and studies, without misrepresentations or falsifications— with other national and foreign Marxist theorists. In the more well-known field of politics, Martin Mangiantini's research on the rupture between Moreno and Santucho in 1967-68 is noteworthy (*El trotskismo y la debate en torno la lucha armada* [Trotskyism and the debate around the armed struggle], 2014).

Moreno always gave great importance to the political and theoretical formation of the militancy within his ranks, and he manifested it in the systematic activity of courses and talks, in the heat of the class struggle and seeking the training of workers and students to respond correctly in revolutionary action. Since he was a high school student, he began accumulating a huge culture. He used to say that at that time he was a fervent anti-fascist and very studious, but idealistic, a fan of Kant and Hegel. He was passionate about philosophy, mathematics and logic, not politics. He ceased to be a “Hegelian Trotskyist” when he read the *Transitional Program*⁴ the founding document of the Fourth International in 1938.

Since the construction of the first group began in 1943, Moreno's erudition gradually shed Hegelian language and he managed to translate it into clear Marxist explanations and very simple language. In this way, he managed to ensure that complex questions of philosophy, history, logic or economics were understood and followed with attention by those who knew little or nothing about these subjects. Unfortunately, little was recorded in those years of low technology, even fewer resources, dictatorships and various exiles. One exception, for example, was the preservation of a recording of an informal chat that followed a visit by Andre Gnder Frank in 1986 to the central party headquarters. Moreno and Frank maintained a personal friendship and deep mutual respect, and they were debating together with some female and male comrades on the complex issue of the subjective and the objective in the process of the class struggle (see *On the historical subjects*, www.nahuelmoreno.org).

Starting in 1965-66 he gave shape to what was known in the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party) as the “theoretical school”, which was held during the summer. It lasted several days of full-time study and discussion, from morning to evening. Metalworkers, textile workers and workers from Tucuman sugar mills, bank workers or teachers, as well as young university students, participated with enthusiasm. Moreno carefully prepared each course and was forming female and male comrades to take charge of the different topics. Under the dictatorships, the usual thing was to work in several houses, in small groups and often sleep right there, to read and study. Every day all the participants met with Moreno to comment on the reading in the groups, discuss and move forward. Mimeograph editions were made of selections of quotes or short texts that were used in each topic. Because of the dictatorships, for example in the summer of 1968-69 under Ongania, several times the school was held in the resort city of Mar del Plata, to have better security conditions for the intense movement of people in the houses and buildings that were rented in the tourist season. In the winter school holidays of 1974, on the contrary, using the legality of the PST, the school was held by concentrating a good number of female and male comrades for a plenary meeting in a spacious room in the Zamorano Centre, in the San Cristobal quarter of the city of Buenos Aires.

The topics covered the origins of the Marxist movement, the more philosophical questions, the study of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and his elaboration on alienation, logic, economics, the theory of permanent revolution, the law of uneven and combined development, or party building.

Over the years, several of these topics turned into party documents, pamphlets and books prepared by Moreno himself, many of them in polemics with other Trotskyist leaders. We include at the end a brief bibliography of his written work.

⁴ See *The Tiger of Pobladora*, interview by Raul Veiga, 1984. Available in www.nahuelmoreno.org.

Three of the courses from that first “theoretical school” fell by the wayside, without being reworked and published during Moreno’s lifetime: What is Marxism?, that of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, and the concept of alienation. From the broad subject of historical materialism, only parts of the 1983-84 summer school were rescued and published. In his 1986 book *Conversations*, he said that he had an “outstanding debt”: to write down his polemics on the concepts of alienation and de-alienation with Mandel and Novack. His early death prevented him from settling it.

We have assumed the responsibility of rescuing, or rather reconstructing these four topics, which are being published for the first time as a whole. We did the reconstruction by appealing to archival transcriptions of recordings, scarce, partial and uncorrected, from the late 1960s to the 1980s, to the selections of quotes that were distributed in the courses for the study of the participants, and to our memory (despite of its fragility...). As far as possible, we have kept the colloquial and pleasant language typical of Moreno’s talks and courses.

In a short text from July 1940, shortly before being assassinated by a Stalin agent, Trotsky wrote – very happily according to him – an introduction to the Chinese edition of his *History of the Russian Revolution*. He said:

The misfortune of the present young generation in all countries, among them China, consists in this: that there has been created under the label of Marxism a gigantic factory of historical, theoretical and all other kinds of falsifications. This factory bears the name ‘Communist International’. (“China and the Russian Revolution”, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1939-1940)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, p. 407)

The tiny Fourth International, founded in 1938, bravely challenged this colossal totalitarian and falsifying apparatus that subjugated the bureaucratized workers’ state, the former Soviet Union and we know it as Stalinism. The “syphilis” of the workers’ movement, according to Trotsky and Moreno. This “misfortune” continued and, beyond the dissolution of the USSR in 1989-91 and the restoration of capitalism (which Moreno never saw), it continues throughout the 21st century.

The Stalinist scourge has greatly harmed the Marxist elaboration and even more so the advance of the revolutionary struggle of the working class and the popular sectors to end capitalism and lead to the triumph of socialism with democracy in the world. Moreno contributed to the fight against this “giant factory of falsifications”, this perversion of Marxism and this betrayal of the revolutions. He did it in the first place by promoting the construction of revolutionary parties. Also elaborating and giving solid bases and contributions to the Marxism that Trotsky longed for shortly before his assassination.

Moreno never tired of repeating that his research and theoretical elaborations were nourished and advanced in the heat of the needs imposed, on the one hand, by the reality of the class struggle, both national and global, and, on the other, by the construction of the party and the international. In order to be able to specify the definition of Marxism, revolutionary critical-practical activity, alienation under capitalism or explain exploitative societies, he went back to previous centuries, delved into the great classical and contemporary thinkers, studied revolutionary processes and their leaders, ancient and modern, thus developing his thought.⁵

Despite the time that has elapsed and the great changes that have taken place in the world, the four topics remain fully useful and valid.⁶ And the same can be said of what is said here by Nahuel Moreno. For our part, in this foreword, we have avoided falling into the temptation of bringing to the present reality those four topics with which we were formed as Marxists and revolutionary socialists, that is, Trotskyists. But we confess the expectation that this reconstruction will serve as an incentive to the readers towards this essential update.

5 Within each topic, we have quoted many of the authors and works that Moreno usually commented on in his courses. And we expand them with a bibliography on page 313 with other authors and contemporary texts of Moreno or previous ones that we consider are still useful.

6 A sample of current Marxist elaboration in one of them may be the work of the professor at the University of York (Toronto, Canada) Marcello Musto: *Karl Marx Writings on alienation* (2021).

As we are only the rebuilders, it is not for us to dedicate this work. Obviously, the merit that it may have corresponds exclusively to its sole author, Nahuel Moreno. If we have introduced any error, we apologise in advance and hope to amend it in the heat of the collective elaboration that, hopefully, this publication can encourage. We thank the patient and hard-working people who, for months and successive versions, with their reading helped to reduce errors and clarify unintelligible paragraphs.

To facilitate understanding we have made a biographical appendix of the main people cited. And a glossary on facts and definitions of recent history and our trajectory. In an appendix, we publish both the *Theses on Feuerbach* and “Estranged work”, in which a Marx “with all the beard” who, together with Engels, has guided us since the 19th century, stood out strongly.

Buenos Aires, August 2022

Lenin pointed out some essential features. In the first place, the fact that socialism or Marxism cannot be conceived if it is not fused with the revolutionary movement of the working class. The second feature is that Marxism does not have immutable and finished dogmas but is based on science and is capable of absorbing new elaborations in the heat of what is happening. And third, it has a clear and explicit objective: overthrowing the bourgeoisie and establishing socialism. [...]

[The essential of Marxism] is to be a social praxis: it is the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and the exploited and oppressed masses of the world against capitalism and for the implantation of socialism.

Nahuel Moreno

What is Marxism

I. There are different answers

What is Marxism? There are many very different answers to this question. Some come from Marxism itself and others from anti-Marxist authors. To address our answer, we will take as a reference, from Marxism, what a well-known French intellectual, Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991)¹ proposes. He was part of the Stalinist Communist Party but he is a great Marxist with his own thought, a scholar of Karl Marx. In 1948 he published a small booklet, which has been widely circulated ever since. In it, he gives his answer: “Marxism is a conception of the world.” And he explains:

What is a conception of the world? It is an overview of nature and man, a complete doctrine. In a sense, a conception of the world represents what is traditionally called a *philosophy*. However, this expression has a broader meaning than the word ‘philosophy’. First, any conception of the world involves action, that is, something more than a ‘philosophical attitude’. Even if this action is not expressly formulated and related to the doctrine, even if their connection remains unformulated and if the action involved does not give rise to a *program*. [...] In the Marxist conception of the world, action is defined rationally, in relation to the whole doctrine and openly gives rise to a political program.²

And at the end of this book, he added another aspect:

The project of going beyond Marxism may not have much meaning or much future, because Marxism is the conception of the world that goes beyond itself.

It surpasses itself, not in the superficial sense of the word – by an incessant and hasty revision of principles and method – but in the valid sense, by deepening and enriching itself. Thus, all science develops, surpassing itself; which means upheaval and chaos only for the superficial adversaries of science. Going beyond means, on the contrary, perpetual integration with new acquisitions, understanding of new facts according to the knowledge acquired from the method developed, more or less rapid continuation according to the moments of this elaboration.

In this sense, and to end this study on an apparent paradox, we can ask ourselves the following question: ‘How to go beyond a conception of the world that includes in itself a theory of going beyond? and which wants to be expressly moving because it is a theory of movement? – and which, if it is transformed, will be transformed according to the internal law of its becoming?’³

For Lefebvre, Marxism would be a conception of the world, a philosophical doctrine that gives rise to rational action and a political program. In addition, it cannot be “surpassed” because this conception has internal laws for its own transformation or improvement and it would also be a science. It is what we read verbatim from the quotes of this great intellectual.

1 People mentioned by date of birth and death and who do not refer to a footnote are listed in a biographical appendix on page 119.

2 Lefevre, H, *Le marxisme*, Presses Universitaires du France, Paris, eleventh edition, 1966, p. 7.

3 Ibid, p. 125.

We disagree with these definitions of Lefebvre, which have many points in common with the “official” definitions made by the manuals of Stalinist “Marxism” of the USSR and the communist parties.

Riazanov,⁴ who was a biographer of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895), never tired of insisting on a fundamental characteristic of both: they were active revolutionary militants, besides enormous intellectuals. Already in 1883, at the grave of his friend, Engels had said that Marx was a man of science but more than anything he was a revolutionary, whose passion and element was the struggle of the workers.

Lenin (1870-1924), for his part, outlined a different approach from that of Lefebvre. Polemizing with the Russian reformists, Lenin wrote in 1899:

At first socialism and the working-class movement existed separately in all the European countries. The workers struggled against the capitalists, they organised strikes and unions, while the socialists stood aside from the working-class movement, formulated doctrines criticising the contemporary capitalist, bourgeois system of society and demanding its replacement by another system, the higher, socialist system. [...] By directing socialism towards a fusion with the working-class movement, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels did their greatest service: they created a revolutionary theory that explained the necessity for this fusion and gave socialists the task of organising the class struggle of the proletariat.⁵

And in the article *Our program*, of the same year, he categorically asserted that Marxism was neither a dogma nor a doctrine closed forever:

We do not regard Marx's theory as something completed and inviolable; on the contrary, we are convinced that it has only laid the foundation stone of the science which socialists must develop in all directions if they wish to keep pace with life.⁶

In his famous book, *What is to be done?* (1902) he insisted on the scientific character of socialism and said: “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.” And in 1913, in *Three sources and three component parts of Marxism*, he placed Marxist doctrine as “the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.”⁷

Seven years later he said in *Left-wing communism — an Infantile Disorder*: “Our theory is not a dogma, but a *guide to action*, said Marx and Engels.”⁸

Summarising, we can say that Lenin pointed out some essential features. In the first place, the fact that socialism or Marxism cannot be conceived if it is not fused with the revolutionary movement of the working class. The second feature is that Marxism does not have immutable and finished dogmas but is based on science and is capable of absorbing new elaborations in the heat of what is happening. And third, it has a clear and explicit objective: overthrowing the bourgeoisie and establishing socialism. These few features alone openly contradict the definition established by Lefebvre.

Taking what has been analysed, and despite the different definitions formulated over time, a more complete definition of Marxism is still pending. Both those who criticise it and those who vindicate it have given this question multiple answers, ranging from merely reducing it to an economic

4 David Borisovich Goldendakh, whose pseudonym was David Riazanov or Rjazanof (1870-1938), was a Russian revolutionary who was acknowledged as an international authority on the work of Marx and Engels. By resolution of the central committee of the CPSU, he founded the official institute from which completely made known the unpublished works of Marx (including *The German Ideology* and the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*). In 1931, because of his studies of the Asian mode of production, just a month after the bureaucracy condemned that definition, he was removed from all his posts and banished to a village on the Volga. In 1938, he was tried, sentenced to death, and shot on the same day.

5 Lenin, VI, “A Retrograde Trend in Russian Social-Democracy”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 4, Progress Publishers, Moscow, p. 257-258.

6 Lenin, VI, “Our Programme”, *Collected Works*, Vol 4, p. 211–212.

7 Lenin, VI, “Three sources and three component parts of Marxism”, *Collected Works*, Vol 19, p. 23–24.

8 Lenin, VI, “Left-wing communism — an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, Vol 31, p. 71.

or sociological theory, to seeing it as a new philosophy, or a conception of the world. We have outlined a completely different response, starting from applying to Marxism its own method, materialist and historical, which tends to round off what Lenin said. To show it, we will study Marxism from its origins. We will begin by studying its genesis, seeing how scientific socialism, later called Marxism, emerged in the 1840s.

II. Marx and Engels and their time

Marx and Engels were born in 1818 and 1820, respectively, in the Rhineland, the area of greatest capitalist development in Germany, to the west, bordering France. Germany was an extraordinarily backward country, like the Latin American countries today in relation to the advanced ones. It was divided into different states or fiefdoms, about forty, with customs that collected taxes to pass from one to another. The agrarian production regime prevailed, and a monarchy based in Prussia and the feudal nobility dominated. France, on the other hand, was the country with the greatest capitalist development after England. It was the country of the great bourgeois revolution of 1789, whose influence had spread throughout Europe, but essentially in the bordering areas.

The Rhineland and Westphalia, occupied by France from 1795 to 1814, will constitute not only the area of greatest capitalist development but also the one in which the French occupation liquidated the feudal regime (serfdom, taxes, and personal services for the princes). Thus, an uneven situation was created within Germany, between this very advanced area and the rest of the country, still dominated by the lords, backward and feudal. The great historian Auguste Cornu⁹ describes four sectors in the country: 1) the states that bordered Poland, to the east, the most backward and feudal; 2) the kingdom of Prussia, the most powerful, where there was a fairly important capitalist development as a result of the wars with Napoleon; 3) the northwest, the Rhineland and Westphalia, those with the greatest capitalist development, where the feudal regime had almost disappeared, the area where Marx and Engels were born; 4) the south, especially Bavaria with Munich, where the influence of the French revolution made it possible to liquidate the feudal landowners and favoured the emergence of a very strong and numerous peasant class but where a great capitalist development did not take place.

Under the French occupation, a nationalist movement emerges throughout Germany against Napoleon¹⁰ and the invaders. This movement, essentially petty-bourgeois and bourgeois, had raised the demand for constitution and unity, that is, German unification overcoming the division into fiefdoms. In their eagerness to confront Napoleon, the Prussian kings had made some concessions to this movement and, above all, many promises. After Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the kaiser¹¹ (as the emperor was called) quickly showed that he was not willing to comply with any of them. Quite the contrary, together with England, Russia and Austria — fundamentally the last two — he organised the Holy Alliance, which was a pact between the most reactionary political regimes of the time to face the influence of the French Revolution.

In this context, the students (the basis of the nationalist and liberal movement) resumed their activity to claim what the Kaiser had promised. They organised feasts and banquets, during which great speeches were made, something similar to what the Radical and Conservative parties did in our country at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Thus, in Wartburg, a not-very-large town, a very important banquet was held in 1817 which triggered repression, especially against university students and professors. The movement then went underground, withdrew and

9 Auguste Cornu (1888-1981). French Marxist historian. He was a member of the PCF since 1923. He participated in the resistance against the Nazis and after the war, he settled in East Germany. He left unfinished a monumental biographical work: *Marx and Engels (From idealism to historical materialism)*. In 1955 he translated Marx's *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, ignored by Stalinism, from German into Russian.

10 Napoleon I Bonaparte (1769-1821). Emperor of France from 1804 to 1815. He embodied a political reaction to the bourgeois revolution of 1789 but promoted capitalist development in neighbouring countries with his invasions.

11 It refers to Frederick William III (1770-1840). Monarch of Prussia from 1797 until his death in 1840.

there were terrorist-type actions. In 1819, they killed a well-known tsarist agent, Kotzebue.¹² The tsar of Russia, which was the centre of European and world reaction, and was seen at that time by liberals and democrats as Yankee imperialism is seen today, demanded the execution of the person responsible and the persecution of the movement. This forced the persecuted to emigrate and the movement disappeared. Many of these émigrés will be an important factor in the development of revolutionary thought and action within Germany, above all through a secret organisation called the Union of Intransigents, which will be the link with the subsequent litters that will emerge with the new rise of 1830.

During Marx and Engels's years of childhood and adolescence, Germany continued without national organisation, mired in general backwardness, with an incipient capitalist development but still on semi-artisanal bases.

In the Rhineland, however, where the greatest industrial development was concentrated, a brutally exploited proletariat began to emerge, which would sometimes rebel against the bosses and the machines. This reaction will deeply sensitize two teenagers: Marx and Engels. The tremendous exploitation disintegrated the artisan guilds, accelerating their proletarianisation; many of the former artisans emigrated to other countries in Europe.

In the Rhineland and Westphalia, the bourgeoisie had deep friction with the Kaiser. On the one hand, the Kaiser applied taxes eight and ten times higher than the rest of Germany. On the other hand, the union with Prussia separated the Rhenish bourgeoisie from the rich French market to which it had been united since 1795. Thus, in the Rhineland and Westphalia, an intense movement was born against the Kaiser and Prussia, and against subordination to the feudal lords of the rest of Germany. Marx's family belonged to this bourgeoisie that resisted the Kaiser.

The revolutionary wave of 1830

From the year 1830, there was a new rise in the revolutionary movement throughout Europe whose highest points were in Poland, Belgium, and France. In the latter country, Bourbon King Charles X,¹³ a representative of the French landowners, fell and the representative of the financial bourgeoisie, Louis Philippe I,¹⁴ came to the throne. In Poland, which was under Russian rule, there was a great uprising against the tsar in the year 1831. It was crushed but it gave rise to a wave of solidarity and enthusiasm in Germany and throughout Europe.

A great rise began in some regions of Germany. Thus, in March 1832, for the Hambach festival, in the Palatinate, there was a demonstration of 25,000 people in solidarity with the Polish movement. This demonstration already raised a clear bourgeois-democratic program. It continued with the demands for a constitution and copied from the United States a slogan that for the Germany of that time was extraordinarily revolutionary: the United German States.

The Kaiser will strongly suppress this movement but, at the same time, he will give important concessions to the bourgeoisie. In 1834, he will grant the famous customs union (*Zollverein*), which allows him to separate the bourgeoisie from the political struggle. That is, he grants them neither the constitution nor the political unity but the economic unity of Germany. He liquidated customs between the 40 states, allowing goods to travel freely throughout Germany. Finally, this will give rise to a colossal industrial development and an extraordinary strengthening of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, he will quiet the bourgeoisie down politically.

12 August von Kotzebue (1761-1819). A German who in 1816 began to provide services to Tsardom. While in Mannheim, a student murdered him as a "traitor to the fatherland".

13 Charles X (1757-1836). Brother of Louis XVI, the monarch dethroned by the revolution, reigned from 1824 to 1830 and was one of the most notorious symbols of the feudal counter-revolution. He tried to restore to the nobility the lands confiscated since 1789.

14 Louis Philippe I (1773-1850). Last king of France, a constitutional monarch since 1830. He was overthrown by the revolution of 1848. During his reign, there was a great bourgeois development and the working class grew.

German emigration

German emigration will be a constant throughout the 19th century. Some, especially students and teachers, left for political reasons. Many others emigrated in search of work to the great developed countries: England, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland, and even the United States. These Germans who went abroad, political activists or workers, found that the English and French workers were much more developed and already had class positions. The French, above all, were organised in secret lodges, of a directly socialist or communist character, with revolutionary proposals. They were clear about the role of the state, and the need to seize it and implement communism. The organisation of the French proletariat was inspired by the revolutionary conceptions and political practice of the great practical communist Gracchus Babeuf.¹⁵

Babeuf organised the first, coldly calculated, communist-type revolutionary political action of modern times, called the *Conspiracy of Equals*. He was discovered, sentenced to death and executed in 1797. Another young revolutionary, from the nobility and Babeuf's friend, Buonarroti,¹⁶ was fortunate to save himself and wrote a book recounting how they had organised this communist-type political action. Through the oral and written tradition, this was happening through a large number of workers' lodges and left-wing political militants in France, especially in Paris. The exiled German workers who worked in Paris began to link to these French communist currents, and thus these currents also emerged among the craftsmen and the German proletariat in exile and, to a lesser extent, within Germany.

Young Germany

After the great Hambach demonstration in 1832, the kaiser violently suppressed the movement calling for the United German States. With the legal possibilities of political action closed, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois democratic and liberal movement took refuge in literature. There was a very important literary movement called Young Germany. Not only democratic but also socialist positions were outlined in it, albeit from an intellectual angle. One of the great leaders of this literary movement, the great poet Henry Heine,¹⁷ much vindicated by Marx, was there; also, Börne,¹⁸ who would greatly influence Engels.

Abroad, these half-democratic, half-socialist German workers organised the Union of Outlaws, then League of the Just or League of Justice, with much more radical positions and led by true professional revolutionaries like Schapper and Moll.¹⁹

These groupings initially had a liberal tinge but later evolved into communist positions because they were made up of German workers and militants who lived in Paris. Looking at the path that this vanguard of the German proletariat was following, we see how Marx and Engels were not a coincidence but the product of a very intense revolutionary breeding ground towards socialism and communism that was taking place throughout Europe and especially in Germany.

Within Germany, the kaiser let the literary movement of Young Germany run for a few years, which then had great development. Its members made very sharp satires against the regime; highly critical poetry and plays. In the year 1835, the government understands their dangerousness, takes a turn in its policy and violently represses them.

15 Gracchus Babeuf (1760-1797). Revolutionary and utopian communist. He argued that to achieve perfect equality, it was not enough to limit property, it had to be abolished and "the community of goods and work" had to be established.

16 Filippo Buonarroti (1761-1837). Italian, he dedicated his life to the revolution by organising secret societies and lodges. In 1828, he published in Brussels the book *History of Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals*.

17 Henry Heine (1797-1856). Noted German poet. Author of a famous poem about the Silesian weavers' rebellion in 1844, brutally crushed by the Kaiser.

18 Karl Börne (1786-1837). German political writer from a Jewish family; critical of the German regime and society.

19 Karl Schapper (1812-1870) and Joseph Moll (1813-1849). German revolutionary workers, exiled in London, were pioneers of the beginnings of labour and socialist organisation. Schapper participated in the First International. Moll participated in the Central Committee of the Communist League. He died in the armed uprising in Baden-Palatinate in which Engels also participated.

Just as after the year 1830, the repressed political movement had expressed itself as a literary phenomenon, the liberal and democratic movement, liquidated in 1835 and without support from the bourgeoisie, whose protests are diverted by the kaiser through the customs law, takes refuge in the philosophical field and the criticism of religions from an idealistic point of view.

The Hegelian Left

After the repression, an extraordinary philosophical movement began, giving rise to the current from which Marx and Engels emerged, the famous Hegelian left, the Young Hegelians, and followers of the idealistic philosopher Hegel (1770-1831).

To move forward, we have to clarify what is idealism and materialism. These two conceptions were born together with philosophy, with the first Greek thinkers. Let's have a broad-brush look. For the idealist, the fundamental thing of reality is thought, ideas or a god. They generate the material world, nature, and humanity. This idea or God already exists before the material world. For the materialist, the material world, nature, the entire universe, and humanity, exist independently of thought, which is an activity proper and specific to human beings. Thus, there is no god either pre-existing or creator of anything.

Hegel was not the only highly influential philosopher. For example, and especially in Prussia, this current vindicates Kant (1724-1804). Perhaps it reflects regional reasons since Kant was a professor in Königsberg, Prussia, all his life. It may also be something deeper, the more feudal character of Prussia.

The Hegelian left will emerge to combat reaction in the philosophical arena, rescuing the dialectical method as the prime thing in Hegel's work and not his system as a whole. In short, the dialectical method refers to reality changing, moving, and doing so according to laws such as contradictions, reciprocal action, the whole and the parts, and others, which will be later enriched by Marx and Engels.

The Young Hegelians thus responded to the fact that Hegel was the official philosopher of Prussia and of all that half-bourgeois half-feudal Germany since his theory and philosophical conception of the world gave rise to justify the absolutist monarchical regime of Prussia. Indeed, among other formulas, Hegel said that "everything real is rational and everything rational is real", so it had to be explained, not revolutionised. But what especially lent itself to making Hegel the official philosopher of a reactionary regime was his overall philosophical conception. For Hegel, the development of philosophy reached its culmination with his work. In the same way, the development of history culminated with the Prussian regime because that was what actually happened. This position served perfectly for Hegel to be the philosophical supporter of the monarchy.

There is much discussion between the Hegelians and us Marxists as to what Hegel's intention really was. Because it so happens that he said some of these expressions at a time when the Prussian regime was going to the left, not to the right. This was in the first years of the reign of Frederick William III,²⁰ who took office in 1797, although later he proved more repressive. It can be asserted that between the young and the mature Hegel, there is a whole process towards the right, which we will see more about later, on the concept of alienation. But it is at least debatable whether Hegel ever approved of the entire ultra-reactionary process of the kaiser from 1817 or 1819 onwards.

Engels, on the other hand, in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886), argues that the famous phrase we were commenting on should not be interpreted solely as a justification of the Prussian regime. Engels says that for Hegel, the real, in addition to existing, must be necessary. Therefore, when any social or political regime ceases to be necessary, it also ceases to be real, even if it continues to exist.

²⁰ In the first years of his very long reign, which began in 1797, Frederick William III reduced the crown's spending and reformed the more oppressive abuses of his father. He maintained a policy of neutrality in the Napoleonic wars until 1805.

Beyond this discussion, the truth is that Hegel was the official philosopher of the reaction, of the Kaiser and Prussia. For example, the Hegelian professors of philosophy gave his teachings and vindicated his absolute idea and the entire Hegelian structure as a philosophical development of Protestant Christian theology.

The Young Hegelians, on the contrary, although they were idealists, vindicated the revolutionary part — his method and not his system as a whole — as the essential part of his philosophy. They used this aspect to put up a fierce battle against the Protestants, and the orthodox Christian and Prussian interpretation of Hegel.

This discussion hid a profound political objective: to shake the ground against monarchical absolutism and the very powerful and influential Protestant church. Under the repression, it seemed more viable to attack Christian theology, and to fight in the philosophical arena, and not in the political one. Let's look at the main representatives of the Hegelian left.

David Strauss

The first to begin the fight against the Protestant church was Strauss²¹ with his famous work *The Life of Jesus*, published in 1835. It seemed like a work of scholars, with quotations from the Old and New Testaments. Why was he so revolutionary and inaugurated the process of the Hegelian left?

According to Strauss, the Hegelian doctrine ran into three fundamental objections. The first was related to the very conception of religion. Is it possible to reduce the content of faith to concepts, as Hegel did, without distorting it, and in this case, is it possible to frame the historical and particular truth that religion represents within the framework of rational truth?

The second objection referred to the conception of Christ. How could the general idea of mediation between God and the world — for Hegel represented in the person of Christ — be reconciled with the particular or individual existence (carnal we could say) of the Christ of the Gospels?

Finally, if, as Hegel thought, God — that is, the idea of God — is progressively realised in the course of human history, Christ cannot represent more than a moment of this realisation, and it is not possible, therefore, to attribute to the Christian religion an eternal and absolute value.

With his critique, he did not place himself on a religious level but rather on a historical one and he set out to extract from the gospels their real historical content and, based on it, understand the true personality of Jesus.

Strauss is against the assimilation of God into the idea that Hegel makes and argues that it is not possible to reduce dogmas to philosophical concepts without profoundly altering the character and content of religion. He saw in the gospels not religious symbols like Hegel, that is, an equivalent of the concept in the field of religion, but myths that translated the deep aspirations of the Jewish people.

In other words, what he was trying to demonstrate through such arid and difficult quotes was that all Christian doctrine was nothing more than a reflection of the Jewish people, that the peoples made both the religion and the governments. There was an attempt to bring down to earth or democratise religion. This did not come from heaven, from the divine mandate, but as a consequence of the legends, prejudices, and even the correct conceptions of the real peoples.

August von Cieszkowski

Von Cieszkowski²² asserted that Hegel, in his work, never mentioned the future, he believed that philosophy can only be applied to the study of the past and that the future must be left completely out of speculation. He, on the other hand, considered that with Hegel a new era was opening

²¹ David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874). German theologian and philosopher, a pioneer in the historical criticism of Christianity.

²² Count August von Cieszkowski (1814-1894). Polish philosopher, economist, and political and social activist. His theory of action had an important influence on the thinking of the young Karl Marx.

in which thought would organise the world, but that for this it is necessary to replace the Hegelian philosophy, without influence on human destinies, with a philosophy of action, of practical activity, of “praxis”.

For Von Cieszkowski, philosophy had to become a philosophy of practical activity, of praxis, which exerted a direct activity on social life, developing the truth in the domain of concrete activity: this is the role that philosophy of the future must play. He argued that, in the same way that thought and reflection have surpassed the fine arts, action and social activity are called to surpass true philosophy.

Despite its importance, because of the demand for an “active” attitude towards the world, this conception is still far from Marxism. First, like all idealists, Von Cieszkowski did not conceive of “praxis” as a revolutionary activity that poses as an immediate goal the objective transformation of society, but rather in the form of an a priori determination of the future, that is, as an application of thought to the future, and not only to the past, as Hegel wanted, to give it a rational course.

At the same time, the practice that he advocated was not based on a scientific study of the reality of capitalist society, on an understanding of the existence of classes, or anything of the sort, that is, he was unable to go beyond the speculative terrain. His conception is close to pragmatism, that is, to practice for practice’s sake. It is a call to action for the action itself. Von Cieszkowski may have assumed the same attitude as Leopoldo Lugones²³ in our country, who considered equally formidable the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and Mussolini’s fascist coup as being expressions of life. Von Cieszkowski would also have been in favour of any non-contemplative attitude, he would have been in favour of “doing” anything, in other words, of pragmatism.

Nonet, we vindicate from him his criticism of Hegel’s intellectual attitude towards the world and his gaze set on the past, which, simultaneously, demands, contrary to Hegel, an active and non-contemplative posture.

The Bauer brothers

Studying the Gospels, not so much in their relations to Judaism as in their relations to the general thought of the time, Bruno Bauer²⁴ argued that the Christian religion was, like the philosophical doctrines of that time, a new expression of universal consciousness.

Bauer regarded the Gospels and the entire Christian religion as a momentary form of this universal conscience, which had had the merit of transforming the ancient world by giving an eminent value to the human personality. But which, subsequently, had become an obstacle to universal consciousness. He criticised Christianity because it subjected man to God and made man worship in God his own substance, represented as a foreign power and superior to man. Bauer believed the task facing humanity at that time was to free itself from religious influence through intellectual criticism. For him, this was the essential instrument of progress and the obstacles that religion opposed to the progress of universal consciousness had to be removed in such a way. From this critique of the Gospels, Bruno Bauer extracted a doctrine of action, critical philosophy.

Bruno Bauer and his younger brother Edgar thus surpass Strauss, asserting that it is not that religion, the gospels, or philosophical advances are directly a reflection of popular opinions and traditions. According to them, the process is not mechanical; the advance in the historical, philosophical, and religious process is caused by criticism, that is, by the reasoning that subjects to implacable questioning all conceptions, whether popular, religious, or of any order whatsoever. Every superior philosophical or historical stage is essentially a product of the critical spirit, that is to say, that reason submits it to implacable criticism.

23 Leopoldo Lugones (1874-1938). An outstanding Argentine poet and writer, a socialist in his youth, he became a vehement supporter of fascism and General Uriburu’s coup of 1930. He systematically attacked the founder of socialism, Juan B. Justo. He committed suicide by drinking cyanide.

24 Bruno Bauer (1809-1882). Theologian and historian, along with his brother Edgar (1820-1886) were two of the main referents of the Hegelian left. They evolved into conservative ideas and support for the Prussian regime.

From this approach, he demonstrated that history was the creation of universal consciousness, which realises its essence in an ever more perfect way in the succession of forms of religion through which it manifests itself. What matters is the general evolution of the world, it is the conscience, it is the spirit that will come to the knowledge of itself.

This dialectical development of consciousness is the work of criticism, which by continuously confronting the rational with the real and by eliminating irrational elements from the latter, determines an infinite progression of universal consciousness and, together with it, of the world. The current action of criticism was intended to liberate the spirit and its highest incarnation, the state, from the power of the Christian religion.

Bauer conceived the fight for progress and freedom as an intellectual struggle that essentially consisted of an incessant questioning of present reality, which kept his general conception of the world in the realm of idealism. For Bauer, philosophy is the critique of what exists and it is necessary to distinguish what is from what should be, which would be the only true and justified thing, the only thing that has the right to assert itself and acquire power and dominance. Philosophy must thus become action, practical opposition; an opposition that must be serious, profound, resolute, have no hesitation in anything and set itself the goal of overthrowing the present state of affairs. It must extend its action —always intellectual— to the political domain and attack and move without pity the existing institutions, when these no longer correspond to its concept.

In Bauer's view, the action of criticism should not be exercised mainly in the political and social arena, which he deemed secondary, but should be directed mainly against religion which, because of its opposition to reason and science, constituted the main obstacle for the progress of universal consciousness.

What was revolutionary about Bauer was that, by emphasising more clearly the need for the dialectical development of universal consciousness and by denying to all substance, to all defined form, the right to incarnate it in a definitive and absolute way, that is, by vindicating the necessity of a dialectical development that does not stop, that has no end in any structure, his philosophy completely destroyed Hegel's conservative system.

The negative aspect was that the Bauer brothers took refuge in intellectual criticism, they subjected everything to intellectual criticism; they were implacable but intellectual. They ended up in an attitude that we could call "the swamp", entangled with their critical criticism. They never entered into any liberal political movement and held positions increasingly to the right.

Bruno Bauer, leader of the Hegelian left, was a teacher and friend of Marx. However, both Marx and Engels had from a very young age a tendency towards political activity and journalism, which would lead them to break with the Bauers. Marx, from his adolescent work at school, insisted on the need to act on the world in defence of the common good. Thus, he differentiated himself from the beginning from the Bauers, even at the time of deepest unity with them, for vindicating in Hegel his criterion of unity between thought and the world. The Bauers conceived them in a permanent and irreducible opposition through intellectual criticism. Engels, for his part, as we have already said, had been influenced by Börne who was a fervent democrat and who insisted on the need to participate fully in the political struggle. For this reason, the famous critical work of Marx and Engels of 1844 had as its full title *The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company*.

This tendency of Marx and Engels to actively participate in German political life led them to put aside the brainy philosophical magazines and quickly tended to try to put out a newspaper or participate in daily political newspapers to reach the people, which they did. They tended to enter into the actual revolutionary movement that was taking place.

The great materialist philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach

Although he did not belong to the Young Hegelians or their left wing, Feuerbach (1804-1872) was the greatest philosopher, the great teacher who inaugurated materialism —albeit of a humanist type— in Germany. His book *The Essence of Christianity* was published in 1841. A man who had a

great misfortune: he was confined to a small village. Had it not been so, if he had been able to leave Germany, and see the reality of the capitalist world, perhaps he would have converged with Marx and Engels. But they did something similar to what France,²⁵ the dictator of Paraguay, did with Artigas:²⁶ they isolated him from political, social and economic life in a village.

What does humanistic materialism mean? Feuerbach criticises any attempt to reconcile religion and philosophy. He starts from a very revolutionary idea: it is man who creates God and not the other way around. He showed how, through a reversal of the real relations between man and God, man, who had created God by alienating in him the qualities proper to the human species, is transformed into a creation of God. Cut off from his species and cut off from his essential qualities, man becomes an isolated and selfish individual. To enable man to live a life according to his nature, to live in harmony with the rest of men, it is necessary to abolish religion, dispel the religious illusion and reintegrate to man the qualities of the species, alienated in God.

Through a critique of it, Feuerbach demonstrated that idealistic philosophy defines man as the product of the idea. The idea plays for idealism the same role as God on the religious level and transforms man into an abstract, unreal being, separated from his environment, his life-giving element: nature. He thus arrived at a materialism for which the essential element of the world was no longer the idea or the conscience, but the being conceived in the form of the concrete man in his relations with nature and other men.

That is, he ferociously attacks Hegel, saying that his philosophy is a rational theology, whose goal is to give a whole system, a structure to justify the existence of God. Feuerbach argues with all idealistic philosophy for the same reason, saying that it is a variant of religion. And, contrary to other materialist currents, he puts man at the centre; this is why it is humanist materialism. Men have a permanent essence formed by three elements: will, reason, and love. And he essentially vindicates love as a relationship that unites men. For him, there is no afterlife, the only thing that exists is the flesh and blood man, and the outside world, especially nature. He shoots down Hegel and the idealistic philosophies; he asserts that all that exists are relations between men and nature and that the tendency of men is to be united with each other by love. That is, there is an eternal essence of man.

For Feuerbach, the essence of man may only be understood if, instead of reducing him to abstract thought, he is considered as he is and exists. Only this makes it possible to solve the problems raised by philosophy: it is the concrete man who constitutes the real existence of freedom, personality, the state, and law, which separated from him are pure abstractions. Any speculation outside of him is necessarily vain and pointless.

Philosophy must be based on the sciences of nature, which, for their part, must be linked to nature; this union will be more fruitful than the alliance concluded until then between philosophy and theology. From all this, Feuerbach extracted a social doctrine, that of humanism.

The essential error of religion was to separate man from the human community because of the alienation in God of the outstanding quality of the species, love. Only in his relations with his neighbour through love is man truly himself and realises his essence.

Thus, this colossus who totally inverted Hegel, who opened the way to overcome Hegel and all idealism, did not succeed in extracting from his materialism a doctrine of action. He avoided engaging in revolutionary political and social struggle and placed all his hopes in the transformation of human consciousness, which would suffice to emancipate humanity.

By placing human activity outside of history, he made man a passive and contemplative being, who did not actively participate in the development of history.

25 Jose Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia y Velasco (1766-1840). Ideologist and principal leader of the Paraguayan independence process with respect not only to the Spanish Crown but also to the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata and the Empire of Brazil. He was a dictator of his country from 1816 to 1840.

26 Jose Gervasio de Artigas (1764-1850). Hero of South American independence, who had to go into exile. The dictator Francia gave him refuge in an isolated and remote village, taking care that he did not retain any political influence or kept correspondence with anyone outside of Paraguay.

This humanism, based on deified love, separated from the reality of the society of his time—torn apart by the division into classes—ended in the creation of a new religion, the religion of humanity and love, for which finally, the anti-theological doctrine of Feuerbach, far from abolishing religion, in fact, aimed at regenerating it.

Marx and Engels

Until 1841-42 the political and intellectual evolution of both young men was framed within the Hegelian left movement and idealistic conceptions. However, as we have already begun to see, unlike most other Hegelians, they were not satisfied with a theoretical critique of reactionary thought and politics, but rather sought to transform the reality of the state of affairs. This explains the increasingly marked aversion they felt for the romantic movement,²⁷ the idealistic conceptions, and the exclusively philosophical or intellectual questioning of the society of their time. And they will take a definitive step to leave behind the currents of utopian socialism.²⁸ They already had a very frank tendency to conceive and resolve, even if still in an idealistic way, the problems that presented themselves to them in their immediate relations with the political situation. What essentially distinguished both of them from the Young Hegelians was that, unlike the latter, they were not simply liberals but democrats and set out to defend, not the specific interests of the bourgeoisie but those of the people in general.

For them to become materialists, Feuerbach's influence in the sphere of their philosophical formation will be enormous. But, from the year 1845, they will in turn totally surpass Feuerbach. Together they write *The German Ideology*. Marx accompanies it with the famous *Theses on Feuerbach*. Both are great works of the rupture but were not published at the time. In 1888 Engels accompanied his pamphlet on Feuerbach with the brief eleven theses by Marx, and *The German Ideology* was published for the first time in 1932.

This fundamental leap, the one that leads them to definitively surpass Feuerbach and the entire Hegelian left, and allows them to reach historical materialism, and scientific communism and become “Marxists”, occurs when they have to go abroad.

In 1842, Engels settled in Manchester (England). He is shaken by the reality of the English industry, by the theoretical development of British political economy, and by the extraordinary vitality of the trade union movement, with which he comes into contact, in particular with Moses Hess.²⁹ In 1845, he published his first major work *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

In 1843, Marx travelled to Paris. The growing pressure of censorship on the part of Prussian absolutism makes it impossible to continue the activity of relentless criticism against the regime that Marx had been doing from bourgeois-democratic positions as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung* (“Rhenish Newspaper”), published from January 1842 and closed in 1843. Once installed in Paris, he establishes contact with the organisations of German emigrants, which had been developing since 1818, and had been acquiring increasingly socialist positions, of a communist nature, although with strong utopian elements, especially influenced by the oral tradition of the work of Babeuf that we already mentioned. It is in Paris that Marx will move from bourgeois-democratic positions to workers' communism. It is worth emphasising, then, that this step is not merely intellectual change but a true vital leap: his link with the German proletariat in exile, the vanguard of the European revolution.

²⁷ Romanticism emerged at the end of the 18th century as an intellectual and artistic reaction to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the influence of the sciences. It exalted feelings and nature over reason, individualism, imagination and the sensitive, among other aspects. Some of its exponents were, in Germany, Goethe and Schelling; in France, Lamartine and Victor Hugo; in England, Lord Byron and Shelley. Among the musicians Beethoven and Chopin.

²⁸ Utopian socialism: its main referents were the Count of Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Robert Owen (1771-1858) and Charles Fourier (1772-1837). See Engels's *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.

²⁹ Moses Hess (1812-1875). Of Jewish origin and a socialist, he defended the integration of Jewish workers with the rest of the workers. He collaborated with Marx in the early 1840s. He later distanced himself from Marx and became a pioneer of Zionism.

To give continuity to the *Rheinische Zeitung*, closed because of the censorship of Prussian absolutism, Marx tries, with other democratic opponents, to edit a new newspaper that takes up the fight, this time on French soil, where the Prussian police do not reach. Thus, in February 1844, the *Franco-German Annals* appear, in whose pages his transition to communism will be reflected. In “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, he begins by asserting exhaustively that in Germany the criticism of religion has already ended because man makes religion and not the other way around. And he links the proletariat with the task of suppressing private property. In his second article, “The Jewish Question”, he argues against Bruno Bauer and raises the emancipation of the state from all religions.

Deeply influenced by his connections to the German migrant workers, to the socialist and communist groups residing in Paris, and impacted by the class struggle of the French proletariat, Marx writes that criticism of society is not effective if it does not find its support in the class dispossessed of property, which in turn will be followed by revolutionary thinkers. Communism, which would emancipate humanity, would be born from their joint action. To arrive at a more concrete and accurate conception of the proletariat, of the class struggle, and of communism, he still needed to proceed to a thorough analysis of bourgeois society and its economic base, the functioning of the capitalist system.

An article by Engels, *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*, which appeared in the same journal, would help. In his article, Engels, impressed by the dynamism of the English economy, argued that the capitalist system, because of its decomposition, was leading to communism. Contradicting the apology that bourgeois economists made of competition, Engels said that the result of competition provoked deeper and deeper crises that, while concentrating wealth in a tiny minority, aggravated the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This would lead to a social revolution and, through it, to communism.

These articles from the *Franco-German Annals* mark the end of the Young Hegelian period of Marx and Engels and usher in a new period. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (published for the first time in the 20th century), essentially the work of Marx in 1844, it is stated that political economy is the central terrain for understanding social and political life and the role attributed to the proletariat. Having arrived at communism by different paths, Marx and Engels then verified the deep identity of their opinions and together they devoted themselves fully to the struggle and organisation of the European workers’ movement. So it will be that in 1847, they will write together a program for the League of Communists that will become famous — the *Communist Manifesto*.

III. Our definition of Marxism: The revolutionary movement of the workers for their liberation

With the emergence of scientific socialism thus situated, we can return to the problem posed at the beginning. We have already seen the leap in the political and journalistic activity of Marx and Engels from bourgeois-democratic positions to their ever-closer ties with the European, French and English proletariat, and especially with the vanguard of the German migrant workers. We now need to answer, in the most precise possible way and after more than a century, the question from the beginning — what is it and how can we define Marxism?

Let us recall Henri Lefebvre’s definition with which we started — a “conception of the world”, a philosophy, which includes and is accompanied, as a subordinate aspect, by practical activity. Our approach is quite different: Marxism is the product of that leap in militant activity and the positioning of Marx and Engels. It is the theoretical and practical synthesis of the European revolutionary workers’ movement, of that movement that is personified in the internationalist vanguard that, dodging repression and promoting the workers’ revolution, swarmed through the capitals of Europe. Its first political-organisational expression was the League of Communists and its program.

This is why we believe that the essence of Marxism, contrary to Lefebvre, is to be a social praxis: it is the revolutionary movement of the proletariat and the exploited and oppressed masses of the world against capitalism and for the implantation of socialism.

Like any social movement, it also brings with it an ideology, a worldview and organisational expressions. What differentiates Marxism from other movements, on the terrain of its conceptions or ideology, is a unique characteristic — it is scientific, and it intends to be a true ideology. Marxism bases its action on a scientific method and encourages and incorporates advances in science in its different areas or disciplines. It is not just another false ideology, used by a ruling class or a sector of it. In the next topic, we will see what its criterion of truth contributes.

Nor is it a utopia. With scientific criteria, it provides the bases, the theoretical, programmatic and political tools to fight for the elimination of capitalism and imposing another new system, socialism. Thus, it overcomes the limited and dead-end character of all the utopian communist theories that expressed the weak previous proletariat, still with handicraft methods, and its egalitarian aspirations. It is the proletariat, strengthened and enlarged by the very development of capitalism, and the course of its struggles, which constitutes the foundation for this new revolutionary social praxis, with its scientific ideology. Marxism is the only political and social movement that holds that the proletariat is the class called to liquidate exploitation, not only of the working class itself but of all humanity.

Marxism as an open totality

From our definition that it is a social-political movement, Marxism has very few fundamental truths or principles and it has huge gaps and countless unresolved problems. At the same time, our definition of Marxism is a call to take into account the importance of thought, study and collective and constant elaboration on reality. We do not agree with almost all the other definitions made by Marxists, which claim to show that Marxism is a closed totality, that it has everything figured out. That a quote solves everything. In Lefebvre's words, "it will be transformed according to the internal law of its becoming".

Bergson³⁰ discovered a new philosophical category, the open totality. It was a great success of some authors of French Marxism to take this category as their own, taking it away from irrationalism and giving it a different, Marxist content. This new category is very important because Marxists, including us the revolutionary ones, have had a mania for closed totalities and, in fact, because Marxism is a movement it has an infinite number of open problems, which we have to elaborate on, in all spheres. This happens in the sciences as well.

Beyond the straitjacket that the Stalinist apparatus was imposing, in Marxism, there were always a lot of discussions, following the tradition of its founders. An example of a debate to resolve, quite controversial, is the definition of the superstructure and where the property relations are located. It was started by Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) at the end of the 19th century. He and the leading Marxists of the German Social Democracy said that property relations are regulated by law. That the laws have to do with the legal sciences, which belong to the superstructure. So, that's where the relations of production would be located. This caused a serious disagreement with many other Marxists, including ourselves, who, following Marx, hold that they are part of the structure.

Among the Trotskyists, this same issue gave rise to a tremendous discussion at the end of the Second World War. A great English Trotskyist who later withdrew from the Fourth International did a lot of work on this subject.³¹ In this case, the leader of the Fourth International Ernest Mandel

30 Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941). French writer and philosopher; in 1927 he won the Nobel Prize for literature. He sought to distance philosophy from the sciences and focus it on intuitive, aesthetic, and spiritual sensations. In the last year of his life, he rejected the pro-Nazi regime of General Petain established in 1940.

31 It refers to Tony Cliff (1917-2000). Born Yigael Gluckstein in Palestine, of a Jewish family. He joined Trotskyism in 1933. In 1947, he settled in England and argued against Trotsky's definitions of the USSR as a "degenerated workers' state" and of Stalinism as the bureaucratic counter-revolution in the workers' state. In his 1948 book, *State Capitalism in the USSR*, he further developed the conception of it. In 1951, he founded the English Socialist Workers Party (SWP)

(1923-1995) responded very well, quoting all the antecedents of the controversy against Kautsky. It is still an open problem.

Another example of our movement can be the discussion between Mandel himself and Pierre Naville (1904-1993), a great intellectual — perhaps the best contemporary Marxist — who was trained alongside Trotsky in the 1930s. Mandel says that there are two economic systems in the world, on the one hand, imperialist capitalism, and on the other that of the USSR, Eastern Europe, China, and Cuba. Naville argues that the world economy continues to be dominated by imperialism and that the countries where the bourgeoisie was expropriated are a contradictory pole but within that unity. That is, the USSR, China and others are part of a single world economy, even if they have a non-capitalist or transitional economy. Naville also says that there has been a revisionist current in Marxism — unfortunately, according to him — with a great theoretician, Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), who believed the two types of economies could coexist, that they were not encompassed in one totality but each one was a totality.

According to this position, which includes Mandel, there would be an economy of the workers' states that coexists with the imperialist economy. Pierre Naville believes that this conception is wrong, and goes against that of Marx and many Marxists. For him, the world economy is always dominated by someone, it is not half and half, nor two-thirds and one-third. It is also not related to coexistence but to dominance. What dominates now is the capitalist, imperialist economy. He makes a very interesting study showing how the salary structure of the countries where the bourgeoisie was expropriated is identical to that of the capitalist countries. Trotsky argued that if the bureaucracy of Stalin (1878-1953) lasted over time, keeping in its hands the power of the bureaucratic workers' state, the USSR would inevitably go to capitalist restoration. According to Naville's analysis, if imperialism remains dominant, sooner or later it swallows the workers' state, which would coincide with Trotsky. In our opinion, this is still true although it has not happened yet. Mandel, for his part, rather rejects that there is a danger of restoration. But I put it as one of the many examples of unresolved problems, which are open, posed by reality, even within Trotskyism.

We Argentine Trotskyists, perhaps because of the little influence of Stalinism, of the local Communist Party, have always had freedom of thought. That's why, amid a lot of mistakes, we've had some great successes. For example, with the problem of entryism. We argued that entryism was a valid tactic towards nationalist movements in colonial or semi-colonial countries. We argued that until 1925 entryism was valid in the Kuomintang.³² The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)³³ of the United States attacked us harshly, seizing that Trotsky, according to them, had sent a letter to Schachtman³⁴ saying that he had voted against it. The great historian Edward H. Carr³⁵ and the best scholars of the Russian revolution said for their part that Trotsky had abstained. But an unpublished work by Trotsky on France has been discovered in which he deals with entryism in the French Socialist Party, recommending it. Trotsky says in it that both entryism in the French

and since then he continued to vindicate Trotsky in other aspects but rejecting the Fourth International, which held the definition of the class character of the USSR as a workers' state, and later extended it to the bureaucratic workers' states of the post-war period. The followers of Cliff and his current are known as the "state capitalist Trotskyists". The SWP became the largest Trotskyist party in England.

32 Kuomintang. China's bourgeois nationalist party, headed by Sun Yat-sen and later Chiang Kai-shek. In 1926-27, Chiang crushed the workers' revolution with fire and sword. He was defeated by the peasant revolution of 1949, which brought Mao Zedong and the Communist Party to power.

33 See Glossary on page 135.

34 See *Leon Trotsky on China*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1976, p. 190-491. Max Schachtmann (1904-1972). Founder, together with James Cannon, of the SWP of the United States. In 1939, he led the faction that abandoned Trotsky's definition of the USSR as a degenerate, bureaucratic workers' state, and proclaimed that it should not be defended against a Nazi invasion. He broke with the Fourth International and joined social democracy, and supported the AFL-CIO bureaucracy.

35 Edward H. Carr (1892-1982). English historian, who published a monumental seven-volume work on the 1917 revolution in Russia and the USSR in the 1920s. He is well known for his book *What is history?*

Socialist Party and the Kuomintang were legitimate. That is, we held our opinion and the subsequent investigation proved us right.³⁶

Another subject with discrepancies, which was highly developed by Trotsky, is that of the popular fronts.³⁷ In the early 1970s, we argued that the Chilean Unidad Popular³⁸ (Popular Unity), the Uruguayan Frente Amplio³⁹ (Broad Front), that of President Lazaro Cardenas⁴⁰ in Mexico, and other movements were popular fronts because they are class conciliation fronts but they had elements of clashes with imperialism that made them different from the popular fronts that we could call “classic” of the Stalinist communist parties in France and other imperialist countries. The SWP leadership flatly said no. Shortly after, an unpublished article by Trotsky came out, published by them in their magazine, *Intercontinental Press*, which stated that the government of Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas was a popular front but that it had to be completely distinguished from the popular front of the imperialist countries because it was a popular front with progressive elements because of the confrontation with imperialism.⁴¹

I insist that we should not make a dogma of Marxism because we Marxists have plenty of messes like this. There are more open problems to be solved than solutions. You have to have the confidence to comment. Being a Marxist implies defending the freedom to express an opinion based on seriousness and scientific rigour. So, there are countless debates and unresolved problems, which go back a long way, to which are added all kinds of new things, which must be seriously studied in order to talk about them.

We have to put all of the above within the framework that Marxism also has principles. These are like the foundations of a house as they support the structure as a whole. They can also be changed from time to time, but with great seriousness and exhaustively demonstrating why they have to be changed. They can be touched when you are sure that it is essential to move those foundations since they compromise the whole. These principles are, for example, class independence, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the role of the party, and a few more. We use the term revisionism (following Lenin against the reformists of the German Social Democracy and other parties of the Second International) for those who call themselves Marxists (or Trotskyists) and bring down —revise— those fundamental principles.

There is also a lot of debate and different positions on art, aesthetics, and science, which we will see later, on the topic of historical materialism. But the definition of art is not a matter of principle for Marxism, at least not so far. Perhaps once we elucidate the issue and have a Marxist definition acceptable to all, coherent and sufficiently demonstrated, it will become part of the principles. We are very zealous with the fundamental Marxist principles; on the contrary, we are very open with the various definitions of other issues and hypotheses. We do not deny the possibility of revising the principles, but 15 or 20 years of study are needed. It is the same as questioning the existence of

36 We could not identify Trotsky’s work mentioned by Moreno.

37 In 1935, the Third International officially voted for the policy that Stalin had been implementing, of conciliation with the bourgeois parties and governments, imposing the unity of the communist parties with bourgeois parties, known as popular fronts, and abandoning class independence.

38 Unidad Popular (Popular Unity): Alliance of the Chilean socialist and communist parties, which won the elections in 1970. With Salvador Allende as president, they formed a bourgeois government of class conciliation, popular frontist, which proclaimed the “peaceful path to socialism” but had strong friction with imperialism. The revolutionary process deepened, and Pinochet’s genocidal coup finally triumphed with assistance from the CIA.

39 The Frente Amplio (Broad Front) electoral coalition was founded in 1971, made up of minority bourgeois parties, such as the Christian Democrats, former White and Red sectors, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, other minor leftist and centre-left groups, and had the support of Tupamaros, the urban guerrilla movement. Its best-known founders were General Liber Seregni and Senator Zelmar Michelini, formerly of the White Party. After the genocidal coup of 1973, several of its leaders were imprisoned for more than a decade. In 2004, the Frente Amplio candidate Tabare Vazquez won the presidency. He was succeeded by former Tupamaro, Jose Mujica.

40 General Lazaro Cardenas (1895-1970). He was president of Mexico and at the end of the 1930s, he expropriated the oil, which was in the hands of British multinationals. There was a serious confrontation and Trotsky lined up in defence of Mexico against British and Yankee imperialism.

41 “Discussions with Trotsky on the Transitional Program”, on 7 June 1938. Published in English in *Intercontinental Press*, 19 May 1975. Published in Spanish in *Revista de América* No. 13, February 1976.

viruses or microbes in medicine. We are not against someone saying that there is something better than the dialectical method. But you must provide exhaustive documentation, you will have to prove it. Because until now dialectics has allowed us to scientifically study and understand historical, economic, and social processes, etc., corroborating them in practice.

The social movement of workers that fights to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism

Returning to the definition, for us, the essence of Marxism is to be a social movement that fights to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism in each country and the world. But this is getting complicated in reality. It has not yet been corroborated in practice; socialism has not triumphed in the world. And, much more worrying, until now only bureaucratic workers' dictatorships have lasted or taken place. Suppose that this reality of bureaucratic dictatorships continues to exist. How will researchers of history define Marxism in a hundred years? Surely serious scientists will say that there were more consistent and revolutionary Marxists (who called themselves Trotskyists) who always believed they were part of a world movement of struggle and workers' democracy, to eliminate class exploitation, and implant the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat, leading the world to socialism. But they were wrong. It was a movement that eliminated imperialism to impose a new system of exploitation on the world, bureaucratic exploitation.

Perhaps we are wrong in the definition. It is an open problem. The story of the French rationalists could be repeated. They believed that by knocking over feudalism they inaugurated the regime of reason, a new society that would be just and egalitarian. In reality, they brought anarchy a thousand times worse and a new horrendous system of exploitation, capitalism. This is especially true for Rousseau (1712-1778) who tended towards equality between the classes. Their movement did not give the expected result but they rather were the great theoreticians of the bourgeoisie. Even though the capitalist system is the height of inequality, Rousseau is still considered a benchmark and part of an egalitarian movement that emerged in the 18th century.

The social-political movement of the working class for its liberation began in the mid-19th century and its first name was scientific socialism, this is a fact. Just as it is also a fact that there was the great triumph of 1917 when the Soviets and the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, took power. But as Trotskyists, we know that later another tremendous event took place, that in the development of that first triumph, a serious internal problem arose for the Russian and world working class, in the context that imperialist capitalism maintained its dominance. The triumph of the bureaucracy led by Stalin took place; this bureaucracy drove a colossal betrayal of the working class, of Marxism and its basic and revolutionary principles. It was a great setback, a new and different situation since that totalitarian, sinister and anti-working-class bureaucracy became the main leadership of the working-class in the world. And with the contradiction that they did it while claiming to be the continuity of Marxism, of Marx, Engels, Lenin and the Third International. This already brings us to a different topic and it is what Trotsky defined as the historical crisis of the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat.

This new and contradictory fact, this great setback, reaffirms our insistence that it is so important to always start from reality, and that reality changes and always surpasses any dogma or schema. The development of the class struggle will advance in one direction or another and the future will tell whether or not Marxism, the movement that emerged to lead the liberation of the working class and the triumph of socialism, will be able to resume the revolutionary path and reach its objective, and how it will be defined then.

According to Marx, thought has tremendous power, it is part of reality, it is capable of changing it and it also can formulate objective truths. But these four virtues of thought can only be realised by putting them into practice, that is the condition. This is why he does not fall into idealism but rather the opposite. That's our interpretation. [...]

To finish, let us repeat what we said at the beginning: [*Theses on Feuerbach*] is a very short, synthetic and difficult text. But we make an effort to study it because we want to see exhaustively that it already was a Marx with a full beard who was launching his revolutionary conception to push the proletariat towards socialism.

Nahuel Moreno

Theses on Feuerbach: study and discussion sentence by sentence

I. Placement of the work

Engels defined this short text —handwritten by Marx in 1845 in an “old notebook”— “as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook.” He did it in 1888, in the preface to *Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of classical German philosophy*. Traditionally, in the cadre schools of our party, we begin with this comment by Engels: at the beginning, where we must start. *The Theses...* are a short document, exaggeratedly short, although very profound and also quite difficult. However, it is extremely useful to study it.¹

Three major themes of philosophy

Before entering fully into the study of the eleven theses, we will raise, in a very general way, some central questions of philosophy. Traditionally, three large segments or branches are recognised, to which answers have been given, both from idealism and materialism. First: the theory of being or ontology. Second: the theory of knowledge or gnoseology. Third: the theory of values (ethics), and some extend it further, to duties (deontology). What values must be respected and what must be done in life? Although they are linked, they are not the same. For example, the Italian Marxists —especially— insist a lot on this term, deontology.

What do these three branches of philosophy mean? Let us bear in mind that philosophers have a habit of complicating everything. For example, instead of saying object of knowledge, they say epistemic object; everyone calls it an object of knowledge and it is perfectly understood. It is what we study: the sun, primitive peoples, such a plant. If they call it an epistemic object, they confuse us all. The same happens with these words: ontology, gnoseology and deontology. To simplify, we summarise them in three verbs: ontology corresponds to the verb to be; gnoseology to the verb to know; and ethics refers to the duty to be.

What is being? Ontology or doctrine or theory of being means that philosophy posed a question: what is existing? Does it exist, does it not exist, is it the product of an idea, of a god? Is it a product of atoms? Is it still, immutable, or does it move, or change? What is the world that we see, what exists, the being? (In philosophy everything that exists is called being because it is because it exists.) Some philosophers call the theory of being metaphysics.

Gnoseology or the theory of knowledge revolves around what and how it can be known. For example: is it possible to know the world, the truth? In philosophy, there are many answers. Some say that they can be known more or less, relatively. Others say that it is impossible to know them, at least completely. The different philosophical currents give their answers. Among the philosophers, everything can be found.

¹ In an appendix, on page 119, we reproduce the eleven theses according to the manuscript and included in Volume 5 of *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 2010, p.3-5.

Finally, there is the duty to be. According to what exists and what it is, and according to how we know, different obligations arise. The Epicureans,² some ancient Greeks, for example, said that you have to have a great time, have fun, sunbathe, and drink plenty of wine; that's a duty to be. Some say "let's sunbathe", they say "let's drink a lot". Others say the opposite: you have to suffer; you should not enjoy yourself much. The Christian or Platonist or Neo-Platonist philosophers say that we will have a life beyond death. Then let us have a suffering, ascetic life: preparing ourselves for the other world, we must tolerate the sufferings in this one. There are philosophers for all variants, with more or less complicated terms, but they raise all these aspects of life, giving a duty to be. We have to act in such a way because we have such obligations and such values. A philosopher may say that what is most to be esteemed is good people. Another will say: what is most to be esteemed is the intellect. Those are the values, that have to do with morality or ethics.

In addition to these three traditional branches of philosophy, there are interpretations of history and society. So, summarising, we have: 1) the interpretation of the world as a whole (being); 2) the theory of knowledge (knowing); 3) ethics or deontology, (the duty to be); 4) conceptions of history; 5) conceptions of society. At the end of the study of the text, we will specify phrase by phrase and thesis by thesis, to which of these five great themes the eleven theses refer and what comments or answers Marx gives them.

German Idealism and Ludwig Feuerbach

To make some phrases and words more understandable, we need to rely on everything we have seen in the first topic on the origins of Marxism, when we took a look at Hegel and the Young Hegelians, at the first steps in the political and theoretical evolution of Marx and Engels and their break with the petty-bourgeois socialism of that time, the influence of Feuerbach, and other topics.

Let us recall that Marx and Engels are part of Bruno Bauer's group of Young Hegelians but they are deeply influenced by Feuerbach's materialism. In this context, they begin their process towards their new conception. Many of their early writings are midway between Feuerbach's humanistic materialism and communism, or rather, what will be scientific socialism. But as of 1845–1846, they break completely with the erroneous conceptions of Feuerbach and in criticising him they begin to develop their entire historical materialist conception. The *Theses on Feuerbach* mark precisely that point where Marx begins to be Marx with a full beard, where he begins to be a Marxist. Hence the enormous importance of this very brief text.

We have already said that the two friends were never totally with Feuerbach. He greatly influenced them from the philosophical point of view and in their definitive passage to materialism, but a tendency towards political activity always prevailed in them. In 1845, the total estrangement took place, as evidenced by these eleven theses and *The German Ideology*. Those are the two great works of the rupture, although they were not published at the time. In *The Holy Family*, which is earlier and was published in 1844, they criticise idealism and break with the Bauer brothers but not yet with Feuerbach.

We also need to recall and briefly expand on what we have already seen of the Young Hegelians. The four great German idealist philosophers were Immanuel Kant, Johann Fichte, Friedrich Schelling, and Wilhelm Hegel.

Kant (1724-1804) was a highly meritorious critical rationalist who posed the whole problem of the modern theory of knowledge. He attempted to subject everything to reason, to a reason with

² The Epicureans were one of the materialist schools of ancient Greece. They questioned Platonian idealism. They said that the gods existed, but that they had nothing to do with human affairs, and they were not to be feared. It was headed by Epicurus of Samos (341 BC – 268 BC), who argued that the purpose of human life is to seek pleasure and health, to avoid pain; always rationally to avoid excesses, as these cause subsequent suffering. The school worked in the garden of his house. It was administered by slaves and allowed equal participation of women, including prostitutes (called courtesans). The most famous one was Leontion. They had influence for several centuries. Marx did his doctoral Thesis in 1841, on the philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus.

laws similar to those of physics that Newton³ had discovered. This idealism, which is a vindication of revolutionary rationalism, was divided into two wings: Fichte⁴ and Schelling.⁵

Fichte was an “ultra-left”, the greatest left-wing thinker of German idealism. Although he is vindicated as part of the origin of modern bourgeois law, in his works he raises theses such as that if someone dies of hunger or lacks freedom, the people have the right to destroy everything and make a revolution. He raised the need for activity, for the development of the self, and for asserting oneself. He was also the one who pointed out the antithesis, the contradiction between the self—the individual asserting himself through activity—and the outside world.

Schelling, instead, vindicated intuition, man’s agreement with nature, instinctively. He ended up being a reactionary of a religious type. After Hegel died in 1831, he applied to the Prussian king as an official philosopher, stating that Hegel was dangerous, and left-wing. He stated that the true right-wing philosophy was his.

Hegel—who we already mentioned enough in the previous topic—was the synthesis of the two. He took from Fichte the subjective dialectical aspect and from Schelling the agreement between nature and man. But saying that this dialectic, this struggle between man and the outside world, was positive, that in this way it was possible to reach a harmony between man and nature, history and society. Through contradictions, a positive agreement is reached, not a fight.

II. Reading them thesis by thesis and phrase by phrase

Thesis 1, first sentence

The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that things [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object*, or of *contemplation*, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively.

What does Marx mean by this? Let’s start with the difference between “thing” and “object” in this sentence. Some translators mistakenly use the same word, so the two German words have to be present to show they are different.

The word “thing” (*gegenstand*) indicates that it has a subjective and an objective character. Instead, the word “object” (*objekt*) indicates that it has only an objective, static character. It is a very philosophical but correct distinction, which we will try to bring down to earth. What name would we give to what man—the subject—contributes, to this combination or mixture of external and subjective elements, in which man also intervenes? It would be the product. The “thing” (which in German we would call *gegenstand*) is the product of man’s activity. They would be the “objects” plus human activity.

The “previous” materialism, faced with a table, was not interested in the aspect that it had been made by man, that it was a product of human activity, but that the table was always there and all man did was look at it. Feuerbach did not distinguish between “object” and “thing”. Man had nothing to do with the outside world and he only contemplated it, he observed it, without transforming it. Therefore, it does not see human activity as an objectifying activity, in the sense that it makes things or products and therefore transforms and creates part of the real world, it is productive.

When we say subjective factor, we refer to the subject, man, and everything else as objective. We are saying that everything that surrounds us is linked to human activity, feelings, thoughts, and

3 Isaac Newton (1643-1727). English mathematician and physicist. He formulated the most general laws of mechanical physics, such as that of gravity, among other discoveries. He was religious and also engaged in alchemy.

4 Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). A continuator of the critical philosophy of Kant.

5 Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph (von) Schelling (1775-1854). One of the greatest exponents of German idealism and romanticism.

senses, but translated into reality and objectified by the human being's ability to do things, to have a productive activity.

Let's take an example: the planet Saturn and a table. What big difference do they have? Saturn is an object of contemplation; we did not make it. Its big difference with the table, among others, is that the table is our product, we made it, with raw material that exists outside of us. According to what we have been saying, Saturn would be an object (*objekt*) and the table would be a thing (*gegenstand*). If we call the table object, we have to clarify that it arose with our activity, our subjective intervention. The product is mediated by our sensible, practical activity. We saw the wood, nail legs, etc. It is the product of our sensitive activity: we change what exists in the world and, through our senses and practical activity, we create things. Previous materialism, including Feuerbach's, never gave importance to production, to making, to creating products. They never took it as a part of material reality. They had an attitude of "contemplation", not only to know reality but to feel it, and see it. This was the conception of pre-Marxist materialism, opposed in this respect to idealism. We will see it in the next sentence of this same thesis.

Idealism always believed that ideal, conceptual objects were made by human thought. In this sense, we will see in the sentence that follows that they developed the "active side". Man could do many things, either because he was touched by God or because of the power of thought, of the idea. Whereas, the most conservative sector in this field, although it may seem strange, was often materialism, which conceived a more passive human attitude; for example, that man was made by the environment. Feuerbach did not differentiate between "object" and "thing", man had nothing to do with the outside world, man only contemplated it, looked at it, and observed it. We will return to this later in another thesis.

Man intervenes in the totality of the surrounding reality, in the whole of nature. We have nothing to do with the planet Saturn. But we can set out to know things about Saturn. For this, man has to contribute elements of his own, subjective elements. He has to learn geometry, astronomy, and higher mathematics, invent first the telescope and then increasingly complex devices to investigate it, and create countless elements for that purpose. But no matter how many things I do to know it, neither Saturn nor the stars nor the planets are human creations as real objects. Activity always intervenes to put man in contact with the object, although there are still all kinds of objects that are not made by us. Instead, the table, yes, is a man-made object, that is, a thing, as is the telescope. Everything is given by nature; man, all he does is consciously change it

Feuerbach ignores that man does things and that those things that he does modify reality. This is the difference that Marx does between object and thing or product. This is why he puts the "object" together with contemplation. Instead, he puts the "thing" together with reality and the sensuous. Later we will see why Feuerbach defends only two types of activity: one is theoretical—one of whose manifestations is contemplation—and the other is trading. He never vindicates the activity of making things, of making products; he does not vindicate revolutionary activity nor any activity that changes what exists outside. Marx means that both in the sensuous (nature, reality) and in the products (things), in everything there is the subjective element of man's activity.

Thesis 1, second sentence

Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the *active side* was set forth abstractly by idealism—which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.

Marx refers to what we anticipated about idealism. Feuerbach vindicated passive contemplative activity, and it was idealism that developed in human activity the "active" side, albeit in an abstract way, by thought and ideas.

We have already seen in the first sentence that Marx criticises the preceding materialism because it does not give any importance to the concrete, practical activity of men, the one that makes products. In this second sentence, Marx adds that there is one aspect in which the idealists do attach

importance to human activity. Let us recall that Fichte —the one who referred to the active side— posed the relationship between the self and the activity of the individual in reality. And, according to Fichte, what relationship did this self have with the outside world? Contradictory and fighting. So, what does Marx mean in this second sentence? That idealism recognised a human activity. Idealists said that man intervenes, that he modifies, but in the field of thought, concepts, and ideas. It was an intellectual, abstract struggle against the world; it did not take things that exist in the real world because they were not materialistic. For them, the role of the individual was to think and think, each time to achieve better thoughts, always making the head work. This activity is the merit of idealism in general and Fichte in particular. But in the field exclusively of the intellect. For example, they did not consider supporting the bourgeoisie, the middle class, or the working class; they did not intend to take the elements of reality to modify reality itself but to do so only in the conceptual world.

Do idealists and pre-Marxist materialists have anything in common? Yes, they have a point in common, and it is good to specify it. It is said in the two sentences of Thesis 1 that we have been studying —neither of them recognises sensory activity or practical activity. Pre-Marxist materialism, for its part, does not take the influence of the subjective factor and human activity concerning objects, transforming them into a product or thing. Idealism, however, does see this subjective factor of human activity, but only that of thought, it does not see it as an objective, concrete, real activity.⁶

Thesis 1, third sentence

Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity.

Let us clarify that conceptual object means it is something intellectual, an idea, something that is thought, or something that is being studied. It may or may not exist in reality, but what we are working on is something intellectual. For example, “the dog in general”. The dog in general does not exist, nor does “the cat in general”. But we can study each species, “the dog in general” or “the cat in general”. That is, we can work on the concept of “dog” or “cat”.

So, if I work with the concept of “dog”, it is the conceptual generality, what all dogs have in common, but what all dogs have in common, no dog has. What all men have in common is not any man. They are all of them, but subtracted from the difference, from their specificity, then it is not a man, it is a conceptual abstraction of man, dog, cat. It is what characterises them, and differentiates them from others, but in a pure state. So, it turns out to be an intellectual product. These “conceptual objects” can only be acted upon by making judgments about them. You can work intellectually, but you cannot work materially with conceptual objects. In reality, in the sensory, material universe, they do not exist, although dogs and cats exist. The concept is nowhere, it cannot be grasped. It is the favourite terrain of idealism.

Feuerbach argues that there are real, distinct and material objects. He believes that there are flesh and blood dogs that bark and bite, they are part of nature. Feuerbach was not an idealist; he was a materialist. He believed the objects existed, that if a house fell on him, it would kill him. But in this third sentence that we analyse, although Marx recognises Feuerbach’s aspiration of the material, of the sensuous, he criticises Feuerbach’s limitation of not taking into account human activity as material, as a producer of objects.

It is important to progress like this, sentence by sentence because it is part of learning to study. We might superficially say that Marx is repeating the first sentence. But this is not the case. Some authors repeat themselves. Myself, I am the champion of repetition. But Marx was a genius and it was very rare for him to repeat himself; in each sentence, he says something different. We said that in this sentence Marx does not start from the object. What does he start from, and what does he refer to? To the activity. He attaches great importance to criticising the activity. Regarding the idealists,

⁶ Nahuel Moreno, in his 1973 work *Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences* (available to download from www.nahuelmoreno.org), refers to this part of Thesis 1 in chapter II, critical of the Italian empiricist Marxist Galvano Della Volpe.

he touched on the problem of activity and says that activity is important to them, but only in the abstract and conceptual, mental field and not in the sensuous, in the material, not in making objects.

So, Feuerbach accepts that there are sensuous, material objects, different from the conceptual object; however, he does not attach importance to human activity. We have to specify what he is adding that he has not yet said. What does “*human activity itself as objective activity*” mean? It is an activity that makes objects. Here Marx is not proposing that it is a revolutionary activity that modifies reality, not yet, let’s not get ahead of ourselves. He criticises Feuerbach because he does not take human activity as an activity that makes objects. The true translation would be like an objectifying activity.

Those man-made objects transformed into products but they are objects in a philosophical sense. They are objects because they are external, foreign to man. Philosophy has given two names for everything that exists: subject and object. Everything that is man is subject, regarding man everything else is object. They are always relative terms.

Thesis 1, fourth sentence

In *Das Wesen des Christenthums* [*The Essence of Christianity*], he therefore regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and defined only in its dirty-Jewish form of appearance.

The Essence of Christianity is the book that Feuerbach published in 1841 and that we already discussed in the first course. It had a big impact. There, he recognises that there is a certain human activity that is carried out but he limits it to that of commerce, not that of making objects, associating it with the character of merchants of the Jewish people.⁷

He takes into account two activities: a theoretical human activity (one of whose manifestations is contemplation) and the other that of trading, never that of making objects, or material production. Contemplation is part of theoretical activity, which is making theories, giving an interpretation of religion, making books, writing, thinking, and being intellectual. It is contemplation taken as an activity of the intellectual. The activity he never takes into account is making things.

Thesis 1, last sentence

Hence, he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary”, of “practical-critical”, activity.

Until now Marx had been criticising the previous materialists and idealism and, in this last sentence, he gives his new and different position, speaking of “revolutionary” or “practical-critical” activity. Why would he have put them in quotation marks? Because, as we have already seen, “critical” refers to Bruno Bauer, who was a representative of the critical idealist philosophical school. We already saw in the first topic, that the Bauer brothers conceived that advancement, and progress took place through the incessant criticism of what exists. But they did it with the idealist conception, which was reduced to an intellectual critique of ideas and concepts. The word “practice” refers to August Von Cieszcowsky, who we have also seen. Cieszcowsky was one of the young people of the Hegelian left, who advocated doing for the sake of doing, voluntarism where more than the critical aspect what prevailed was the will and the activity itself. Bauer was a critic, Cieszcowsky a pragmatist. Marx proposes a synthesis, in the field of materialism, of the two approaches, that the activity has both aspects. This is why he says “practical-critical” activity, which is “revolutionary” because together they change reality.

This phrase by Marx is very important because it is against doing for the sake of doing, of pragmatism, of the action itself, and it is against pure and isolated rational criticism. But if they go together, Marx is in favour of both. There should be no practice without a well-done, rational critique

⁷ For the Christian religious conception, so influential in those times, commerce was considered “dirty”, an activity to which the Jewish people were preferably dedicated.

of reality and of practice itself, and there should be no criticism, no matter how well done, that does not fail to be put into practice, that is linked to action. It will be very important in Marxism and it has its origin in this union of the critical-rational and the practical. It is revolutionary because it puts into practice in reality the revolutionary and rational critique that we developed.

Marxists use the word praxis linked to this concept of practical-critical activity, and there will subsequently be all kinds of debates and different interpretations among the intelligentsia. For example, if we say “praxis”, are we already saying it is revolutionary? What is praxis? Some define Marxism as “the philosophy of praxis”. We have already seen that we do not define Marxism as a philosophy. All this was discussed but we have to get used to not getting entangled in words and in their different use depending on what current uses it. Besides, you will see that we ourselves use practice as a synonym for praxis, without clarifying it.

Thesis 2, first sentence

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question.

What does this objective truth mean? The question arises again as to whether Marx is repeating himself or saying something new. The commentators say different things, and within the party this is discussed a lot. Is Marx saying that there are truths that are not objective, or concrete, like those of mathematics? A theorem is proven without the need to resort to practice, it has an abstract proof. This is the discussion at our party. With this, I am not saying who is right but that there are different opinions in the interpretation of this thesis. We have to see it step by step together.

First, the interpretation of Marx’s text. When he wrote “objective truth”, did he consider that there are two types of truths, one objective and one subjective? Or, on the contrary, although he wrote objective truth, he could say just truth because there would be only one type of truth. This is the first problem that is discussed at our party. And the other is to place the topic in the present. Now, more than a century later, in the middle of the 20th century, it is accepted among many scientists that there would be two types of truths, objective and subjective. Here we would also be saying then that Marx foresaw a verifiable scientific fact a hundred and some years ago. We would say yes to both. That he referred to two different types of truths and that science subsequently converged, explicitly, in that same position.

What are we talking about? That there are both objective and subjective truths. If we take mathematics, a theorem is built based on certain postulates, and statements that must be respected. The truth criterion for the theorem is that it maintains coherence with the postulates that are formulated. The geometry of antiquity has its own. In the 19th or 20th century, new geometries were formulated, with different postulates. We consider that this is a subjective truth, it is self-sufficient, it is abstract, and it must respect coherence with itself. Another example is the use of what are called imaginary numbers. They are truths within mathematics, which together with formal logic, are what we call formal sciences. They serve objective reality but have different criteria and applications. For us, then, there are abstract or subjective truths, which prove themselves and are not proven by practice. They have another criterion of truth.

The ones that can never fail to be tested in practice are the objective truths, those that have to do with the material, the real world. If I have a cobblestone in one hand and a feather cushion in the other and I throw each one on a foot, I will quickly know which of the two is heavier. We notice it immediately, by way of practice, without discussion. And if I have two not-so-different objects, I solve it by weighing them on a scale. Any measurement method has to do with practice, with real experience.

Suppose we are taking part in a struggle, in a strike. We will try to win it, but only with practical experience, we will see whether the guidance we give is useful in the struggle, whether it strength-

ens us or not, and whether the bosses or the workers win. From there will come the “objective truth” of the balance sheet about the orientation and its result.

Thesis 2, second sentence

Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice.

Some interpret that, in this sentence, Marx repeats himself, while others give it extraordinary importance. The first thing is to define what Marx is referring to by objective truth or thought. Some commentators say that Marx argues here that, through practice, the this-worldliness of objective truth had to be seen. He would be repeating the above. Others say that Marx doesn't repeat the first sentence in any other way but that he inserts a different and very important concept. There are even some who say that a substantial concept of Marxism appears here.

We always have to see how we progress in the reading and discussion, making mistakes or getting it right, not looking for who wins, or who is right but to affirm or rectify. It is good for us to argue too, providing different interpretations. We do not expect that they agree with one or another interpretation. It is about learning to think like Marxists; we Marxists may disagree.

Those of us who say that Marx does not repeat himself believe he refers here to thought, not to objective truth. He is advancing on what he had already said in the previous thesis about the importance of the activity of thought, and criticism. Thought has to do with reality and builds knowledge of it. Marx already said that only practice can demonstrate the objective truths that thought poses. And in this second sentence, he is adding that not only does the practice demonstrate the objective truths of thought but also its power and this-worldliness. According to this interpretation, it is a vindication of human thought.

There are two interpretations. The first does nothing more than explain the first sentence a little more. The other interpretation is a vindication of human thought, not in itself, but linked to practical action. For those of us who make this interpretation, it is one of the most important phrases of Marxism because it is an extraordinary vindication of human thought. We understand it as a criticism of the crude interpretation of Marxism, the one that says that thought is nothing and practice is everything, or, also, that external reality is everything. There are extreme positions that reject any contribution that comes from idealist philosophers, just because they remain in the field of ideas and thought. We believe that in this sentence Marx is denying those mechanical and empiricist conceptions of Marxism, much encouraged by Stalinism. Marx makes a colossal, extraordinary vindication for the human activity of thinking. For a certain vulgar and extreme “materialism” all this is to fall into the most reprehensible idealism.

According to Marx, thought has tremendous power, it is part of reality, it is capable of changing it and it also can formulate objective truths. But these four virtues of thought can only be realised by putting them into practice, that is the condition. This is why he does not fall into idealism but rather the opposite. That's our interpretation

The two sentences would be different. It says that thought is powerful, it creates, it elaborates theories, even when many times they are not given in reality. Thought anticipates processes that are going to happen. For example, with the theory of relativity created by the physicist Albert Einstein, it was foreseen that with these new laws, the atomic bomb could be created. Afterwards, it was confirmed and applied. It is an example of the power of thought.⁸ But so as not to fall into the totally erroneous idealist conception that thought or idea is fundamental and creates everything, Marx limits it and unites it with practice, and activity. He vindicates the idea linked to reality, and therefore, to know whether that thought or theory elaborated by thought is true, it must be demonstrated in

⁸ In 1988, in his book *A Brief History of Time*, the physicist Stephen W. Hawking (1942-2018), in his acknowledgments, referred to the limitations caused by contracting motor neuron disease (MND). And he added he was lucky to go into the field of theoretical physics, because “it's all in the mind”.

practice. Nuclear fission and the construction of the atomic bomb proved in practice Einstein's theory of relativity.

In short, Marx has said, according to our interpretation, that thought has the virtue, the power, to advance in the construction of objective truths that can become part of reality but only if thought is accompanied by practice. This is the condition and why it is opposed to idealism. And it is also opposed to later and crude interpretations of Marxism, according to which thought is nothing or, at most, it is a mirror, a reflection of the real, and that practice or external reality is everything. Interpretations that are typical of the Stalinist perversion of Marxism or empirical conceptions. For us, therefore, 1) thought linked to practice is capable of changing reality, 2) it has a force, a formidable power when making its constructions, 3) it reaches objective truths, and 4) it, too, is part of objective reality (the most subjective part of the real world). But it is only possible to concretise these virtues of thought when they are linked and put into practice and objective reality.

Thesis 2, last sentence

The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which isolates itself from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.

Let's clarify what "scholastic" means. In the Middle Ages, Christian monks in convents dedicated themselves to reading the holy scriptures, or the texts of Aristotle, and sometimes would spend years discussing incredible things. For example: if an animal was baptized, what happened? Tremendous discussion. Before being baptized, what were children? It is said that Byzantium fell to the offensive of the Ottoman Empire, which was Muslim, because the monks, passionate about the discussion about whether angels had sex, did not defend the city. It is not the correct interpretation, but the saying remained... This is called "a scholastic discussion". Said in Buenos Aires terms: it is a super stupid discussion, without ties to reality.

Let's also start by clarifying, as we did in the previous sentence, what Marx would be talking about. Is he saying that thought can be real? It would seem that yes, it says that, as long as it is united and not isolated from the practice. Let's take a concrete example. In the 19th century, at some point, the electric lamp was invented. But before, it was thought, it was in the head of the one who invented it. It became a reality only when practical activity produced it.

Thus, in this sense thought is real. But not only because it captures reality as a concept, something we already know it does; capturing reality, knowing, is one of the virtues of thought. It is real because through practice it can become reality; the subjective factor, of ideas or thoughts, can be transformed into reality, and become objective, for example, in the electric lamp. This is why Marx says it is a scholastic problem to discuss the reality-unreality of thought itself because the only thing that can make it real is practice. A scholastic would have written pages and pages on darkness and light, on the electric lamp, etc. Edison thought about it, experimented, tested it, and finally gave birth to it.

Thesis 3, first sentence

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated.

First of all, in this first sentence, what is Marx doing? Let us take advantage of this thorough reading to learn to be good Marxists, to be synthetic, and to define precisely. In this sentence Marx does not give his conception yet; he merely makes a criticism. First, he is demolishing the adversary, he is tearing down his building, to later make his own building; he will do it in the third sentence.

We need to explain something beforehand. Marx is referring to the English and French rationalists and empiricists.⁹ Both had a double conception of an evolutionary, linear type of society. Among them, some believed that circumstances (nature and society) created the individual. Others, called Illuminists or Encyclopedists,¹⁰ held that the decisive factor in historical progress was the people who educated the people, that is, the educators. There are two positions. One is that the environment is what creates individuals. Another is that what shapes individuals, what makes them in a certain way, is the education they receive from those who educate them. They are similar but not identical. On one, everything is determined by circumstances, and on the other by educators. In both positions, there is a linear relationship, of cause and effect, that changes men. Philosophical thought was influenced by the great discovery of the laws of Newtonian mechanical physics. The people have no role. We have to relate it to what we saw in Thesis 1 about the contemplative and non-transforming role of the objective reality of “*precedent*” materialism.

Here Marx criticises those who hold that the environment (as nature and society) is what originates everything. And, also, to the illuminists in the sense that those who have enlightenment educate those who do not, in an evolutionary process: teachers educate in such a way and those people, who are educated in such a way, in turn, educate those who come and then each generation progresses, evolves progressing more and more. This approach can become reactionary and elitist. Let us anticipate that Marx will say in the third sentence that all this is false.

Thesis 3, second sentence

This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

If we understand the first sentence well, we can answer the following: This “must”, to whom does it refer? Who must? It refers to the materialist theory. This is how this text should be analysed. Marx refers to the following: according to those materialists, circumstances are above men, and educators are above those who are educated. Those who remain below are the men and those who are educated. Marx says that materialists consider that the environment makes man and that education also makes man. He does not refer to the school teachers that we know. Educators are the most educated sectors of society, the older generation, and the parents who educate their children.

Thesis 3, third sentence

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.

This is very difficult. So far, Marx has been working with different categories. In the sociological or philosophical sense, it is called a category or concept when it covers a wide sector of reality. What concepts or categories has Marx been working on in this thesis? With what words, what are the most important words in the first and second sentences that Marx deals with here? We can point out that he has been referring to three categories or concepts: 1) circumstances or environment, which refer to nature and society; 2) education or educator, the enlightened; 3) and the student, that is, the man to be enlightened.

⁹ Rationalism is a philosophical current that emphasises the role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge. Empiricism, by contrast, emphasises the role of experience, especially perception. Both movements developed during the 17th and 18th centuries in England and France. Some of its exponents were Denis Diderot (1713–1784), Voltaire (1694–1778), Baron d’Holbach (1723–1789), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704), Edward Gibbon (1773–1794) and Isaac Newton, already cited.

¹⁰ Enlightenment, also called encyclopedism, was the eighteenth-century philosophical movement that sought to generate progress through scientific knowledge. Diderot was the director of the *Encyclopedia* and attempted to summarise the knowledge of the time. It began to be published in 1751. Voltaire, Rousseau, and others collaborated on it.

In this third sentence, Marx introduces human activity as synonymous with man himself. So, in this case, this about human activity is not a new category of human activity but it is man, who is linked to the student. Marx speaks of change but in the sense of human action. Does any other new category appear in the third sentence? Yes: revolutionary practice. We have to specify what this category means. He has been talking about practice from the beginning. In Thesis 2, he advanced the concept of practical-critical activity and said that it was revolutionary, without giving details. In this thesis, he advances regarding change. For Marx, men also change circumstances and educators through their revolutionary practice. When both change, there is a revolutionary practice. He is now emphasizing being revolutionary. The rationalists, and the materialists used to say “circumstances change men”. Marx makes the criticism: “This is false because men also change circumstances.” But saying this doesn’t solve the matter. What solution does he find? Revolutionary practice is the nexus that unites man with the environment and will give rise to something new. In dialectical terms, it is called mediation. It is the third dialectical term that unites the contradictory but indissoluble poles: man, and the environment. He is already placing the concept of revolution linked to rational human action and change.

There are two poles, man, on the one hand, and, on the other, the environment, nature, and society. Two poles that are in reciprocal action and reaction and that are linked through mediation, the revolutionary practice. This is the new contribution of Marx in Thesis 3. First, he criticises Feuerbach’s position. He tears it down by saying that Feuerbach takes man’s relationship with the environment only one way. That Feuerbach doesn’t see the relationship as a back-and-forth. Next, Marx clarifies through what means this reciprocal action and reaction takes place — it is through revolutionary practice; it is a new category that he incorporates. It is not just any activity. If the activity is not revolutionary, it does not change either the environment or man. What Marx is saying is that through revolutionary practice the coincidence of the change of both occurs. A man who does the same thing every day changes nothing; neither him, by his practice, nor anything. He continues his whole life the same, and the environment also remains the same. Revolutionary activity is the third dialectical term that unites the two contradictory but inseparable poles — man, and the environment, nature.

I said before that this is complicated but very important. To a certain extent, as an outline, this issue of revolutionary practice gives us the philosophical basis for the theory of permanent revolution — only with revolutionary practice is the environment and man himself as the working class changed forward. When revolutionary practice stops, neither the working class is transformed in its level of consciousness and organisation, nor is society modified or revolutionised. On the contrary, both stand still or move back. If there is a counter-revolution, things remain as they were before or go backwards. The only change that exists is to go backwards and, once they go backwards, they are stuck there.

As Marxists, we are used to referring to revolutionary activity fundamentally to the political arena. But Marx will develop in-depth in other works the importance of revolutionary activity in another field besides politics —on nature, with production and the development of the productive forces. Lighting a fire for the first time, using different tools, inventing the wheel, changing a way of producing, discovering atomic energy and cybernetics, are revolutionary facts in the order of the productive forces, of the relations between the human being and nature. All of this also modifies man. Now, what we believe is that the political revolutionary practice is the most important thing because it has to do with power and classes, in order —as they also say in *The German Ideology*, the work by Marx and Engels that is simultaneous— to access to the new society, the communist society. It will change not only the state but the entire society and allow the development of productive forces. Revolutionary practice is about the two poles, nature and human society.

Let’s try to bring all this down to earth. Suppose a guy fells a tree and makes a bench. Is this a revolutionary activity? It depends. If they’ve been felling trees for a thousand years and they’ve been making benches or tables, it’s the most routine thing there is, it doesn’t revolutionise anything. Now, the first man to chop down a tree and make a bench or a table did a revolutionary act. Revolutionary, here we take it in a progressive sense, in the sense of giving birth to something new. Thus, the cir-

cumstances are changing in a revolutionary way and also men, who began to sit on a bench and use a table and stopped doing everything on the floor.

Even if it is cumbersome, I insist on going phrase by phrase. This is how we get used to studying, to strictly understand what is said, to get the most out of each sentence or even each word. Not to advance mixing with other concepts that are not said or are said elsewhere, not going ahead with free interpretations, even though they may be a correct contribution. This is why we go phrase by phrase, specifying what Marx said, we advance analytically.

In this way, we can also better understand the thesis as a whole. In it, Marx, without naming it, is using one of the fundamental laws of dialectics. Which one? The law of interaction of opposites, or more particularly, the law of reciprocal action and reaction. What does this mean? Marx criticises the evolutionary, linear conception: this acts on this, the parents make the children, and the children make the grandchildren. We already said they used the cause-effect relationship. And we can add that they reflected the influence of the mechanical physics of the time, the physical laws discovered by Galileo,¹¹ Newton and other great scientists of the time. Instead, the dialectical conception is: the parents make the children, but the children make the parents, and when they have grandchildren a tennis match starts between three. Grandchildren make parents and grandparents, grandparents make children and grandchildren, and children make grandchildren and parents; then it is a hellish game called reciprocal action —everyone acts on each other. It is one of the most important laws of dialectics.

Thesis 4, first sentence

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-estrangement, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one.

Religious self-estrangement means that man creates religion. “Self”, because he is the same man. The word estrangement or alienation means to surrender something that is yours. Self-estrangement means that it is man himself who is transformed into something other than himself. It is turning against oneself, that one’s works turn against oneself. Man makes another world, that of religion.

From the philosophers of the French revolution onwards, the term estrange or alienate began to become very important in French philosophy first and then German philosophy. The one who develops it enormously is Hegel, and then Marxism takes it over. But we see this in the topic on the concept of alienation. There is a lot of discussion within Marxism about estrangement or alienation, what it means, whether or not it is Marxist.

But in this sentence Marx is presenting the position of Feuerbach, who affirms in his works something enormous —religion was invented by man. This is what self-estrangement refers to and from this the rest is self-explanatory: the unfolding of the world in two happens because the earthly man creates this other religious world.

Thesis 4, second sentence

His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis.

Feuerbach has the merit of seeing that the religious world started from the secular but he does not know why religion exists, he takes an abstract man. There is a lot of discussion among commentators. It is said that, synthetically and unilaterally, the difference between Feuerbach’s conception and that of Marx is reflected in the different verbs used by each one. In this sentence, in German, a verb is used, *auflösen*, which can be translated as dissolve, resolve or reduce. In the next sentence,

¹¹ Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). Italian scientist, a precursor of the scientific method, and inventor of the telescope. He defended Copernicus’ theory that Earth revolved around the sun, for which he was persecuted and condemned by the Inquisition of the Catholic Church, which 400 years later made a “self-criticism”.

we will read that Marx uses the verb *erklären*, which means to explain. Why do the commentators give it so much importance? They say that here lies the difference between the two conceptions, the two materialisms. That Marx, to present Feuerbach's position, uses the verb to resolve (*auflösen*) or, better said, to dissolve, which would be the perfect translation.

This is not a subtlety or a capricious interpretation. What does it mean to dissolve? It is interesting to pause because what Feuerbach was doing is similar to what the left-wing Catholic currents are doing now. Feuerbach, like many Catholics, says that God must be brought into the world. If man makes God in his image and likeness, then the only thing necessary is for him to return, to dissolve himself among men. We have already seen in the previous topic that Feuerbach asserted that the essence of man is love but since he is not aware of his essence, he created a God, who is the god of love. Hence, man has to discover that love is not religious but human. And then, what we have to do is stop believing in God but love all men, dissolving the divine essence, which is love, in all men, bringing it to the earthly world.

We all love each other. To make God disappear by this mechanism. To dissolve or reduce the divine essence is for love to be installed among all men, regardless of their class character. We all must love each other and thus we make God disappear through this mechanism. To stop believing in God and begin to believe in love between men, in a humanistic approach, but without changing society, without questioning the real relationships between men.

Thesis 4, third sentence

But that the secular basis lifts off from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the inner strife and intrinsic contradictoriness of this secular basis.

Here Marx will give his explanation about the unfolding that Feuerbach says must be reduced or dissolved. Marx says it is not a question of dissolving the divine essence in the human essence by bringing it down to earth, but of explaining (*erklären*) why religion has been created. This explanation leads us to the fact that there are profound contradictions, and terrible antagonisms in society, from which gods and religious beliefs have emerged.

Thesis 4, fourth sentence

The latter must, therefore, itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionised in practice.

What does this phrase mean? That it is good and necessary to study, understand, and write books that explain the reason for religion, and why men created God. But not to stop there, not to settle for explaining or understanding it but also to attack and liquidate the earthly contradictions that engendered religion. That is to say, the social contradictions, misery, and exploitation. It is to make the socialist or communist revolution.

Thesis 4, fifth sentence

Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice.

He says that the holy family comes from the bourgeois and earthly families. Having discovered this, we must annihilate the bourgeois family, which is part of today's capitalist society and its contradictions.

In the first few sentences, Marx describes what Feuerbach says and then argues against it. He always has the same method. He ends up giving his line and this is that it must be shown that the

religious family is nothing more than the reflection, the false ideology, of the bourgeois class family structure. So, this has to be explained theoretically, it has to be demonstrated. Pamphlets, books, and programs must be published, demonstrating that it is the reflection of the current bourgeois family, existing in a capitalist society, that horrible earthly world of which that horrible institution is a part. It must be demonstrated scientifically, and theoretically, to revolutionise and destroy that earthly bourgeois family.

Thesis 5

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, wants [*sensuous*] contemplation; but he does not conceive sensuousness as *practical*, human-sensuous activity.

It is often suggested that here Marx is returning to Thesis 1, or at most, that he is going to the side of the subject-object relationship. For me, this Thesis 1s totally different from all the others. Marx points out that activity modifies the senses, not concerning the object, to the outside world now, but concerning the subject itself. This Thesis is very important and has been fully confirmed by modern psychology, especially by Jean Piaget (1896-1980). It means that the subject listens and smells differently depending on the class sectors to which he belongs and the activity he develops. With his practical activity, man not only modifies the external world, as Marx indicates in the first thesis but also modifies his sensibility. Feuerbach, just as he believed that activity has nothing to do with external objects, commits the parallel mistake of holding that activity does not modify the senses either, that the senses are always the same.

Specifically, Marx is saying that the ear of a blacksmith is not the same as that of a musician, a librarian or an intellectual. A wine taster does not smell like any other mortal. And let's not even think about the fingers of a blind man learning to read Braille. This would be the correct interpretation. Already in the third of the *Manuscripts...* of 1844 (which many authors place as non-Marxist) Marx had said the same: "The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present."¹²

Then, Marx, who in the first thesis refers to the relationship of man's activity with the outside world, in Thesis 5 places the relationship of man's activity with his own sensitivity; not regarding the object. It must be read carefully because there is a discussion between the Marxist interpreters. Many believe that he repeats Thesis 1. We believe he does not, that there is a very deep logic in Marx's reasoning. He begins with the most objective factor, the relationship of human activity with the outside world, and takes on different aspects each time, until he manages to define his relationship with his senses, going from the objective to the subjective. For Marx, according to the activity that each one develops in the sensory (smells, hears, sees, touches or tastes), he creates and produces his sensitivity. Man, not only transforms the exterior but also modifies his subjectivity or sensitivity.

According to what we say, Marx asserts that when a man changes his activity, his senses also change. As there are different currents, it may be that empiricist Marxists do not accept this thesis, or others give it a different interpretation.

Thesis 6, first sentence

Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of *man*.

Here it is very good to recall what the second sentence of Thesis 4 and the first of Thesis 6 have the same. We have already seen that in German the verb resolve has the same root as the verb reduce. And also, that for Feuerbach, the essence of man was love, and he places love in religion. What Marx does is take down to man the essence of religion, which is love. With this phrase, he resolves or dissolves it and says: "No, instead of belonging to religion, the essence, love must belong to humanity." In this first sentence of Thesis 6, he takes up the problem of essence and in Thesis 4 he

¹² Marx & Engels *Collected Works*, Vol 3, p. 302, Lawrence & Wishart, 2010.

takes up the entire religious world. In both, Marx shows he is a humanistic materialist. But, although they have very deep common points, Theses 4 and 6 do not say the same thing, they are not mere reiterations.

Thesis 6, second sentence

But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual.

Let us clarify that “abstraction” here would not be the same as nothingness, just an idea, something theoretical, but rather something separate, independent of the historical process. It is separating a part, a sector, a moment, that is abstracting, that is what he means by abstraction. “Inherent” means what is proper and permanent, that the individual always has to have that characteristic. Feuerbach was a consistent atheist because he said that God and religion were a construction of man but he also believed that they were relatively positive because they arose from the human essence. The religious for him is typical of man but in the sense of love among all. This yes would be inherent but to have religion it isn't. I don't think he thought that in a thousand or two thousand years there would be religion in the society of the future. And Marx here criticises him, telling him that there is no abstract and inherent essence, neither love nor any other.

Thesis 6, third sentence

In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations.

There is a lot of discussion around this phrase. Let us begin by specifying what Marx says. The first is that there is a human essence, and the second is that this would be the set of social relations, which take place in reality. This is what we read, what is written.

Here Marx, when speaking of essence, uses a Hegelian-Feuerbachian language. But by defining that this essence is the set of social relations, he is saying, in fact, implicitly, that the human essence changes, it is historical. He says there is no human essence of its own, an “abstraction inherent in each single individual”, as he criticised Feuerbach in the previous sentence, but rather that the human essence is linked to the reality of social relations, which are changing and historical. He uses the word essence which is traditional to philosophy, but he explains it by denying it. That word itself will disappear in his later works.

For example, we can say that material objects have an essence. We have a radio and it is a radio. A radio can never become a dog. And vice versa. Precisely, the essence of animals and objects always remains the same, it is not historical. That is why Engels made such a good definition, that it seems like a joke, that the only being whose essence is to have no essence is man. In philosophy, this term is associated with the eternal, inherent, immutable, the same for all individuals, which never changes. Marx gives a definition of essence that leads to that, to having no essence. It looks like a tongue twister but it's pretty deep.

One of the Marxist intellectuals who discusses these texts the most is the Frenchman Louis Althusser (1918-1990). He takes a position about the *Theses on Feuerbach* opposite to that of Engels. Let us remember that Engels described them as the “genius germ” of Marxism. Althusser says that they only “light up every philosopher” and show “through in the erstwhile consciousness and the erstwhile language”.¹³ As he often does, Althusser changes and falsifies the quotes to justify his claims. Because it is false that Marx takes isolated individuals; this is precisely what he criticises Feuerbach for. Marx will say that the human essence is not an abstraction but rather it is the concrete set of social relations that exist in reality between human beings.

Althusser goes on to say:

13 Althusser, Louis, *For Marx*, Allen Lane, Penguin press, 1969, p. 32 and 33.

The sixth thesis on Feuerbach goes so far as to say that the non-abstract ‘man’ is ‘the ensemble of the social relations’. Now, if this expression is taken at face value as an adequate definition, it means nothing.¹⁴

Is Althusser right? Marxists argue like this, step by step.

Let’s see what Marx says. He refers to the human essence, he does not mention the “non-abstract man”. Althusser invents the quote of the “non-abstract man” which does not exist. Falsifying quotes it is very common in him. He does not quote Marx saying that “the essence of man is no abstraction”.

When Marx says: “In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations”, he refers to true life, as man lives, “in its reality”. Marx is saying that if we put aside the complications and lucubration of the philosophers and see what happens in life “in its reality”, the essence of man is the set of social relations. As an example, we could think of the reality and role of women in this society, as a housewife, wife and mother, submissive and oppressed. In another type of society, she would have a change of “essence”.

Thesis 6, fourth sentence

Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is hence obliged:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment [*Gemüt*] by itself, and to presuppose an abstract—isolated—human individual.

Feuerbach did not take history into account; he did not think about the changes in different societies. He was characteristic of those great philosophers, apart from Hegel, making ahistorical structures. It was very common for them to make this type of abstraction, ignoring the historical change. Philosophers have a tendency not to care about the problems of the world, even though the problems of the world reflect in them. And, although they do not consciously intend it, in their abstract structures they reflect worldly problems.

Marx criticises Feuerbach that since he does not notice the historical change or realise that the essence comes from social relations, he is forced to sustain, to capture religious feeling “in itself”, as an inherent and essential fact to each individual, like having two eyes and two ears. It is typical of an abstract individual, isolated, independent of history and social relations. It occurs by itself.

2. Essence, therefore, can be regarded only as ‘species’, as an inner, mute, general character which unites the many individuals in a natural way.

Let’s see what “species” simply means, because it is complicated. Does Marx consider this about “species” as good or bad? He criticises it as bad.

Man cannot be defined as a species, a genus, by permanent attributes; this is what Marx says. Feuerbach defines man as he defines the dog, the cow, the amoeba, the crustacean, and the tree. How does he define it? The cow is a ruminant, which has such characteristics. This is how species and genera are defined. If the cow changes, it ceases to be a cow. For example, you can say: the cow produces milk, it is a ruminant, it is a mammal, all characteristics of the cow. It is defined by permanent and immanent qualities. This is the characteristic of a genus. But man cannot be defined in this way. But Feuerbach does, he defines it this way, as a genus, because he says: what characterises man, at all times, is love. Just like the cow, at all times, what characterises her is producing milk. This is the criticism that Marx makes of Feuerbach, who defines man by general and ahistorical characteristics.

For Marx, the characteristic of man is to change the historical process, and himself, because he changes with social relations. This is precisely the discrepancy he has with Feuerbach. His mistake

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 242-243.

is to define man as other living species are defined in the natural sciences: as an internal, mute generality. What does mute mean? It means there is no conversation, exchange, or language. One thing always happens the same way. It is not the product of human relations, inseparable from language.

The first and second phases are critical pointing out how Feuerbach is forced to have a false position. Feuerbach “does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence”, committing these two mistakes. This is what Marx means. And we reaffirm ourselves in this interpretation because we do not leave aside that these very brief theses were simultaneous to the elaboration by Marx and Engels of the then-unpublished work, *The German Ideology*. At this point in Thesis 6, there is a clear break with one of the very misleading and confusing concepts of the previous work of “Estranged labour”, from the first manuscript of 1844.

Thesis 7

Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the ‘religious sentiment’ is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual which he analyses belongs to a particular form of society.

Marx continues the critique begun in Thesis 6. The first thing is that Feuerbach does not see that “religious sentiment” or false religious ideology as the creation or the result of certain social relations. The sentiments, contradictions, sufferings, and needs to which man is subjected are engendered and arise from society itself. Marx is punctually using what is his definition of the relationship between the structure and the superstructure, on the religious level.

Second, it is not about an “abstract individual” that would have an essential unmodifiable and generic character of man. He is the product of historical social relations, of “a particular form of society”. The abstract individuals that Feuerbach imagines do not exist. That individual belongs to a particular social form which is the capitalist society.

Thesis 8

All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

In Thesis 6, Marx defined the “essence” of man. And now he defines social life, and social relationships, which are not theories or speculations. Marx earlier said: man is a social relationship, referring to the bonds that men establish among themselves to produce and distribute what they produce. Social life is practical, it is what men do. For society, what is fundamental is not religious or theoretical speculation but practice, doing, in the sense of Thesis 1, of critical-practical activity.

And the mysteries of religion or the questions raised by the contradictions of human society will have an explanation and a rational solution by understanding what humanity does and they can be solved with revolutionary practice. Beyond his great merits and his materialism, Feuerbach does not escape falling into mysticism, as is all that love between men that we have already seen.

Thesis 9

The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is, materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is the contemplation of single individuals and of civil society.

Just as we clarified before that the “active side” is an expression of Fichte, we must clarify that Marx takes this “civil society” from an expression of Hegel. Hegel speaks of civil society, as opposed to public or political society. In his time, in general, the great characters who made history, the rulers, the ruling institutions, and the great public and political events were taken into account, but little or nothing of what we could call daily life, the production, the economy, the needs, the enjoyments,

the common and current activity of every day. Hegel deserves the credit —although without taking into account social classes— of having vindicated this world of daily needs, of work, to which he gave the name of civil society. This is where Marx takes it from, who, as he himself later said, flirted with the Hegelian vocabulary, although he had already moved away from its conceptions. Using the Hegelian expression, Marx rather refers to the society of that time, to bourgeois society as a whole. He criticises the old materialism that conceives of the individual as isolated and contemplative of social circumstances, that is, of the bourgeois society in which he lives, with a set of eternal social and economic laws (for example, that there are workers, property, capitalists, market, the capitalist mode of production, money, etc.), regardless of the will or action of individuals.

Just as in Thesis 1, we saw that for Feuerbach man does not modify nature, here Marx adds that he does not see man as capable of transforming existing society either. Feuerbach does not see social classes. Instead, some bourgeois thinkers do, who have the concept of classes but do not see the depth of the irreconcilable antagonisms or the revolutionary solution.

Thesis 10

The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or social humanity.

Beyond the use of Hegelian vocabulary, here Marx is giving his standpoint on the society in which they live, as opposed to previous materialism. His standpoint view is located in today's bourgeois society, capitalism as a whole. Marx sees that in the real world, there are bourgeois and proletarians, starving people; a disaster. The standpoint of the old materialism is what exists, the current, but as eternal, without history or change. And this is a bourgeois, capitalist society, as it is, with all its needs and miseries. Using Hegel's term "civil society", Marx refers to that reality. Modern materialism, instead, is based on something else, human society or social humanity, in other words, socialism. This is the objective that emerges from the standpoint of modern materialism, which Marx and Engels will call scientific socialism. The two standpoints would be the "civil society" of those loose individuals, abstract and without relationships between them and without history, limited to bourgeois society, as Feuerbach has been criticising, on the one hand; and, on the other, human society, as the thesis of the revolutionaries, who fight for a socialist society.

Thesis 11

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.

This is perhaps the best-known, most famous thesis, and one of the most discussed.

Marx had already been criticising the contemplative character regarding the world that philosophers had had until then. The only thing they do is see it, interpret it, give their opinion about it, and make theories, but they do not act or propose that it be modified. He has already said that the important thing is to act, it is the practical-critical and revolutionary activity. And then, he closes the text with the last conclusion about the goal of that activity: the transformation of the world. Some intellectuals interpret it as a call by Marx for philosophers and philosophy to transform the world. For us, this is not the case. In *The German Ideology* this approach is clearly ruled out since, in it, Marx and Engels extensively develop their new conception, in which the proletariat is called to transform the world with its struggle and with the triumph of the communist revolution.

Around this thesis arise some very interesting and great discussions in Marxism and also with neo-Marxist, neo-Kantian currents. German social democracy, for example, was neo-Kantian with Eduard Bernstein,¹⁵ among others. At the beginning of the 20th century and before the 1930s, they

¹⁵ Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932). German social democratic professor and leader, the main theoretician of the reformist revisionism of Marxism. He argued that capitalism had changed and that socialism would be achieved through peaceful evolution and the growth of the presence of social democratic deputies in parliaments.

took the orthodox Marxists to task with the following proposition: socialism is not a scientific necessity, nor does it derive from the scientific theories of Marx, but rather it is a proposition of ethical kind. They said that they were socialists, that they were Marxists in terms of the analysis of society, but they were Kantians in terms of the need to fight for socialism. What does this mean? They argued that science gives objective laws, of an inexorable nature. So, if socialism were an inexorable, objective scientific law, we should not fight for it, it will impose itself. They concluded by saying that precisely because it is not a scientific but a moral law, we, based on a moral analysis, say: socialism is the best thing that can happen to humanity. So, there is a moral obligation: we are going to fight for it to succeed.

They took Kant's famous category, the categorical, moral imperative. Every good person, every worker, intellectual, or bourgeois, who wants good, has to be a socialist because socialism is a morally superior society. According to them, there was no scientific law on which to base the struggle for a future socialist society. Because science studies existing facts, and objective laws, which are independent of the will of man. Marxism is, indeed, scientific in the study of society; that there are social classes, that there is surplus value; it is the study of something existing. The study of socialism will be scientific when there is a socialist society.

The neo-Kantians said that one could be a very good Marxist to study history, even if one did not fight for socialism. Those kinds of people happen in reality. Some great historians vindicate Marxism, who use the Marxist method, and —at the same time— are against the proletariat taking power, against socialism. Henri Pirenne,¹⁶ for example, is a genius for the study of history, he studies the classes but is politically conservative. We say of him that he is a reactionary who uses the Marxist method but the Kantians would say he is a Marxist because Marxism is only a science of what exists and of the past because there is no science of what does not exist. Of the revolutionary practice, they think, then, that it is a categorical imperative, that whoever wants does it and whoever doesn't, doesn't. In other words, you should fight for socialism for moral reasons, not scientific ones, that's why they were called neo-Kantians.

To this, the Marxists responded from two different angles. On the one hand, it was said that socialism was rooted in biological development itself, it was a culmination of evolution, a biological necessity. Kautsky was one of those who raised it. Also, Kropotkin,¹⁷ the famous anarchist theoretician. On the other hand, in contrast to Kautsky, Plekhanov¹⁸ responded to the neo-Kantians by saying that it was a political necessity that acquired a scientific character.

Kautsky said that all biological development tended towards a collective organisation, and then this was a tendency of the natural, biological world, which man and the working class carried to its maximum expression. In animal development, societies, more complex and more communal organisations, were being achieved. Kropotkin, for his part, wrote a famous book called *The Conquest of Bread*. Taking all the animal species, he argued that in the biological process it had happened that when an animal colony was more socialist and more organised, it had better conditions to survive. With his research on geography and zoology, he showed that mutual aid, and social solidarity, were the only guarantee that species would survive longer and win the battle against individualistic species. Kautsky, who made a similar argument with fewer data, was a socialist and Kropotkin an anarchist.

Plekhanov fought the neo-Kantians with another argument; not of natural science but with the political argument: if we accepted, as the neo-Kantian Marxists said, that classes existed, we had to accept that class politics existed and if we accepted this, we had to make them scientific, then Marx-

16 Henri Pirenne (1862-1935). Belgian academic characterised by the rigour of his research and data, and the emphasis on monitoring social and economic phenomena as a whole. His great multivolume work was *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*.

17 Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). He belonged to a very wealthy Russian noble family. A scientific researcher and political activist, he lived for over 40 years in exile in Switzerland. Founder and theoretician of anarcho-communism, he participated in the First International.

18 Georgi Plekhanov (1856-1918). Russian revolutionary, founder of Marxism under Czarism. When the Social Democracy in Russia split in 1902-03, he accompanied Lenin for a time and then joined Menshevik reformism.

ism was the science of politics and, as all politics, it has not guaranteed success, then, it was scientific politics but it did not have the character of exact or natural science, it was not guaranteed of success. He answered from a political angle.

All this long explanation is to pose a short question. Is there unity, a common criterion of the eleven theses? Or, on the contrary, the first ten are scientific and the last one is not? Is this a moral imperative? A neo-Kantian would think that Thesis 11 has nothing to do with the rest, it is not scientific; the others are.

We would say that if the ten theses are a scientific explanation of the human activity, it is logical and natural that it ends by saying what that activity, that human practice should do faced with the panorama of the real world. The contradiction raised by the neo-Kantians is real but it is the contradiction of human activity. Every practice, even scientific practice, has a contradiction: it must have objectives but the achievement of these objectives is not guaranteed. Thus, what neo-Kantians consider a contradiction of Marxism is, in reality, a contradiction that occurs in all human actions on reality.

For example, a doctor who acts scientifically analyses a sick person and says: I will cure him in such a way. Is he certain to cure the patient? No. Is his praxis scientific? Yes. It has the project, the objective of curing it, when that has not yet happened, it is the future. And it may or may not happen. All praxis, however scientific it may be, if it is praxis, has a contradiction between the proposal and its realisation. Because by being a praxis, it goes from the subjective to the objective and it is never certain that the objective will always respond to the initial subjective. That is the contradiction of praxis, of practical-critical activity.

We Marxists believe that everything is contradictory and that there are specific contradictions in each item, and each action. Just as society has its special contradictions, praxis has a contradiction of its own: the passage from the proposition of the praxis to its realisation in which an objectification exactly equal to what has been scientifically planned is never guaranteed. Thus, the approach of the neo-Kantians is ultimately empirical. By pretending to deny the scientific character of Marxism for having the same contradiction as all scientific praxis, it denies the contradiction in all human activity, even in political action.

One could also argue against the neo-Kantians, that science has always formulated hypotheses about the future. But we would be making an intellectual manoeuvre, taking advantage of the colossal advances of science in the 20th century. We would interpret the text with a post-Marx conception of logic because hypothetical-deductive logic was only discovered in this century. We cannot use that approach to explain a text from the 1840s. It would be trying to attribute to Marx something that, going very deep, may have been in his head since he was a genius, but a tremendous investigation would have to be done. Marx did not consider hypothetical-deductive logic, which was discovered much later. The current century discovered it. We now, to respond with more strength to the neo-Kantians and the empiricists in general, can use that one has the right to make the most probable hypothesis, and so on. But not to substantiate the arguments that Marx would have had to write Thesis 11.¹⁹

There is a difference between practice and praxis. There is much discussion about it. Praxis is more general than practice, it is all human activity, with mental activity linked to practice. Instead, the word practice, rather than praxis, is only what takes place in reality. The doctor's thing is a praxis. One of the biggest flaws in Marxism is —when we don't have the same understanding— wanting to discuss without clarifying the terms well and getting entangled in the language. It is always necessary to clearly state what we are talking about when using one word or another.

¹⁹ In his 1973 book *Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences*, already quoted, Nahuel Moreno argued with Italian Marxist empiricists such as Galvano Della Volpe and their definition of Marxism as a "moral Galileanism". He also broadly traced the features of hypothetical-deductive logic developed in the 20th century.

III. Synthesis of the theses

Now that we have gone through that “genius germ” of Marx’s thought sentence by sentence, we can make a synthesis. How to define them as a whole and in a few words locate their axes, their essence?

First, practical-critical activity, revolutionary activity, would have two aspects: on the one hand, action, action that produces things and changes. And on the other, it is rational, that is, thought out. It does not vindicate the practice for its own sake but the practice that is revolutionary and rational action at the same time. The eleven theses are a call to force, to power, to the this-worldliness of thought activity, and a call to practical criticism to change things, as it says in Thesis 3.

But second and fundamental, it is a call to struggle. These are theses that revolve around the great vindication of human praxis in its entirety. It is its development in the different spheres. In a nutshell: they are theses of human revolutionary praxis to transform the world.

Finally, to finish this study, we will synthesise, reviewing phrase by phrase and thesis by thesis, which one or which ones have been responding to those great themes of philosophy that we mentioned at the beginning.

Critique of materialism

They criticise Feuerbach and “precedent” or ancient materialism because they do not consider that a part of reality external to man has been made or manufactured by man himself. They believe that everything that exists (nature and society) has always been there and that the only thing man does is grasp it, look at it or contemplate it statically. It has to do centrally with the doctrine of being but also with that of knowledge. In the initial theses, the themes of being and knowing are mixed.

Critique of idealism

In Thesis 1, Marx also criticises idealism in terms of not recognising human activity as practice, of the senses, and the producer of things. And he gives Feuerbach the merit of recognising the activity of thought, although only as a creator of concepts, especially speculative ones.

In Thesis 1, he is criticising both the materialists and the idealists, the two great philosophical currents of his time, for not seeing practical human activity as the creator and recreator of the objective world.

On knowledge and the criterion of truth

Thesis 2 contains Marx’s conception of knowledge. He points out that it is impossible to reach objective truth if it is isolated from its practical proof. This is the basis of the Marxist theory of knowledge. He is giving his criterion of truth, which is practice. At the same time, in that thesis he makes vindication of the power of thought, the ability to make theories, invent, and build with the head.

Conception of history

In Thesis 3. it should be noted, first, that Marx insists on the existence of history, that human society has a long development, and that it has not been and will not always be the same. There is a critique of the evolutionary and linear conception of the history of the French rationalists and materialists, and an outline of the materialist conception of history, which he simultaneously develops extensively in *The German Ideology*, together with Engels. He will say that through their practical-critical activity, their revolutionary activity, men change themselves.

About society

In Thesis 4, he studies the relation of society to the superstructure. Here Marx gives an explanation, albeit a partial one, of the relationship between the ideological superstructure, of which religion is one of its most important components and society. The origin of the religious superstructure is the product of contradictions and antagonisms within society.

In theses 7, 8, 9 and 10, there is an extension of the explanation of thesis 3. In Thesis 8, it is said that the character of social life is essentially practical. Marx argues that the old materialists do not see the revolutionary way out and only see men individually.

In Thesis 10, it is seen what ideological views the old materialists and Marxism have on society.

Conception of man

The definition of man is given in the last part of thesis 3, in 5 and 6. What are the characteristics that he gives?

1. Man produces, makes things and has an objectifying activity.
2. Man changes by his practice over reality. He changes nature and society, changing himself.
3. He is social. He lives in society and has a certain location regarding the ownership of the means of production, according to Thesis 6.
4. Man is historical.
5. He changes his sensitivity through practice (thesis 5). It is a small but very important thesis, which was confirmed by psychology.

About ethics or duty to be

As we said, Thesis 11 is the most famous. Marx closes his brief text with a call to change the world. Not only to critically understand it but act to transform it.

To finish, let us repeat what we said at the beginning: it is a very short, synthetic and difficult text. But we make an effort to study it because we want to see exhaustively that it already was a Marx with a full beard who was launching his revolutionary conception to push the proletariat towards socialism.

In this part, Marx gives as much importance to the activity as to enjoyment, pleasure, and happiness.

The Stalinists try to eliminate this thing about enjoyment for a very profound reason: the bureaucracy tries to convince the working class that their great task, their main role, is to work. That there is nothing more revolutionary, nothing that helps socialism more, than killing oneself working. And social enjoyment is linked to freedom and democracy, which the bureaucracy denies them. Later we will see that there is a conception borrowed from capitalism by many reformist socialists —and Christians— who say that work is the greatest enjoyment, that the more they work, the happier they are. Marx has said just the opposite. [...]

But if de-alienation is living a full life, in what one chooses and likes what he does, it seems to me that this is only provided by dedicating oneself to the construction of the revolutionary party. [...] It is the only activity that is absolutely voluntary and totally free, without any type of interest or economic progress or social advancement (quite the contrary). If someone is not happy being active, they don't do it and that's it, it's impossible to force them. No one can be forced to be a militant.

Nahuel Moreno

Marx and his concept of alienation

I. What the topic is about

We are about to enter one of the most discussed topics for a few years among Marxists. Marx makes the most extensive formulation of his conception of alienation in his *Economic-and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, especially in the part entitled “Estranged Labour”, which is from the first manuscript. Almost all Marxists acknowledge that this work is not yet fully “Marxist”, since it mixes pre-Marxist and erroneous concepts. This work was first published in German in 1932, almost a century after it was written. The debates on alienation developed, fundamentally, after the Second World War.

Althusser and others think that these works are not Marxist. In his very famous book *For Marx*, Althusser says that both the *Manuscripts...* and *The Holy Family* would be “Marx’s Early Works”, prior to a break that Marx and Engels would have made in 1845, with a mistaken “ideological” conception. We and other authors do claim them as Marxists. Although, in any case, we also say they are riddled with errors or concepts that are still incipient and confusing, not yet well elaborated. All this makes studying difficult. Therefore, we must clarify our position on two or three fundamental issues, to begin studying the work.

We also have to clarify that we will not read and discuss the part, towards the end, about the relationship between alienation and private property. This is a very scholarly discussion among Marxists. There Marx generated tremendous confusion because he still had not mastered many aspects of political economy. We can omit it because what interests us is his conception of alienation. And in other of those same manuscripts, he is much clearer about what he says about capitalist private property, its abolition and other concepts.

Marx wrote about happiness and unhappiness

Whether or not they are Marxist, we need to specify, in the first place, what subject the great philosophers and the young Marx were referring to. Only then will we be able, for example, to comment on the question of whether the mature Marx continued to have a theory of alienation, with complex terms such as “estrangement”, “alienation”, etc. In the German language, five different words are involved. There are studies, especially of the Italian Marxists, that go back to the German of the Middle Ages to see its roots. We have to leave these kinds of questions aside for now, so as not to get lost in scholarly abstractions and details.

Let’s start by unravelling our answer to the question of what was the subject that occupied Marx in this 1844 work, and what can make it easier to understand. Man has always raised in the reality of his life, his practice, and his activity, a very clear and important question, which is that of happiness and unhappiness. He has always been worried about this problem. That is, if he was in poor conditions, how could he be happier, live happily or in such a way that he was satisfied? Where, how to achieve happiness, by what means, and in what place. This is a constant of the human race. I

even think that even animals do it. If a dog in a home is treated with kicks, and across the street, they feed him very good meat and pamper him, it seems to me he will tend to settle in the home where he is treated well.

This constant of avoiding suffering, and gratifying oneself concerning one's senses, which also happens in animals, began to be reflected upon by man. There began to be intellectual answers to this question of happiness and unhappiness. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC–322 BC) talked about it. On the other hand, religions gave a categorical and interesting response, starting this alienation or estrangement.

II. The birth of the concept and different interpretations

The great religions and happiness after death

Man, especially in Christianity through “original sin”, moved away from God, and, if he behaved very well while he lived, after death, he came back to God and to eternal happiness. The earthly, profane world would be a valley of tears where we are materially born and live to suffer and we have to prepare ourselves for happiness after death. The Christian religion took this to the extreme with its paradise and with the angels. The Muslims were much more practical, perhaps because it was a religion linked to nomads and merchants, a rare combination. I don't know what the reason is but in the afterlife those who behave well are rewarded, according to the Islamic and male-chauvinist concept of life. Every brave man who died for Allah goes to Muslim heaven where he has a virgin, renewed daily and for all eternity. In this sense, the Catholics were very ascetic. For that kind of happiness, they make you want to go to hell because spending the day in nothing, between clouds and surrounded by angels that fly around us, etc., is not very gratifying. But what is concrete is that the three great religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, pose happiness after death, in eternal life, and misfortunes and suffering, unhappiness, in the earthly life.

So, the concept arises from the great religions, from “original sin” or its variants, which is the alienation of the god that becomes something other than him and then returns to him. This is part of the mystical and religious conceptions.

But man continued reasoning around happiness. He was not very convinced that you had to suffer a lot in earthly life to achieve happiness in another life. Feuerbach, for example, defined Christianity as a religion for death.

For us, this conception of alienation reflected a very useful belief in convincing slaves, those who suffered in a horrible society—as happened in the ancient world and then in the Middle Ages, in feudalism—to convince them to put up with the suffering: the more they suffer, the happier they will be afterwards, a false ideology, at the service of the exploiters.

As capitalism developed and the time of the great bourgeois revolutions approached, a reformulation began, a different use of the word, now more political, more rational and scientific. Around the theme of the happiness or unhappiness of men, paradise, the heavens and religions were gradually left aside, and they went straight to political society.

Alienation in the Earthly World: Rousseau

First, the English philosophers, who in fact comment with their philosophical terminology on the English bourgeois revolution (which took place during the 17th century) bring the word alienation down to earth. They hold that alienation is trading, buying and selling, exchanging something for something, a fair deal. It was no longer as Christianity proposed, that God was transformed into his opposite —of man— so that after his death he would return to God. For them, alienation was a simple barter, a fair exchange.

This earthly conception of alienation is taken up later by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the rationalists, and the great French philosophers. Rousseau said that every man has —it is inherent in him, it is the essence of him— his freedom, his life as a separate and totally free individual. And then, why do men live suffering so much, as slaves, as serfs and politically dominated by kings and absolute monarchs? Because men alienate or estrange this individual freedom that is inherent to them by birth, which they had all their lives until the kings arrived and men gave the kings their freedom. Men lived individually and freely. When they decided to live in society, in order to organise themselves, they had to give up that.

According to Rousseau, because of the historical process, man alienates his freedom, which is the fundamental condition of his character as a man. And this alienation is against his nature, it is a monstrosity; the king takes possession of the essential physical and natural properties of man, which are freedom and material property. The alienation of the subject's freedom from the king is an enormous injustice that must be repaired. It is not a fair deal: man gives everything and the king gives nothing. Thus, Rousseau goes beyond the conception of the English philosophers who believed that alienating was a fair deal, exchanging something for something. Now, alienation or estrangement is a historical infamy that must be repaired. Man has to reappropriate what he gave the king, he has to de-alienate himself, taking away from the king that freedom that he granted him and that material property that the king appropriated.

He said in his famous book *The Social Contract*:

Grotius says: 'If an individual can alienate his liberty and make himself the slave of a master, why couldn't a whole people alienate its liberty and make itself subject to a king?'

This contains several ambiguous words that need to be explained, but let us confine ourselves to 'alienate'. To alienate something is to give or sell it. Now, a man who becomes the slave of another does not give himself — he sells himself at the rock-bottom price of his subsistence. But when a people sells itself what price is paid? Not their subsistence: Far from providing his subjects with their subsistence, a king gets his own subsistence only from them... Do subjects then give their persons on condition that the king takes their goods also? I fail to see what they have left to preserve. [...]

Even if each man could alienate himself, he couldn't alienate his children: they are born men, and born free; their liberty belongs to them, and no one else has the right to dispose of it. While they are too young to decide for themselves, their father can, in their name, lay down conditions for their preservation and well-being; but he can't make an irrevocable and unconditional gift of them; such a gift is contrary to the ends of nature, and exceeds the rights of paternity. So an arbitrary government couldn't be legitimate unless in every generation the populace was the master who was in a position to accept or reject it; but then the government would no longer be arbitrary!

To renounce your liberty is to renounce your status as a man, your rights as a human being, and even your duties as a human being. There can't be any way of compensating someone who gives up everything. Such a renunciation is incompatible with man's nature; to remove all freedom from his will is to remove all morality from his actions. [...]

There's only one law that from its very nature needs unanimous consent, namely the social compact; for civil association is the most voluntary of all acts. Every man is born free and his own master, so no one on any pretext — any pretext — can make any man a subject without his consent. To rule that the son of a slave is born a slave is to rule that he isn't born a man.¹

Rousseau's ideas fuelled what would become the great anti-feudal revolution in France at the end of the 18th century, preparing the struggle for democracy and equality. May everyone return to be the owner of their freedom and take care of it among all. It is about reappropriating lost freedom. He vindicates this right that will later be petty-bourgeois and bourgeois individualism, of liberal de-

¹ Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Social Contract*, Pdfcorner.com, p. 3 and 4.

mocracy or the plebeian democracy of the people. No right allows an individual to be the owner of the freedom of others. Everyone must own his freedom. This conception of Rousseau's alienation is very revolutionary. It has to do with the famous slogan of equality, liberty, fraternity!

Alienation in Hegel

Among the German philosophers and in the young Hegel, who was 18 years old in 1789, this same conception occurs, although with a more philosophical and conservative formulation. But as Hegel becomes more and more conservative (and remember he was an idealist) a third conception of alienation emerges. Hegel, to a certain extent, takes up the religious conception (which is also idealistic) but gives it a structure, a rationalist philosophical foundation. Instead of God, he takes the absolute idea. Thus, he argues that the absolute idea—if you want, you can call it God—is objectified in the material world and this objectification is an alienation because it is turning into another. Thus, he goes on using the two famous words, alienation and estrangement.

The idea is objectified, goes to the world and makes objects, social relations, and creates nature. That is, the idea, which is something abstract, an intellectual category, of thought, which has no material existence, is like God, it transforms into its opposite, in the world of objects, of things; it is the physical laws, it is nature, humanity, and thus it alienates itself. It is the idea that is alienated.

As it develops in the world, this idea establishes a relationship, a dialectic between it and the world. The idea with its alienation—its other—which are the objects; a relationship between subject and object (subject here is the personification of the idea). And thus, thanks to this dynamic of the world, of man with the idea, one arrives at the spirit and absolute spirit, at religion, at philosophy, which is where all development ends, one returns to God, but to a God rich, full of things. It started with a poor god, undeveloped, with nothing. The process of alienation is necessary, it is enrichment, and it is positive.

In Hegel, the idea becomes nature, the objective world. It is the same religious criterion that we have already seen: God exists eternally and one day, for whatever reason, it occurred to him to create the world and then create man. God created man with imperfections, although at the same time, he is his creature; then, according to religion, a dialectic between man and God was established; the man built a church and prayed to him but at the same time he strikes someone else, then someone would tell him “But no, God wants you to be good”; the world became full of things. Nothing happened before, God was there alone with the angels, bored to death. Then he created the animals, the sun, men, and the whole world, and there began to be some fabulous messes, bigger and bigger, and things got animated. God's alienation gave rise to a series of phenomena that never happened before, hilarious, contradictory, and tragic. Tragedy, fun, and comedy emerge. And all this for what? So that one day everything will be fixed, and we will return to the kingdom of God but with everything that man did on earth. That's what religion says, and Hegel says the same thing but in a much more sophisticated and philosophical way: the idea exists and then the idea creates nature, creates man, and everything that exists in the world. Instead of saying God, he says the idea. That is why Feuerbach was very correct when he said of Hegel that he was a rational theologian and that instead of saying something simple that could seem crude: “I believe in God”, he complicated it with this matter of the idea and they were all moving concepts. That's how it is, do not try to find the rational thread in this conception of Hegel.

Do not believe that Hegel was a fool. He thought that and period; because he believed in God, and thus he gave a whole super complex structure to justify it. Whoever says “but how could it be that someone as intelligent as Hegel believed that”, has to think about his study or workmates, or his parents, uncles or grandparents who are believers, Catholics for example. It is not a matter of asking “why did Hegel reason in this way?” In this world, countless people reason much worse than him. He made a mental structure to justify his belief. He said that this concept or category developed by creating reality, objectifying itself in reality, and alienating itself. Thus, according to him, everything

was enriched. This idealistic approach did not prevent Hegel from making very important contributions, for example in the field of logic.²

Marx sought to disentangle this from Hegel and said that this theory of positive alienation was Hegel's philosophical expression of the positive aspect of man's work but that he ignored the negative side of intellectual and physical work. He points out that Hegel discovers that man thinks: "Well, I am going to make a table", and first he has it in his head as a concept, and then he makes it. It creates an object other than itself, which is the expression of that idea, the objectification of it, the realisation of the idea. Then man is enriched by making the table, although it becomes something different from him, something that has its own independent life.

This aspect of work that Hegel takes is considered correct by Marx. Hegel himself admits that this was a bit complicated because he uses two words that will become famous, and will give commentators and Hegel scholars a lot to talk about: *entausserung* and *entfremdung*. What does he mean by these two words that Marx will later take on? The first means "to become another", or "to become something else"; the second is "become strange, foreigner". It is very important to notice the distinction between the two. "Becoming another" does not mean that man is harmed, but "becoming strange, foreign" contrary to oneself, is harmful, something negative, and will be the key to the Marxist conception of alienation. *Entfremdung* will be Marx's favourite word.

In general, "Estranged Labour" is mistranslated because in German it is *die entfremdete arbeit*. Marx points out that not only is it an object other than man, but those objects that man makes become foreign, enemies. It should be translated as "alienated".

Hegel believes that the alienation of the idea gives rise to the material world and that this enriches it, just as work enriches man. That is, for Hegel both are positive; through alienation, man progresses towards his happiness.

This conception leads him to the monstrosity of the very famous "master and slave dialectic", which is in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel asserts that in this relationship, the one who is worse off of the two is the master because he does not have the fortune to work and change the objects. Instead, the slave is fortunate enough to be in contact with nature and is "realised" because with his work the raw material changes.

For Hegel, the idea alienates itself, it transforms into its opposite, into objects, into nature, and through this process of alienation of the idea, of transforming itself into something else, it becomes enriched, which is *entausserung*, that is, as long as that does not turn against it, it is positive. He exceptionally uses the word *entfremdung*, as negative, but as action and reaction, within something positive.

The other conception of alienation is that of Feuerbach, who was a materialist and which we have already seen more or less in the previous course: man has an essence (love) that he does not see and then attributes it to an imaginary being, to a god that is created by himself.

Feuerbach says in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841):

Religion is man's earliest and also indirect form of self-knowledge. [...] Man first of all sees his nature as if out of himself, before he finds it in himself. His own nature is in the first instance contemplated by him as that of another being. [...] Man has given objectivity to himself, but has not recognised the object as his own nature: a later religion takes this forward step; every advance in religion is therefore a deeper self-knowledge."³

Regarding Feuerbach, taking into account the above, we can ask ourselves whether he is closer to Rousseau or Hegel. As it is known that Feuerbach is Marx's predecessor, it is often said that he would be closer to Rousseau but this is not the case. For both Hegel and Feuerbach alienation is positive. For Rousseau it is negative, and we will see that for Marx as well.

² See the already quoted *Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences*, in www.nahuelmoreno.org.

³ Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, translated by Marian Evans, John Chapman Editor, London, 1854, p. 13.

III. What does Marx say in the work “Estranged Labour”?

We will have to read it sentence by sentence, to be faithful to what the author says, and thus understand and comment on it.

In order not to lose the context of the “Marxist” positions still incomplete— that the young Marx already had in 1844, let us take into account how this work begins, locating the subject in relation to the other manuscripts since we will see that things will get more complicated, with very confusing parts:

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property, the separation of labour, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land — likewise division of labour, competition, the concept of exchange-value, etc. On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; and that finally the distinction between capitalist and land rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory worker, disappears and that the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes —the *property owners* and the *propertyless workers*.

We proceed from an *actual* economic fact.

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things.⁴

These two paragraphs configure the most general framework of this text, which closes the first manuscript. Marx refers to the worker, and sometimes to man, giving his conception of the alienation of work in capitalism. In the third manuscript, Marx advances on the theme of communism, as a positive abolition of private property by the proletariat.

Let’s start, so as not to get lost, by seeing in the text, with the precise quotations, how is the mechanism of the process of labour estrangement, as described by Marx. There will be four steps, regarding the product, its activity, nature and its “generic being”, and regarding the other man:

First step: the produced object turns against the worker

We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour, in two of its aspects. (1) The relation of the worker to the product of labour as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature, as an alien world inimically opposed to him.

Second step: the relationship between the worker and his activity at work, which turns against him

The text continues:

(2) The relation of labour to the act of production within the labour process. This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker’s own physical and

⁴ This is the last of the texts that make up the first of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which remained unpublished and practically unknown until 1932 when it was first published in German. We quote exclusively from the Volume 3 of *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 2010. We reproduce it in full on page 121 of this edition.

mental energy, his personal life — for what is life but activity? — as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him. Here we have *self-estrangement*, as previously we had the estrangement of the *thing*.

Third step: man alienates himself from nature and his “generic being”

Estranged labour turns thus:

(3) *Man's species-being*, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being *alien* to him, into a means for his *individual existence*. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect.

Fourth step: man alienates himself from the other men

(4) An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being is the estrangement of man from man. When man confronts himself, he confronts the other man.

We can locate that, regarding nature, in the first step, Marx refers to the material objects that make it up, and in the third step, he takes nature in the sense that man is part of it. We also see that in the first and second steps, Marx speaks of the worker, and then, in the third and fourth, he speaks of the man. This is linked to what is confusing or directly wrong in the text. In a later part, he even writes “the man (the worker)”, as if trying to avoid their confusion. At the end of the text, he categorically returns to the worker and the non-worker. In the second step, he says “self-estrangement,” which can be interpreted as man alienating himself, as Feuerbach said. This is very important and we will see it again when debating with Erich Fromm.

The mess of the “species-being” in the third step

The “species-being” thing is very confusing. Marx will fall into Feuerbach’s definition of the essence, he is almost pure Feuerbachian, and from here those who assert that this text is useless, that it is not “Marxist”, take hold.

Developing the third step, Marx says:

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its *life activity*. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity.

So far, we are doing well. But he continues next:

It is just because of this that he is a species-being.

In this statement, Marx mixes two things, one right and one wrong. The correct one is in the first part, saying that man is a being that thinks. This distinguishes him from animals. We saw, studying and commenting on the *Theses on Feuerbach* —written a year later in 1845— that Marx gives great importance to the subject that man is a thinking being, has mental activity, and the power of thought. We will come back to this later. So far, we are doing well. But the last sentence is wrong. Thinking does distinguish him from animals, but it does not make him a “species-being”.

When he first talks about the third step, he says:

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but — and this is only another way of

expressing it – also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being.

And further on he insists on “the consciousness which man has of his species”, that he has a conscience towards other men, they are all of the same species, and that would be the species-being. Here the influence of Feuerbach is very clear. Why? Let’s see it sentence by sentence:

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object.

What does this mean? Here Marx affirms that man recognises himself as a species and that he has a consciousness of belonging to other men. When a dog sees another dog, it is not aware that they are of the same species, while man is. He sees another man and recognises a being of the same species as him.

Let’s not criticise him yet, we are explaining, specifying well what he says, without even going into whether he is right or wrong. I already said that in this work there are parts that are pure poison, that you have to throw them away. But first, we have to analyse and understand what Marx is saying so that later we can criticise him.

The first part of the first sentence —“he adopts the species [...] as his object”— means that in nature he distinguishes between bees and horses, for example, and can use them in such a way: bees make honey, horses are used for riding; I distinguish the different species and the function they can fulfil. And man would be the species that has “species-being”.

In the second part of the sentence, Marx says the same thing as this, but it is the subjective side of the phenomenon; objectively he knows that he is his species, but subjectively this has consequences: “he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being.” He knows that he is part of a different species than other animals. He recognises himself in other men. He is saying: “We are great, we are capable of doing anything, etcetera, etcetera.” We are free to do what we want, we will go to the moon, this and that, and they are all considered achievements of humanity, as something that can be planned among men. Marx himself says: “This is only another way of expressing it” but it is the subjective side of the same thing. One thing is that I want to do something and do it, and another is that I realise that we can start discussing with other men and reach an agreement as a species about what to do, even if we don’t do it. I meet several men and I know that I can discuss what we do.

“In theory” means that I can study the human species, as an object of knowledge. The species as a species can be my object; not only human but any other. I can make them an object of knowledge and an object of my activity. I can say: the horses will be used as pack animals, and the cows to give us milk. And we use man himself, with his universality and rationality, for this or that, as an object, to do such a thing. That is one aspect of the problem.

Another aspect is that no one calls a horse to ask it “what do you think, should we go to the moon or spend money on food”? Rather, they discuss this with other men. This is why he asserts that he recognises himself in the other as the free, universal species, capable of doing anything. This part, the second, is the most Feuerbachian. Because Feuerbach precisely asserted this difference between man and animals: man is the only animal species with universal consciousness, with the consciousness that he is part of his species.

Now let’s look at the criticism, whether or not this is correct. And we believe that it is not. In this part, Marx gives man permanent attributes, as he already said that animals have. And one of them is to recognise himself as a member of the species, in such a way that he sees another man and says “he is a man like me”. And it is not so.

We have a categorical example that shows it very clearly, something that we will see in the topic of historical materialism. In the ancient world, in the slave system, slaves were not considered

men, but things, property of the masters. That is why Aristotle, who was the great philosopher of ancient Greece, divided tools into three different types: mute, semi-talking and talking. The mutes are the ones we know, the plough, an axe, etc.; the semi-talking ones are the horses, the donkeys, the chickens, and the talking ones, the slaves. In that society, some men were classified within the genre of “tools”. All kinds of ideologies and justificatory theories were made to not include slaves in the human species. Aristotle’s is one of the most formidable for its clarity.

The aborigines of America also did not recognise the conquerors as equals. When Hernan Cortes arrived on the shores of Mexico, the Aztecs took him as a god.

The concept of man, and recognising each other, as well as his relationship with nature and other species, varies completely according to historical times and social relations, it did not always exist. Let us recall that in the previous topic, we read Thesis 6 criticising Feuerbach, whereas Marx himself, a year after this manuscript, will say the opposite, will correct this mistake. It is not an inherent and universal characteristic of human beings to recognise each other, that is why there is no “species being”.

What is already merit of Marx in the manuscript is to locate man as part of nature, as one more species, although very different, because the human being has a conscience, and thinks.

We continue reading:

The life of the species, both in man and in animals, consists physically in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature; and the more universal man (or the animal) is, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives.

Both man and animals use nature to subsist, but unlike other species, man expands the field in which he works. Are there any animals that travel to the moon? No, just the man.

We continue phrase by phrase; this is the hardest part:

Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., constitute theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art — his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make palatable and digestible — so also in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, etc.

First, Marx places plants, animals, air and light as objects of study in natural science, botany, zoology, or astronomy. He says they are objects of knowledge, organic and inorganic, they are objects of study in the natural sciences, but he’s not finished yet. He adds that, from a theoretical point of view, man has to prepare this in order to enjoy or assimilate it; science and knowledge must be developed. But “they constitute a part of human life and human activity”. What does it mean? That man studies the species cow but also eats it. That these objects also serve for the practical activity of man, not only for scientific activity, because the very life of man depends on plants, animals, minerals, air, and light. And he includes “making them palatable” and developing the art. We will return to this later.

He continues:

The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body — both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity.

In other words, first, there is the relationship with natural objects, with that inorganic nature that serves man physically —Marx already forgot the intellectual aspect— as a means of life, of subsistence. And second, to work on it, which provides the raw material, the tools and the final product.

Let's take an example. A baker has flour, water, salt (raw materials), a rolling pin, an oven (instruments), and his product, the loaves. All of this is part of his activity, which he pours out through these three elements. So, inorganic nature —that is, everything that is external to man— serves us for two purposes: the first to subsist, the second to work.

He continues:

Nature is man's *inorganic body* — nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man *lives* on nature — means that nature is his *body*, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

Everything is very cumbersome and with mistakes but we cannot fail to appreciate that it is placing man as part of nature, linked to it, and not to God or the Idea or something like that, which was usual at the time, when religious conceptions, creationists, and idealistic conceptions in philosophy prevailed among scientists. He even goes so far as to say that man is also an animal, although he is distinguished by thinking, consciousness, productive activity, etc. These may seem obvious now but they were almost unacceptable in the mid-19th century. Man needs nature to live. At its core, it is a relationship of nature with itself.

He continues:

In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life activity, estranged labour estranges the species from man. It changes for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life.

This is difficult, but it is understood if we exemplify it. In the first point of the sentence, Marx is saying that man is universal, that he is linked to all of nature, but that by doing estranging work, he breaks that relationship. Can a worker, a common person decide to go and cut wood or fish in Lake Nahuel Huapi? No, he cannot, he has to stay in his specific job, in the trade that he learned, in the poor house he rents and in the neighbourhood that he lives in; when he is starving, he may be able to go elsewhere. So, alienated work breaks the relationship between man and nature, which is total, intimate, and universal. In the capitalist world, they tell him: you only work here, with such raw material and such tools, and manage to live with the little I pay you. It not only alienates man from work but also from food. You go to the countryside, you see fruit and you can't eat it, or a cow and you can't butcher it, because they take you to jail.

Point two: then man alienates his activity, it ceases to be his, it becomes someone else's. And if his activity becomes that of another, he alienates himself as a species, he cannot do what he wants, he has to do what the other says; and he does this to produce — for another — but to be able to live individually, to upkeep himself.

What is proper to man is to produce, to be active, to work on all of nature, to be free; but that estranges him, he loses it.

His activity is the same as himself, he develops by thinking and developing his activity. But all of a sudden that activity ceases to belong to him, it belongs to someone else and then he surrenders that activity, which is a characteristic as a species, as a man, to be able to live as an individual, to be able to eat. Why? As a consequence of the previous estrangement from nature because he has neither means of work nor means of life. Although it seems very difficult, Marx is describing that the worker works to survive.

To have livelihoods he has to estrange himself as a species, he has to estrange what is his own, which is to work and to be active. He has to estrange his activity losing its species quality, which is to have a free activity, wherever he wants, one year in one sector of nature, another year in another. And to live as an individual he has to stop living as a species, as a genus, lose what is being human and distinguish him from other species. Although he mixes it with the species, all this is so, it is correct.

He continues:

First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form.

What does it mean that it estranges the life of the species from individual life? That if man were not estranged at work, what he did as an individual would coincide with his species character; there would be no contradiction but synthesis, and coordination. The free man doing and developing his activity, would work in different places, would capture more sectors of nature, would have a relationship with it every day richer —not poorer—, full of possibilities. The individual and the generic would coincide, and they would be harmonious.

But the estrangement of the individual species-being makes them not harmonious. Having to work forced, he ceases to be united to the species, creative free work disappears, and becomes routine, a disaster.

What Marx is saying is very simple, it is the scientific expression of everything we see every day: a man —or rather, a worker— in bourgeois society, because of the estrangement of work, has to take the hit, stop being free, become a slave for eight or ten hours, so that in the time he has left he can develop as an individual, do what he wants. But this produces an estrangement: if at work, in the productive activity that is essential to man, he is not free, then he gets hoodwinked, there ceases to be a relationship as a species with the individual; then, the man in the time that he does not work is not human either.

The second part of the sentence, what does it mean? What does “it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species” mean? It means that individual life is an appendage of the function it fulfils as a social class. An individual becomes a worker. Instead of having an individual, personal life, he becomes a worker, it is the end of life as a species; the role he fulfils is abstract. It ceases to be an individual life of his own, but for other people, not his individual life, that is why it is an abstraction. He says: “[...] likewise in its abstract and estranged form”, that is, at the service of the estranged work that is a characteristic of this moment, of the entire species.

Here he is saying that, in fact, the worker does not have his own life, he does not develop his individuality as he wants, but is reduced to a shadow, to an abstraction of what individual life is, because this will be whatever he is told, because of the estranging conditions of work and society.

Thus, such an individual becomes a worker, not such an individual who plays football well, this or that, but his essential quality is to be a worker, or a capitalist as well.

He continues:

For labour, life activity, *productive* life itself, appears to man in the first place merely as a means of satisfying a need — the need to maintain physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species — its species-character — is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man’s species-character. Life itself appears only as a *means to life*.

Although it is cumbersome, it is describing well what should be the “life activity” of man, and how this is lost in the living conditions of the worker, in capitalism. After unravelling all this mess, there remain things that are not only simple but practically unthinkable for his time. Now it may seem ridiculous that the synthesis is: in capitalism, the worker has to work forced, against his taste and will, to survive as a worker.

And he continues with what we had already quoted at the beginning:

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity.”

He insists that man, to do, first thinks about what he is going to do, he has his product before in his head. Twenty years later, in *Capital*, Marx in a famous phrase says that the difference between the bee and man —although the bee makes cells with geometric shapes more perfect than man— is that man is the only one who has in his head what he does before he does it. And some say that this is a repetition of this part of the 1844 work. Marx continues to develop and perfect this topic, ending with that definition of labour in *Capital*.

Man is conscious, free, with a will, precisely because he can choose, think of different variants, and different projects and decide whether to do them or not.

He continues:

He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. [...] Estranged labour reverses this relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life activity, his *essential being*, a mere means to his *existence*.”

So, the essence of it, which is work, conscious productive activity, is reversed and serves only to exist, not to develop himself. Marx is considering what man has in common and what is different from the other animal species.

He continues:

In creating a world of objects by his practical activity, in his work upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being. Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty.

What characterises the animal? To act according to immediate need. What does it mean that “an animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature”? That animal activity only generates the continuity of his species; man creates a human nature, full of man-made objects. Man makes a nature to suit his taste and palate. The characteristic of man is to have a universal activity and, within it, to make beautiful objects.

He continues:

It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his *species-life*, his real objectivity as a member of the species, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him.

Here, using the confusing expression of “species-being”, he says something which is correct. What characterises man’s species-life? The transformation of nature, which through work produces objects.

The characteristic of the “species- being”, as Marx is developing it in these parts, is to produce; man is the only one who makes products, and in them, he objectifies himself. That is the characteristic of species. There are no other species that can hold a meeting to study a text by Marx, have a microphone, a recorder, tables, chairs, etc. Through all this, man transforms inorganic nature and creates another inorganic nature, made by him, which characterises him as a species, a humanised nature.

But if they alienate the product, they are alienating what characterises him as a species, which is to make products that are his work. If the products cease to be his, they take away his essence as a species. So, he comes further back than the animals.

Why is he worse off than the animals? Because the animal is right with nature, while man becomes his opposite. The nature that he created turns out to be not his and it is the only nature to which he is linked, so he is left without the relationship with nature, which exists immediately in the animal.

Although Marx does not do it here, we can use philosophical terms and say that animal has a “relatively immediate” relationship with nature, and on the other hand, man has a “mediated” relationship with nature, of instruments or tools; but that by taking away the means, by belonging to another, man is left, then, without the relationship with nature.

This is our interpretation of this part where there are big mistakes but also things of great value, which lead us to vindicate this work. They are the first steps. Marx, for example, had not yet worked out his later concepts of abstract and concrete labour and the sale of labour power.

IV. The fourth step and the interpretation that philosopher Erich Fromm makes of this work

To advance on the topics of the fourth step —the man-man relationship— we are going to analyse a debate installed in intellectual sectors that claim to be Marxist. The book *Marx’s concept of man* by Erich Fromm⁵ is being widely read in university environments, it is a best seller, like many other works by this author. We will read carefully and discuss a very clear question: Is Fromm’s interpretation of this work by Marx from 1844 correct or not? Whether one or the other is the answer, it must be demonstrated with precise quotations from both.

We start with Fromm’s brief and forceful interpretation of Marx’s position:

Just as Kierkegaard⁶ was concerned with the salvation of the individual, so Marx was, and his criticism of capitalist society is directed not at its method of distribution of income, but its mode of production, its destruction of individuality and its enslavement of man, not by the capitalist, but the enslavement of man – worker and capitalist – by things and circumstances of their own making.⁷

Fromm insists at the end of his work:

5 Erich Fromm (1900-1980). German psychoanalyst and philosopher, from a Jewish family, who was part of the Frankfurt School until 1939. He had to settle in New York because of Nazi persecution. He later moved to Mexico, where he was a professor at UNAM. From an existentialist humanist approach, he sought a synthesis between Marxism and psychoanalysis. He was very influential in the 1960s. The book in question was published in Spanish in 1962 by the Economic Culture Fund, Mexico.

6 Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Danish philosopher and theologian considered the father of existentialism. His philosophy focuses on the individual as such, without class definition and on his subjectivity, on his freedom and responsibility, and on feelings of despair and anguish.

7 Erich Fromm, *Marx’s concept of man*, Frederic Ungar Publishing Co, New York, p. 49.

To what extent things and circumstances of our own making have become our masters, Marx could hardly have foreseen [...].⁸

The first thing we seek is neither to agree, nor to be right but to be precise in reading and to have the capacity for Marxist reasoning. With good Marxist reasoning, if one is wrong it is easier to notice and rectify. And it is essential to read well. We Marxists have different hypotheses and positions, and we do not have a hierarchical, bourgeois or Stalinist criterion of authority: the educator or the highest-ranking official is right. We are also not bent on “winning” an argument or are hurt if we realise we are wrong. It is about making clear and categorical hypotheses, getting used to being very precise, with definitions that we will try to prove, and, if they are wrong, we will change them, or we will continue searching.

Someone can say that Fromm is wrong when he writes that alienation is a consequence of man in general and that it affects both the capitalist and the worker. Because alienation is a consequence of the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist. Someone else may say the opposite, that in fact there is a process of alienation that harms both. Thus, we keep elaborating, quote by quote. In other of his works, Fromm gives his opinion more clearly, saying that the capitalist is much more alienated than the worker, and brings the statistics of the suicides of the bourgeoisie and the middle class in Sweden and other advanced countries, highlighting the true fact that capitalists do commit suicide more.

It might be correct to say that Marx speaks of alienation in general but it would be a very partial reading to stay with that. He says, verbatim, that the capitalist plays an active role in this general alienation and he is the one who causes and develops it. Furthermore, on the individual, Marx's concern is not with the individual alienation of both the capitalist and the worker; what Marx says is that the “species-being” of an essentially social individual is destroyed. And we will see later that when he refers to individuality, he links it directly to the worker and says that capitalism takes it away from him.

To clarify well the answer to the organising question —Fromm, does he interpret the text right or wrong? — we can start with a categorical quote from Marx:

If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong? [...] The *alien* being, to whom labour and the product of labour belongs, in whose service labour is done and for whose benefit the product of labour is provided, can only be man himself.

If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, then this can only be because it belongs to some other man than the worker. If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must give satisfaction and pleasure. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man.

We understand that in this way, by reading the text quote by quote, we can categorically demonstrate that Fromm's interpretation of Marx is wrong. He has a completely different conception of the concept of alienation, humanitarian and not of class, and he endorses it on Marx, making him say what he does not say.

We have to get down to earth with what we are talking about. The billionaire Rockefeller, or even more so, a son of him —do they not do what they want? It is a somehow different alienation from that of a worker from any country, of a labourer, a miner or a semi-slave *mensu*⁹ in the Misiones jungle. If we want to say that they are alienated, we have to discuss what kind of alienation they would have. One characteristic of “species-being” is that the worker has lost his free time, and

8 Ibid., p. 58.

9 *Mensu* is a Guaraní word that designates the rural worker in the jungles of Paraguay and the Argentinian provinces of Corrientes and Misiones, in particular the worker of the mate plantations.

they do have it. The worker does not. Indeed, there are contradictions and elements of alienation, but the worker is totally different from the capitalist.

We have already commented that there is confusion and even mistakes in this work. But even these confusions and mistakes do not justify this interpretation by Fromm. For Marx, alienation here is not the product of “things and circumstances” created by men in general, but rather it is the product of some men who impose alienation on other men. It is the worker who has those “masters” and they are people with names and surnames, very human, they are the capitalist owners. The mode of production is a concrete reality, imposed by a class at the service of that class, it is not an abstraction that would affect individuals or humanity in general.

The great manoeuvre made by Fromm when he speaks of capitalism and criticises it is not to say that behind a mode of production there is a class that imposes it; he makes an abstraction, and that is not what Marx asserts. Fromm says. “let’s have compassion on the capitalists, let’s not wage class struggle, poor capitalists who commit suicide, we have to talk to them so that they go to nature, to fish.”

We, following Marx, what do we say? Rockefeller, father and sons, are monsters, who rule with a monstrous system. All humanity suffers because of the capitalists, we have to destroy them. In any case, since we are human, if Rockefeller in the face of the triumphant socialist revolution, appears before the workers’ committee of the expropriated factory and says that he is in favour of the workers, that it is good that we take away his property, that he can help in the administration or work eight hours like any worker, and that if he can he will go fishing for bream in the river on Sunday, we can accept it, we would not be vindictive.

But here there is a serious problem in Fromm’s formulation because he transforms (and he is not the only intellectual who makes this manoeuvre) the mode of production into an entity, into an abstraction or theoretical category. We as Marxists say that abstract entities and theoretical categories reflect what men do. The category of capitalist mode of production implies flesh and blood capitalist men, who are as monstrous as the actual economic system they dominate. We do not believe in anonymous human forms without concrete humans, which make up antagonistic classes.

This way of presenting things has expressions in many fields. We are against some existentialist intellectuals who say: “The fascist regime oppresses the torturers and fascists as much or more psychologically than those who are tortured and taken to the gas chamber.” Let us clarify that the text can be used for Fromm’s interpretation because there are confusing parts, different categories and errors are mixed. Here Marx does not start from the category of economic exploitation. He does describe it at the beginning when he refers to the “actual economic fact”, and to the fact that society is necessarily divided into “two classes —the property owners and the propertyless workers”. This framework would already leave Fromm out of kilter. But, from there, he continues with alienation and confusion arises, with elements that can give rise to Fromm’s interpretation.

Here Marx is very young, he is taking the first steps in what will be his “Marxist” conception, he is managing different categories and the strings are mixed. On the one hand, he believes that alienation is a decisive factor, and on the other hand, he begins to handle the economic categories of the exploitation of man by man. He gives a lot of importance to private property, without knowing exactly in what order it goes. But there is still in this part —and this is not the case in the other manuscripts— an approach that we can call philosophical in which the element of alienation is the essential one. Marx has not yet fully mastered the mechanism of the capitalist economy and this is reflected in the text. But it is a bit like what Rosa Luxemburg used to say that she loved the third volume of *Capital*, more than the first because as it was a draft, it was full of errors, and wrong formulations, but at the same time, it was richer, prettier, to bust your head trying to understand it.

The work is incomplete, it cuts off abruptly at the end. But there Marx had already taken up the situation of the worker as the centre from the beginning, and he explicitly denies the interpretation of Fromm and other authors (including some Catholics) who strip it of its class character, pretending to support a non-class humanism. Fromm’s trap is that taking some elements that suited him, he

does not make the corresponding reading. There are categorical quotes that disprove what he says. We have already seen several, and we will add others.

Marx says at the end of the work:

Having seen that in relation to the worker who appropriates nature by means of his labour, this appropriation appears as estrangement, his own spontaneous activity as activity for another and as activity of another, vitality as a sacrifice of life, production of the object as loss of the object to an alien power, to an alien person—we shall now consider the relation to the worker, to labour and its object of this person who is alien to labour and the worker.

First it has to be noted that everything which appears in the worker as an *activity of alienation, of estrangement*, appears in the non-worker as a *state of alienation, of estrangement*.

He speaks on the one hand of the worker and on the other hand of “an alien person”, of a “non-worker”, he makes a sharp distinction.

In the non-worker, it is a “state” of alienation, not of activity. To consume, to develop his life, to give himself his privileges, the capitalist only has to take what the worker’s production gives him. This means “state”, then the alienated production of the worker gives him what he consumes; what he takes, he takes from nature that the worker is doing for him. It is not that the capitalist goes to a paradisiacal island to throw himself naked under a palm tree to wait for a ripe coconut to fall on him; no, it’s the other way around. The whole culture, the civilization, works for them, but for them to consume immediately, not through an activity prior to consumption.

He continues:

Secondly, that the worker’s *real, practical attitude* in production and to the product (as a state of mind) appears in the non-worker confronting him as a *theoretical* attitude.

What does “state of mind” mean? Not only that one works and the other thinks, but it is also more than that. The relationship of the worker with respect to the product is different from that of the boss. How is the relationship between the worker and his activity? In the worker, it is on the one hand “real” and “practical”, but as a “state of mind,” it is suffering, anguish, and work but forced, with anger, with hatred. And regarding the non-worker, Marx insists that he is the opposite, not real and practical, he can think about it, but he does not live it in his reality.

He continues:

Thirdly, the non-worker does everything against the worker which the worker does against himself; but he does not do against himself what he does against the worker.”

He does not put this activity against himself but in his favour, and against the worker, to whom he causes sacrifice, loss of himself.

It is worth clarifying what the existentialists have said about the contradictions and problems of each individual to be taken into account would also include the torturer and other positions that may be reactionary or at least contradictory. Taking, for example, Jean-Paul Sartre,¹⁰ we must distinguish between his philosophical and existentialist positions and his personal activity and commitment. In the first ones, his location is contradictory and of a bourgeois individualist type, but with progressive aspects, although it seems not, because he defends the freedom of each individual. In this sense, it is a philosophy, a contradictory ideology. Developed to the end, this bourgeois individ-

10 Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). French intellectual, one of the main referents of Marxist existentialism. He participated in the resistance to the Nazi occupation, and supported the Algerian struggle against French colonialism. He opposed the US invasion of Vietnam and was part of the court headed by Bertrand Russell to denounce US war crimes in Vietnam. In 1964, he refused the Nobel Prize for literature, which he considered a bourgeois distinction. He was a partner of the feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir. In *Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences* already mentioned, Moreno argues with Sartre’s positions against Engels.

ualism becomes reactionary. This would explain the fact that everything has come out of existentialism. People have come out for the revolution, or who support the revolution, like Sartre himself: a tireless fighter, anti-imperialist, defender of the liberation struggle of the Algerians, of revolutionary Cuba, etc. And ultra-reactionaries have emerged like Albert Camus,¹¹ the famous French novelist who is the other head of post-war existentialism. He believed that in the face of a war between the USSR and the United States, it was necessary to be with the US. Sartre said the opposite.

Every individualist position can end in anything, it is self-contradictory. There was a well-known existentialist here, Carlos Astrada,¹² who also turned to Marxism. But others don't.

V. The dialectic between the legal property (*Eigentum*) and what belongs to each individual (*Eigenschaft*)

Thanks to the characteristics of the German language, Marx was able to develop quite a bit the topic of the effects of alienated labour and capitalist exploitation on the characteristics of each human being. In German, a very important distinction can be made between having as possession or legal property, and having as personal qualities, what is proper to each individual. Specialists can richly trace this subtlety in the original texts. The Marxist that we have been mentioning several times, Pierre Naville, took care to follow this topic in depth. He wrote:

There is in Marx a very deep dialectic of *Eigentum* and *Eigenschaft*, which unfortunately the French language [and English] does not allow us to restore correctly since it only has the same word to say property in the sense of quality and property in the sense of legal possession. We know of Robert Musil's novel *The Man Without Qualities*: he is the man without properties, *Eigenschaft*. We do not know how to translate this title. If you say "the man without properties", everyone will think that it is about the man without *Eigentum*, without property in the economic and legal sense and, however, in French [and in English] we have no word to express this thing precisely. We then use the term quality, almost in the sense of a logical predicate, also speaking of capacities, of attributes; attributes that are, on the plane of action, capacities, and we rather reserve the term property for property in the legal sense, that is, the *Eigentum* of the Germans. However, Marx, and others in his time, had founded their entire theory of alienation and reappropriation on this dialectic of what is proper, *Eigen*, and of property, *Eigentum*: it is about making the *Eigentum* disappear for the benefit of the *Eigenschaft*, to restore, to reappropriate in the qualities proper to the truly proprietary individual (in the sense of qualities), for being deprived of his capacity educated by work, and in more general terms, of his human properties.¹³

Let's look at a couple of quotes from *The German Ideology*, in which Marx and Engels refer to these contradictions.

According to Destutt de Tracy,¹⁴ the majority of people, the proletarians, must have lost all individuality long ago, although nowadays it looks as if it was precisely among them that individuality is most developed. For the bourgeois it is all the easier to prove on the basis of his language the identity of commercial and individual, or even universal, human relations, as this language itself is a product of the bourgeoisie, and therefore both in actuality and in language the relations

11 Albert Camus (1913-1960). French writer born in Algeria; received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957. A member of the resistance, he directed his official clandestine newspaper *Combat*. He distanced himself from Sartre, among other reasons, because of his rejection of the Algerian people's struggle for their liberation.

12 Carlos Astrada (1894-1970). Philosopher and university professor, student of Hegel, Marx, and other authors. He worked intensively on topics such as dialectics and alienation, among others. See, for example, *Labour and Alienation*, published in 1965.

13 Pierre Naville: *Towards social automatism?* FCE, Buenos Aires, 1965. P. 250. We could not find an English translation or the French original of this work, so we had to re-translate from the Spanish version. [Translator]

14 Antonine Destutt, Marquess of Tracy (1754-1836). Enlightenment philosopher and republican, tenacious defender of the interests of the bourgeoisie.

of buying and selling have been made the basis of all others. For example, *propriété*—property [*Eigentum*] and characteristic feature [*Eigenschaft*]; property—possession [*Eigentum*] and peculiarity [*Eigentümlichkeit*]; ‘*eigen*’ [‘one’s own’]—in the commercial and in the individual sense; *valeur*, value, *Wert*; commerce, *Verkehr*; *échange*, exchange, *Austausch*, etc., all of which are used both for commercial relations and for characteristic features and mutual relations of individuals as such.¹⁵

The contradictions between the legal owner and the qualities and relations of individuals as such are very present in the elaborations of Marx and Engels. Defining communism as “the power of associated individuals,” a little later they say:

The difference between the individual as a person and whatever is extraneous to him is not a conceptual difference but a historical fact. This distinction has a different significance at different times [...]

The conditions under which individuals have intercourse with each other, so long as this contradiction [between private property and the classes] is absent, are conditions appertaining to their individuality, in no way external to them; conditions under which alone these definite individuals, living under definite relations, can produce their material life and what is connected with it, are thus the conditions of their self-activity and are produced by this self-activity.¹⁶

What do they talk about with this of the individual as a person (what is proper, what is inherent), and the conditions imposed by circumstances? Everyone is born amid certain conditions external to each one and that is “contingency”, what may happen or not, the external factors that condition our entire existence as an “individual”. Beginning with private property, external contingency will determine everything personal. Suppose a case linked to reality. The circumstances are so determining that in the last 400 or 500 years there have been no great scientists among black Africans. They were conditioned by the contingency of the historical process. First, they were falling behind other regions and continents in their development. Then, the most terrible misfortune that can happen to a race, to a human group, happened to them: that men themselves —the most important productive force— were sold as slaves. The contingency caused this aberration to fall on the African population. We Marxists, as historical materialists, believe that both personality and aptitudes, as well as circumstances, are historically conditioned.

VI. On the overcoming of private property, the pleasures and the needs

In the second text of the third manuscript [“Private Property and Communism”], Marx says:

The positive transcendence of private property, as the appropriation of human life, is therefore the positive transcendence of all estrangement — that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his human, i.e., social, existence.¹⁷

Here Marx links the overcoming of estrangement with the overcoming of private property. There is also an outline of what his conception of the superstructure will be, which will reappear in thesis 10 on Feuerbach, and in *The German Ideology*, as we mentioned in the previous topic. He defines as alienating institutions such as religion, the family —referring to the bourgeois family— the state, among others. They will be liquidated when liquidating the estrangement at work.

A little further on he says:

15 “The German Ideology”, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol.5, p.231.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 81 and 82.

17 “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” Third Manuscript, Private Property and Communism, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 297.

Thus, the social character is the general character of the whole movement [of history]: just as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him. Activity and enjoyment, both in their content and in their mode of existence, are social: social activity and social enjoyment.¹⁸

So short, it is a quote that gives rise to different interpretations because Marx is not very clear. For us, he is proposing a very important dialectic regarding a fundamental category of Marxism but practically ignored by many Marxists, especially the Stalinists: enjoyment.

In this part, Marx gives as much importance to the activity as to enjoyment, pleasure, and happiness. The Stalinists try to eliminate this thing about enjoyment for a very profound reason: the bureaucracy tries to convince the working class that their great task, their main role, is to work. That there is nothing more revolutionary, nothing that helps socialism more, than killing oneself working. And social enjoyment is linked to freedom and democracy, which the bureaucracy denies them. Later we will see that there is a conception borrowed from capitalism by many reformist socialists—and Christians—who say that work is the greatest enjoyment, that the more they work, the happier they are. Marx has said just the opposite.

What does it mean that activity and enjoyment have content and that they are social? For example, being a teacher has social content, arising from a specific action. When humanity was born there were no teachers; transmitting education was part of the entire tribe, from the oldest to the youngest. Only in Sumer, about six thousand years BC did the first teachers emerge. This is about the activity.

About enjoyment, let us think of something trivial. Someone likes to have lunch on Sundays with good wine. Wine is a social product; it is the result of activity and provides enjoyment. It may also be that there is someone who does not drink wine, who enjoys Coca-Cola... It is another social product, from the 20th century. Millions of us enjoy going to the movies. The cinema was invented at a certain stage of society, in the division of tasks and, at the same time, it was made to entertain many people, as content. Enjoyment is socially and historically conditioned; According to each historical period and each class, different enjoyments arise. It is like play, which was born with humanity and has been changing.

And he continues:

[...] the positive transcendence of private property — i.e., the perceptible appropriation for and by man of the human essence and of human life, of objective man, of human achievements — should not be conceived merely in the sense of immediate, one-sided enjoyment, merely in the sense of possessing, of having. Man appropriates his comprehensive essence in a comprehensive manner, that is to say, as a whole man. Each of his human relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving — in short, all the organs of his individual being, like those organs which are directly social in their form, are in their objective orientation, or in their orientation to the object, the appropriation of the object, the appropriation of human reality. Their orientation to the object is the manifestation of the human reality, it is human activity and human suffering, for suffering, humanly considered, is a kind of self-enjoyment of man. [...]

The abolition of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and qualities [...].¹⁹

This quote is very important to the definition of socialism and communism. We Marxists have many definitions of socialism and communism. One is the socialisation of the means of production; a more philosophical one is to eliminate alienation or the objective factors that alienate man to achieve his full development. The best-known and famous definition of Marx and Engels is that the

18 Ibid, p. 298.

19 Ibid., p. 299–300.

first stage, socialism, is “to each according to his work” and, in the second, or communism, when there is already superabundance, it will be “to each according to his needs and each according to his abilities”, that is, each one gives what he can, but receives everything he needs.

But some Marxists think this is a poor definition, very limited and unilateral, linked to this society, full of unsatisfied needs. Some Marxist commentators, basing themselves on these paragraphs and other quotes, say that the deeper definition would be that man takes possession of himself. That he becomes a total man, “omni-lateral” or universal. They say that defining by needs is very dangerous because these are historical. Those needs that we know as such under capitalism will change a lot because everything will be different. The only need will be to fulfil oneself. This discussion is very subtle and beautiful.

Finally, in this third manuscript, linked to qualities and enjoyment, he had already formulated a very deep concept, which we saw before, discussing the *Theses on Feuerbach*, on the historical and social character of the senses:

The abolition of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and qualities, but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have become, subjectively and objectively, human. [...] Need or enjoyment has consequently lost its egotistical nature, and nature has lost its mere utility by use becoming human use.

[...] a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form – in short, senses capable of human gratification [...]. The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present.²⁰

VII. Free time under communism

In his important work of 1857-58, which we usually call the “Grundrisse” (the “drafts”), there are many contributions on the subject of alienation and the perspectives of individuals after the abolition of private property. Marx poses the importance that the availability of free time will acquire, for the enjoyment and fulfilment of human beings. Let’s look at some paragraphs.

If we presuppose communal production, the time factor naturally remains essential. The less time society requires to produce corn, livestock, etc., the more time it wins for other production, material or spiritual. As with a single individual, the comprehensiveness of its development, its pleasures and its activities depends upon the saving of time. Ultimately, all economy is a matter of economy of time. Society must also allocate its time appropriately to achieve a production corresponding to its total needs, just as the individual must allocate his time correctly to acquire knowledge in suitable proportions or to satisfy the various demands on his activity.²¹

The *Times* of November [21,] 1857 contains a most endearing scream of rage from a West Indian planter. With great moral indignation this advocate – by way of plea for the reintroduction of Negro slavery—explains how the *Quashees* (the free blacks of Jamaica) content themselves to produce only what is strictly necessary for their own consumption and apart from this ‘use value’, regard loafing itself (indulgence and idleness) as the real luxury article; how they don’t give a damn about sugar and the fixed capital invested in the plantations, but rather react with malicious pleasure and sardonic smiles when a planter goes to ruin [...].

They have ceased to be slaves, not in order to become wage workers, but self-sustaining peasants, working for their own meagre consumption.²²

The theft of alien labour time, which is the basis of present wealth, appears to be a miserable foundation compared to this newly developed one, the foundation created by large-scale industry itself. As soon as labour in its immediate form has ceased to be the great source of wealth,

20 *Ibid.*, p. 300, 301.

21 *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft of 1857-58) [First Instalment]*, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 28, p. 209.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 251.

labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and therefore exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The surplus labour of the masses has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of a few has ceased to be the condition for the development of the general powers of the human mind. As a result, production based upon exchange value collapses, and the immediate material production process itself is stripped of its form of indigence and antagonism. Free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time in order to posit surplus labour, but in general the reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, to which then corresponds the artistic, scientific, etc., development of individuals, made possible by the time thus set free and the means produced for all of them.²³

Once they have done so – and disposable time has thereby ceased to possess an antithetical existence—then, on the one hand, necessary labour time will be measured by the needs of the social individual; and, on the other, society’s productive power will develop so rapidly that, although production will now be calculated to provide wealth for all, the disposable time of all will increase. For real wealth is the developed productive power of all individuals. Then wealth is no longer measured by labour time but by disposable time.²⁴

VIII. Other definitions of alienation

The complexity of this writing from 1844 led to all kinds of interpretations of Marxism. We mentioned that some currents and authors consider it one of the two or three most important theories of Marx, such as Henry Lefebvre, and the Trotskyists Ernest Mandel and George Novack (1905-1992). The position of the Hungarian Marxist György Lukács²⁵ is a bit different: he accepts the concept of alienation but considers it essentially as a reification of human relations. Mandel —although he has a different definition than Lukács— says that Lukács’s best-known book, *History and Class Consciousness*, “constitutes a masterly reconstruction of Marx’s thought regarding the problems of alienation.”²⁶

Others, like Louis Althusser, and Stalinism in general, believe it is a non-Marxist, Feuerbachian or Hegelian, non-scientific, non-real concept. The scientific concepts would be those of the economy, such as exploitation, work, surplus value, and many others. According to this current, Marx would have developed this concept of alienation fundamentally when he had not yet thoroughly discovered the economic mechanism of exploitation of one class by another, especially the economic mechanism of exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, and the concept of surplus value.

Althusser clings to the fact that Marx uses the word estrangement less and less in his seminal works of maturity. The topics of the 1844 manuscript remain in *The Holy Family* and later in *The German Ideology*. Mandel has given Althusser a controversial beating because he has contributed a large number of quotes from the *Grundrisse...*, which are from 1857-58, in which Marx refers numerous times to the concept of estrangement. And he added another investigation with all the times he quotes or uses this word in *Capital*, which would be six or seven. As for the citations, one can be categorical: indeed, the mature Marx continues to handle the concept of alienation.

Starting from defining the concept of alienation as fully Marxist, several aspects can be discussed and insisted on. The first thing would be to define well what alienation is. Is it a psychological

23 Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft of 1857-58) [Second Instalment]”, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol. 29, p. 91.

24 Ibid. p. 94.

25 György Lukács (1885-1971). Hungarian revolutionary; participated in the government of the Soviet Republic of Hungary (1918-1920), which was defeated. Exiled in Moscow, he developed an intense intellectual activity, until he returned to his country with the fall of Nazism. He participated in the government that emerged from the 1956 uprising that was crushed by the Russian army. Expelled from the party, he returned to his intellectual activity. He was a specialist in Hegel and in issues of aesthetics.

26 Ernest Mandel, *La formación del pensamiento económico de Marx* [The formation of Marx’s economic thought], Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1968, in footnote 77, p. 209.

category within Marxism? Is it rather economic or about work in today's society? In other words, if the concept is Marxist, what sector of reality does it analyse? We have stated our interpretation from the beginning: it is the psychological impact on the human being when subjected to exploitation.

As with so many other issues, our party has an elaboration that generally distinguishes it from almost all other positions, both on alienation and de-alienation.

What do Mandel and Novack say about alienation in Marx? His definition, is it correct or not? Later we will see what criteria of de-alienation both have, and if we would have the same ones.

On whether it is Marxist or not, in general terms, we agree with Mandel and Novack that it is a Marxist theory and we also agree that under socialism and communism, alienation will disappear.

Our discrepancies with them are linked to the definition of the concept, beyond the name, the word. Let's see what both authors say.

Novak says:

Before examining the specific causes of alienation under capitalism, it is necessary to note that the phenomenon is rooted in the whole previous history of humanity. The process by which man becomes oppressed by his own creations has passed through distinct stages of evolution.

The most primitive forms of alienation arise from the disparity between man's needs and wishes and his control over nature. Although they have grown strong enough to counterpose themselves as a collective labouring body against the natural environment, primitive peoples do not have enough productive forces, techniques and knowledge to assert much mastery over the world around them. Their helplessness in material production has its counterpart in the power of magic and religion in their social life and thought."

Alienation is therefore first of all a social expression of the fact that men lack adequate control over the forces of nature and have thereby not yet acquired control over sources of daily sustenance.

Alienation has been a general feature of human history. The alienation of labour, however, is peculiar to civilisation and is bound up with the institution of private property. In primitive society men are oppressed by nature but not by the products of their labour. [...]

The producers thereby lost control over their product as it became subject to the laws of the commodity market. In turn, these laws came to rule the producers to such an extent that in time men themselves became commodities to be bought and sold. Slavery was the first organised system of alienated labour; wage labour will be the last.²⁷

Mandel says:

In primitive society, the individual directly supplies social labour. He is harmoniously integrated into his social environment, but if he seems to be "fully developed" it is only because of the extreme narrowness of the needs that he has become aware of. In reality, the material poverty of society, the impotence of men before the forces of nature are sources of alienation, above all social (of their objective possibilities), ideological and religious.

With the slow progress of the social productivity of labour, an economic surplus gradually appears. It creates the material conditions for exchange, for the division of labour and for commodity production. In this, the individual is alienated from the product of his work and from his productive activity, his work becomes, more and more, alienated work. This economic alienation, which is now added to the social, religious and ideological alienation, is essentially the result of the social division of labour, commodity production and the division of society into classes. It produces political alienation, with the appearance of the state, and the phenomena of violence and oppression that characterise relations between men. Within the capitalist mode of production, this multiple alienation reaches its climax: □The transformation of all objects into commodities,

²⁷ George Novack, *Alienation*, MIA, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/novack/works/history/ch15.htm>, consulted on January 2023.

their quantification into fetishist exchange values (becomes) ... an intense process that operates on each objective form of the life.²⁸

And further on, he reiterates his definition that early man was alienated.

We do not share the opinion of Gajo Petrovic,²⁹ according to whom alienation constitutes the lack of realisation of human possibilities already historically created. If this were the case, primitive man (actually realising the possibilities that existed in his day) would have really been a misguided man. [...] ³⁰

According to Novack and Mandel, from its origins and up to the present, humanity has always been alienated. Primitive man for his ignorance and limitations facing nature, and later, because of the social division of labour, commodity production, and so on.

Regarding primitive man, we could accept that human beings, before the emergence of exploitation, created magical entities that in a certain way alienated them. How to interpret the flight to one side or the other of the birds as omens of a different sign. Pre-Marxist French sociologists called this “magical thinking”. We can accept that this is a human creation that at a given moment can turn against man; and we can even accept that all ignorance, all errors of a social nature turn against man. In this sense, ignorance could be a source of alienation.

But we have to be blunt. If we call “alienation” the problems and limitations that ignorance brings to primitive man, let’s put another name to what happens from exploitation. Or clarify that, with the same word, we are already talking about something totally different. We, and Marx too, say alienation when we refer to the very concrete and real phenomenon, linked to inequality, and oppression. Marx studied it in the capitalist mode of production. Mandel and Novack in their approach have points in common with Fromm when they speak of the fact that the human being would be a victim of his own creations.

Alienation and exploitation

From the brutal exploitation that began historically with the Asian regimes, and in Europe with slavery, there had to be a drastic, radical change in relationships between men, in the psychological field, and relationships with work. In other words, we believe that exploitation provokes a series of concomitant, parallel, ideological and psychological phenomena. We believe that for this change of psychological type, caused by exploitation, the name of alienation corresponds, and it is what is described, although in parts confusing and using some questionable concepts, in the text of Marx’s “Estranged Labour”.

Let’s try to simplify our approach. Years ago, visiting the British Museum, I came across a translation of a papyrus that pointed out I don’t remember what prison sentence for a foreman in the workshops of a pharaoh, because in a moment of carelessness, he had made a drawing different from the one he had to do. Surely, several of you know the famous Egyptian guards, from the decoration of buildings, are always all the same. The slaves, the workers who made them, spent 20 or 30 years for 12 or 14 hours a day, doing the same guard. And whoever did not, was punished.

With forced labour, done because someone else orders it and demands it, duplicity begins already, and the worker begins to think different, fanciful questions about what is being done. There already, for example, begins a total division of the subject with the object he makes, and like this,

28 Ernest Mandel, *La formación del pensamiento económico de Marx* [*The formation of Marx’s economic thought*], ob. cit., p. 207.

29 Gajo Petrovic (1927-1993) Yugoslav intellectual, critical of Stalinist philosophical theses, including the concept of dialectical materialism. Based on the reading of young Marx, he promoted a humanist vision of Marxism. He was expelled from the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1968 for supporting student demonstrations.

30 Ernest Mandel, *La formación del pensamiento económico de Marx* [*The formation of Marx’s economic thought*], ob. cit., p. 210

other multiple aspects, which for me Marx tries to specify in his works on alienation. That is, from the moment he is exploited, man reflects it in a series of very serious phenomena.

The psychology of the unexploited man in primitive communism may be linked to ignorance. He may create through his fantasy ideological objects of worship that go against him and his tribe, his society. But it is different. The characteristics and psychological suffering that are caused by a man exploited by other men do not exist.

This change in psychology, this hatred of what he does, that feeling of being a man when he runs away from what he does, is for us what justifies the existence of a Marxist theory of alienation.

Thus, it is not that first there was a religious alienation, then it was political, to culminate later in economic, adding as new alienations according to Novack and Mandel. There was a historical change, a drastic leap, something new and different arose in the situation of the human race, a before and after the emergence of exploitation. This starts when the activity and its product cease to belong to the person who does it when some men—a minority—make a majority work like beasts of burden. This new fact cannot fail to be reflected in the minds, feelings, morals, in all aspects of life and behaviour of the exploited. Thus, an immense set of psychological consequences arises. We believe that lies, duplicity, hypocrisy, etc., emerge in this age. And for this reason, the theory of alienation has not only psychological but also anthropological roots.

In our opinion, exploitation is a clear economic category, which can even be measured: of their work, so much goes to the worker, so much goes to the class or caste that does not work, that exploits. It is an economic, qualitative and quantitative phenomenon that can be specified objectively in each society. In this, Asian societies had an immense clarity, akin to feudalism. For example, in Latin America, during the Inca Empire, two-thirds went to the exploiters and only one-third was left to the peasant. The economic-social phenomenon of fetishism or the reification of the social relations of production will also appear. We see this in Marxist economics courses but we can summarise it by saying that in capitalist society money is made a fetish. For Marxists, money is nothing more than the abstract and fetish expression of a social relationship, which is the exchange of goods through the market. When the whole society is dominated by production for the market, it is commodity fetishism.

The theory of alienation is interested in what happens to the exploited man, dominated by that market, it is not interested in the market itself, studied by political economy. For the study of alienation, it is of interest, for example, what happens to the worker, what happens to the unemployed or what happens to a petty bourgeois, who see fabulous shop windows full of things that they know they produced but their salary is not enough for them to possess them, to enjoy them. This is the aspect of reality linked to alienation.

The theory of alienation asks what psychological phenomenon appears in the worker when he sees that he does everything and has nothing; what he does, whether he is happy or given to fits of madness. Marx says so, he is getting richer in the sense of the complexity of what he produces, but his personality is poorer. Marx always refers to the subject; he paints the objective process to see what influence it has on the subject, on man, on the actual individual and locating it with respect to his class membership.

So, we say the economic phenomenon that is exploitation emerges. And it has social consequences: the fetish, false beliefs, the state, the laws, the church emerge.... The church will give us happiness in eternal and heavenly life, the state is there to protect us all, all immense lies. And it also produces a psychological-anthropological phenomenon: man begins to suffer differently. In the words of Marx, man begins to suffer as a beast, and in socialism, it will be a matter of beginning to suffer as a man. The three phenomena—economic, social, and psychological—are related but not the same.

Now that we have located the phenomenon historically, we will try to define it. There is a large current of Yankee psychiatrists, empirical-pragmatic scientists, who challenge Marxists and philosophers to give a precise, objective definition of alienation, claiming that Marxists never gave it nor

have they agreed among themselves. The definition they use states that there are objective norms and laws in society, and anyone who is against them is an alienated person. With this approach, revolutionists would be the most alienated. It is a position to which a response must be given. We intend to respond objectively to this challenge of Yankee bourgeois psychiatry.

Man has two intimately linked and dynamic characteristics, which we have been seeing:

1. Productive activity — it can face different productions, different activities that, as a historical and social process, give rise to different needs, starting with “eating, drinking and procreating”, having a roof over your head and getting dressed, which, as Marx said, are the most primary.

2. Accompanying productive activity is the satisfaction of those needs, a dynamic of enjoyment. To satisfy a need is to enjoy. This clearly distinguishes man from animals. These have a few specific, biological needs. Man, in addition to his biological needs, has many others and thus a rare combination of needs and enjoyment is caused, to such an extent that certain needs that arise lead to denying biological needs at a certain moment. For example, when a revolutionist goes on a hunger strike out of solidarity with another revolutionist. Man generates different faculties, does different activities, and has different needs, and therefore, different enjoyments.

We have already mentioned the conception of Stalinism, very typical of the bureaucracy —and totally wrong— which states that the essence of man is work and all that legend of the enjoyment of work: whoever works more is more content, is happier.

The theory of alienation put forward by Marx is a scientific response to the problem of happiness and its counterpart, unhappiness or alienation produced by exploitation. It formulates the scientific conditions of unhappiness, happiness, needs, enjoyment and their relationship with production, with productive activity. Every man, for biological, historical and social reasons, has attitudes, and possibilities for development, which are provided by the development of the productive forces, which develop the qualities of the individual himself. It would be, in the words of Naville, to put an end to private property, the *Eigentum* of the bourgeoisie, to the benefit of the *Eigenschaft* of the exploited, and all humanity. While Yankee psychiatrists suggest the theory of alienation has to start from the codes and norms instituted by today’s society, our theory starts from a more important fact: the activities and needs of men in reality, and their tendency to enjoyment.

We place our definition in this existing reality because as Marxists we hold that we live in a society that prevents the enjoyment of the majority of human beings, the development of individual and collective skills, and the satisfaction of needs. It prevents enjoyment in life. Marxism explains scientifically through what mechanism this takes place. This is what Marx faced very young, in a confused way and with some erroneous formulations, in his work of 1844, “Estranged Labour”.

IX. On de-alienation today

The theory of de-alienation will be, then, in favour of free time, of enjoyment, of the development of multiple aptitudes, “polytechnic”, as Marx says, of a universal character. We start from the central fact, that the development of the productive forces, the abundance of material production, allows enjoyment, having free time to do what you want, a multifaceted development of activities and personality, and the use of skills. Quite simply, the theory of alienation and de-alienation takes these problems and tries to solve them by first giving them a scientific definition. In other texts of these manuscripts from 1844, Marx goes a long way on the subject of the abolition of capitalist private property and communism.

We have seen that we disagree with Novack and Mandel regarding the historical location of alienation, and also regarding the definition. Now we add that we also have a difference —and that it is fundamental, in capital letters— regarding de-alienation.

First, and following Engels, we are reluctant to make theories that relate to the historical future; with the immediate future yes. We are against writing books to discuss what kind of personal or “family” relationships there will be if the socialist revolution succeeds in the future, for example.

Let the men and women of the future organise their lives more or less in common as they see fit. The same goes for de-alienation. We are against writing pages and pages concerning a future de-alienation. At most, two or three short sentences, perhaps. Those human beings who begin to live in the new system that the socialist revolution will install will deal with the issue.

For us, the problems are concrete. If in reality there are propositions and proposals in Marx about enjoyment, happiness, etc., a simple question arises: what use are his contributions to us now, in the present, in the daily reality —f those of us who are militants and of those of us who are not— of common life? What use is it to the workers, to the comrades at the university, whether or not they are from the party? Because frankly, if there is no practical, concrete activity, something current linked to these issues, discussing and writing as much as we are doing would be merely academic, not to say directly useless.

We believe that this theory and study, all this discussion, do have extraordinary utility. It is no coincidence that we think about this issue and that in this post-war period, it has become so fashionable because it has to do with a problem that is an objective fact: the disaster of happiness in the capitalist world. We see broken families, ruined marriages, catastrophic parent-child relationships, the suicides quoted by Fromm, alcohol and drug addiction, the desperation of older generations to imitate the younger in fashions, the younger generations who begin to suspect they have no future, the problems that growing loneliness engenders when we are a “social being” by definition. Mandel gives the data of the sociologists who capture the conversation of two neighbours where they prove that almost all conversations today are not conversations except for the greeting, that each one talks about what interests him, that he pays no attention to what the other says. All of the modern sociology sees how the other man is seen as an object, how he is ignored. All modern life is the highest expression of alienation, from conversations, and so on. All human relationships are undone. In American society, this is even more evident. The Yankee economist and sociologist Vance Packard ³¹shows it very well. And existentialist intellectuals, although I disagree with their approaches, reflect on these current problems.

This process that takes place in reality, that we all suffer, is what Marx describes. We have already pointed out confusions and errors in the text. But we also believe that the four steps that he points out, the alienation of the product, of the activity, of nature and the “species-being” —taking it as we have already explained— and of the other man, are very correct. It is a ray of light that has come to us from the 19th century, which helps us understand these real and current, everyday and very human problems, of unhappiness, anguish, sadness, anger, seeing that we do not get along with family, that we don’t know what to do with a relationship. Of course, it has errors but the four steps exist, even if we take them a little differently in some aspects. I take that of “species being” as “own possibilities”, as different possibilities of enjoying, unlike animals, the development of *Eigenschaft*.

Party building and de-alienation

At present, are there any activities or locations that are de-alienating? It is a key question, that Mandel and Novack do not raise. If I remember correctly, Lefebvre does, and he gives it a rather particular and debatable answer: he recommends the practice of mountaineering.

I think that in the field of artistic and scientific activity, although full of contradictions and limitations, one can be relatively happy. It seems to me that some artists and scientists have individually achieved a relatively full and happy life. I know that many artists have committed suicide, or died young cornered by misery. Not all, I say only a minority, some, but there is the possibility of fulfilment, development and happiness in these activities. Perhaps, although more limitedly, in sports.

But if de-alienation is living a full life, in what one chooses and likes what he does, it seems to me that this is only provided by dedicating oneself to the construction of the revolutionary party.

31 Vance Packard (1914-1996). American sociologist who specialised in empirically describing the so-called “consumer society” of the second post-war period in advanced countries and in particular in the United States. Among his works dedicated to this topic, *The Pyramid Climbers*, *The Status Seekers*, and *The Hidden Persuaders* stand out.

In science and art, all kinds of obstacles exist because everything is mediated by economic needs. And even more so in sports. Thousands of boys and young people with great aptitudes for cinema, or painting, cannot dedicate themselves, and they get frustrated. Only very few can fully realise themselves as artists, and something similar happens with researchers and scientists.

Within contemporary society, there is a possibility, albeit a partial one, of de-alienation, in the struggle against alienation. It is made possible by revolutionary militancy, the construction of our revolutionary party. It is about the full dedication of a professional of the revolution. We are not talking about dedicating only the always welcome “afternoons off” of a supporter; nor the dedication of a paid party official. It is to choose the revolutionary activity as the main activity of our life. It is the only activity that is absolutely voluntary and totally free, without any type of interest or economic progress or social advancement (quite the contrary). If someone is not happy being active, they don't do it and that's it, it's impossible to force them. No one can be forced to be a militant.

Do not take it as propaganda for you to join the party. I see it as a real phenomenon. It is a conclusion that we have been drawing from experience, exchanging ideas with other party comrades, and studying and discussing this alienation. Analysing the real phenomena, not theory: what happens when a comrade joins the party and becomes a militant? What psychological phenomenon happens? He finds himself in an environment exactly opposite to that of the capitalist society. First of all, he meets a series of people who look at him strangely, they are studying him, but to see what aptitudes they discover in him. For example, in the case of a comrade who has learned a language and has not practised it for a long time, he is already forgetting it. And suddenly they call him and give him an article, a book, for him to translate; His skills are valued. A worker who never speaks, is rather shy, who never leads anything, who approaches the party, who begins to meet in a team, take courses, etc. And when the time comes in his factory there is an assembly or the possibility of conflict, and in his team, they tell him “You have to speak. Did you understand? We have this line, and you speak.” This worker comrade has the human ability to speak and in bourgeois society, they try to crush it, they try to make him a steppe wolf, who only communicates with the machine for years and years. He has worked since he was a child, and this was making him a sullen person, only linked to his work. The party is achieving the opposite, he is recovering the faculty to speak, that means of communication, which is so powerful and differentiates him from the animals. Bourgeois society limits or directly takes away from the exploited their education, and their progress, it nullifies their qualities and potentialities.

The party tends to achieve the opposite. The party watches over to see whether it can help this shy comrade to be brave; the one who doesn't speak, to speak; the one who doesn't write, to write. Then we see fantastic phenomena, comrades who after three or four years begin to write flyers or articles, workers who take pleasure in studying and begin to read things about philosophy. Put another way, within the possibilities that this bourgeois society gives us that has us crippled, we begin to recover some organs and faculties, not always all of them.

In addition, within the party, an incredible, permanent social bond is also established. In fraternal human relationships, caring for each other. The typical one is helping another comrade to build his house. Help him if he gets sick, make a collection, and more than anything fellowship, the opposite of that loneliness that we already mentioned that is typical of capitalist alienation. When comrades from here go and meet, for example, with comrades in Venezuela, from any other country, they understand each other right away, and vice versa. This relationship of man with man that is lost with alienation is recovered. A high-level bond of a fraternal type is established.

The object is retrieved. In everything we do, we put all our senses. Sometimes we sleep little, thinking we have to get up early to picket or that the fascists will attack us, or we have to see such a line for the university or the factory. And we think; we think about everything we do and, while we do it, we continue to think about it, there is no dichotomy between the activity and the purpose of our activity, there is total unity.

In militant activity, in the party, unlike in the process of capitalist alienation, a process of de-alienation is taking place, there is a recovery of the activity itself, of its purpose, of one's own

aptitudes; there are possibilities of developing “polytechnic” aptitudes”, and the contact with the other man —the four steps of alienation—, we live them differently, we live them like the four steps of de-alienation.

If this is so, here is found — within the relativities imposed by being in bourgeois society— happiness, which is also another characteristic of ours. In our local headquarters, in meetings and activities, there is usually an atmosphere of camaraderie, I would almost say joy. Within the party, I have seen many comrades learn to laugh. Many times, we start chatting and after a while, we are bursting out with laughter. We also share sadness, when we suffer some blow, some defeat, but it is a sadness different from the helplessness and unhappiness of the capitalist society.

The party causes an extraordinary change in all of us, and it is a permanent change that does not stop. This is what leads us to the conclusion that the only broad process of real de-alienation that exists today is revolutionary militancy. This does not mean we are de-alienated. It is a process: capitalist society alienates and the party de-alienates but, as we live in a capitalist society, it is a contradictory and partial process, where a state of total de-alienation cannot be reached, this will only be achieved under socialism and, even more so under communism.

If there is a process of de-alienation with party militancy, it is because there is a brutal alienation in society, they are two poles but closely related. The party is not alien to society, we are also linked to revolutionary ebbs and flows. Leon Trotsky said the revolution is a great devourer of men. There is friction, a permanent struggle and this contradictory process takes place within each one of us.

This approach of ours is summarised in an expression of a great militant of the SWP of the United States, Rosa Karsner,³² who was the partner of the leader James Cannon.³³ She was not a theoretician nor did she study these things but she was a great militant and her favourite expression was: “The party always gives us more than we give it.” I think it is the most precious definition of the process of de-alienation that takes place in the militant activity for the construction of the party.

And I believe that all this was not invented or discovered by us. Mandel and Novack don’t even think about it. But I am convinced it was the conception and life experience of the great revolutionaries who have been our teachers. Marx wrote it explicitly when he was very young, in the *Manuscripts of 1844*. In his third manuscript, about human requirements, production and the division of labour, Marx said in 1844:

When communist artisans associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need — the need for society — and what appears as a means becomes an end. In this practical process the most splendid results are to be observed whenever French socialist workers are seen together. Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring them together. Association, society and conversation, which again has association as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them, but a fact of life, and the nobility of man shines upon us from their work-hardened bodies.³⁴

The following year he said something very similar in *The German Ideology*:

32 Rosa Greenberg Karsner Cannon (1890-1969). Born in Romania, she emigrated to the United States at 18 and was a member of the New York Socialist Party. During the 1920s she was active in the International Defense of Workers, which, among other imprisoned workers, included Sacco and Vanzetti. She participated in 1938 in the founding of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, where she militated until her death.

33 James Patrick Cannon (1890-1974). American revolutionary labour leader. From the age of 18, he participated in the struggle and in the union and political organisation of the American working class. He was a founding member of the Communist Party. He travelled to Moscow and participated as a delegate to the sixth congress of the Third International in 1928. There, he learned about Trotsky’s critical positions and began his militancy in the left opposition. Expelled from the Communist Party, he founded the American Socialist League and later the Socialist Workers Party in 1938.

34 “Human Requirements and Division of Labour Under the Rule of Private Property”, Third Manuscript, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 3, p.313.

The tireless propaganda carried on by these [communist] proletarians, their daily discussions among themselves, sufficiently prove how little they themselves want to remain 'as of old', and how little they want people to remain 'as of old'. [...] but they know too well that only under changed circumstances will they cease to be 'as of old', and therefore they are determined to change these circumstances at the first opportunity. In revolutionary activity, the changing of oneself coincides with the changing of circumstances.³⁵

And so did Trotsky reassert almost at the end of his life, amid the most tremendous hardships to which the persecution of Stalinism subjected him. In 1938, he sent a recorded message to the founding congress of the Fourth International, which he, its creator and martyr, was unable to attend. He said:

Dear friends, we are not a party like other parties. Our ambition is not only to have more members, more papers, more money in the treasury, more deputies. All that is necessary, but only as a means. Our aim is the full material and spiritual liberation of the toilers and exploited through the socialist revolution. [...]

Our party demands each of us, totally and completely. Let the philistines hunt their own individuality in empty space. For a revolutionary to give himself entirely to the party signifies finding himself,

Yes, our party takes each one of us wholly. But in return it gives to every one of us the highest happiness: the consciousness that one participates in the building of a better future, that one carries on his shoulders a part of the fate of mankind, and that one's life will not have been lived in vain.³⁶

35 "The German Ideology", *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 5, p. 214.

36 "The Founding of the Fourth International", 18 October 1938, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1938-39)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974, p. 86.

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned, have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.

Friedrich Engels (1883)

One of the most colossal tasks of the revolutionary party is to help eradicate these false consciences from the heads of the workers and the people. But at the moment we are very much in the minority, the weight of our conscience or true ideology is very small.

Nahuel Moreno

Historical materialism

I. Historical materialism and dialectical materialism?

There is much discussion about whether or not Marxism has two parts or branches: historical materialism and dialectical materialism. Marx and Engels hardly used those two words together: “dialectical materialism”. They were referring to the dialectical method, or dialectics directly, and their conception of society and history as historical materialism. Only at the end of the last century does it seem to have been used by Plekhanov, according to research, and it seems to have been used for sure by a famous German publication from the turn of the century. But it is so popular in the field of Marxism that we have to take it into account, regardless of whether Marx would have agreed or not. Perhaps Marx was wrong not to speak of dialectical materialism. But it is undeniable that neither he nor Engels can be attributed to that definition.¹

According to the general interpretation of all those who spread it, dialectical materialism would be “Marxist philosophy” and responds to the great themes of philosophy that we have already listed in broad strokes in the second topic, discussing the *Theses on Feuerbach*. It is, therefore, a complex, difficult issue. Today there are many Marxists who believe this interpretation of the two parts or branches is not correct.

II. Change and functioning of human society: historical materialism

In the mid-nineteenth century, Marx and Engels formulated their new scientific and materialistic conception to understand history, the change in human societies and their different ways of life. They gave us the tools to understand, for example, how, in our country, from what was the former Spanish colony of the Río de la Plata, before 25 May 1810, it became what would become independent Argentina. Or how, more than a century later, Peronism arose, or the various dictatorships. In other words, how humanity was changing. There are laws that explain the historical process; how people lived 300 years ago, with absolute monarchical governments and then came the republics, governments without kings, with the vote. We will also see that these are small episodes because humanity has existed for many millennia, for more than a million years. That is, we have to see the changes, why and how they took place. Understand and explain how it works, and how the different societies were organised at each moment or in each period or era. It is called historical materialism, and thus scientific socialism was born.

Historical materialism addresses two different aspects of the development of humanity. We could compare it with the human body. Each body has its story. You are born with a head of such

¹ Stalin, the author of *Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism*, was one of the chief promoters of this conception. “Dialectical materialism” was a priority subject of manuals and dictionaries in the USSR released by the communist parties throughout the world. An example was *Elementary Principles of Philosophy*, by Georges Politzer, a prominent professor of the French CP, assassinated in 1942 by the Nazis. Likewise, Althusser has been another of the chief promoters of this double definition.

characteristics, which later changes. At first, the head is large in relation to the body and is the one that grows the least. Later, growth is more harmonious, it goes through different stages, from baby to child, to adolescent, to adult and, finally, to old age. As those who are teachers know, a lot of progress has been made in this study, especially with the contribution of Piaget. What the baby does as soon as it is born is studied, how it discovers that an object exists, its entire evolution as it grows, and the stages and the laws of those stages are pointed out. There are studies on how children, adolescents, and adults grow. And there are laws, there are theories that explain how each stage is reached. It is also studied how it is formed: where the kidneys, the heart, and each organ are, and how the different parts work.

Humanity can also be studied from two aspects. On the one hand, its history, its evolution, and how humanity has advanced and matured from the first primitive beings until now. The other aspect is to study it as it is at all times, how it is formed and how it works. They are two different aspects but they are related.

III. The different conceptions of history

This discovery by Marx and Engels was fundamental to understanding human society. Different explanations were given in the 1840s. One that had been very important in the Middle Ages said that what happened to people was whatever came into God's mind. God said this king should rule and that's it, he ruled, and he ordered the whole society. If the king turned out to be a disaster, it was because God had sent him to the people for bad behaviour. The people had to put up with the king, no matter if he was a madman or a despot. Today it may seem almost ridiculous to us, but 150 years ago a huge number of people believed that. Applied to our time, it would be that God condemned us with Videla² and then we would have to put up with him. Interpretations of this type have lasted for thousands of years. It was firmly believed in the divine, celestial origin of the power of rulers. Now, this interpretation almost no longer exists among historians. Although there are fundamentalist religious sectors that do believe it.

Another conception, which still endures, explained everything by the action of great men. Suddenly a guy named Caesar³ or called Napoleon was born and he changed history. That is why the life of these men is studied since they are little. This theory, for example, is the one that says Peron⁴ made Peronism and not the combination of certain social circumstances. The liberal interpretation, from the beginning of the 19th century, asserts that society is based on the struggle between individuals, where the one with the best personal conditions progresses. Currently, this interpretation has many people supporting it. The speech by Alfonsín⁵ explains this: there is nothing better than this society... where everyone fights and the more capable one does well, and the less capable has to eat less and be in worse conditions. It is another interpretation of society.

There have been racist conceptions also. Even today some politicians and historians speak of superior races or say that in each epoch such a race or such a people has been the determinant factor. And for the rest, patience; whoever is part of it, is part of it. For example, in this century, it is the turn of the Anglo-Saxons to rule and in the next century, it is the turn of the Japanese. So, whoever wants to do well in the 21st century should go to Tokyo or ask for representation of a Japanese company. Great historians have based themselves on the predominance of some races over others. Marx and

2 Jorge Videla (1925-2013). Genocidal dictator who headed the military regime imposed in 1976, ferociously repressive and who caused 30 thousand disappearances. The dictatorship was overthrown by revolutionary mobilisation in 1982.

3 Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 BC). He defeated the conservative sector of the Senate of the Roman Republic in a civil war. The defeated, however, managed to assassinate him.

4 Juan Domingo Peron (1895-1974). Military man and politician who led a vigorous anti-Yankee nationalist bourgeois movement in the mid-1940s that became the political and trade union leadership of the workers. He was president in 1946-1955, then overthrown by a bloody dictatorship. He returned to the presidency in 1973, as part of an agreement between the military, the Radicals and Peronism, and died the following year.

5 Raul Alfonsín (1927-2009). Leader of the Radical Civic Union (UCR); he was the first president after the fall of the military dictatorship in 1982, from 1983 to 1989.

Engels refuted the approaches that history would be explained by the action of God, of great men, of the struggle of individuals or certain races or nationalities.

The Marxist interpretation

Marx and Engels discovered that history is made by the classes. Today, many people accept this, even if they do not call themselves Marxists. But at the time, their analysis produced a colossal revolution in social theory. Contrary to what Aristotle believed, history in ancient times was made by slaves and their struggles against slave owners, and in turn these against merchants, all fighting for their interests. Not just one class makes history, but the class struggle, the struggle of one class against another, or several classes or between different groups or sectors of the same class. The individual is important only as a leader or representative of the interests of a class. Ultimately, what is decisive is the class struggle.

Religious beliefs can be very important in this context. For example, we already commented that Muslims firmly believe that whoever dies fighting for Islam immediately goes to heaven and that heaven was a paradise where every day he would have a different woman to have sex with. This ideology made everyone want to fight and they almost took over the world. But we have to see the economic and social reasons linked to this religious belief. The Muslims were located in the middle of the trade between Asia and Europe. They were a trading class and they developed to dominate all the ports that allowed them to control that commercial exchange. This is the Marxist interpretation. Hence, Muslims fought savagely for their god Allah and Mohammed, his prophet, but were driven by these economic and social reasons. Religious ideas, the promise of paradise, helped a lot and were very positive as instruments of the interests of one class: the Arab commercial bourgeoisie.

Marxism brings a completely new and opposite interpretation to those we mentioned about what history was. Before Marx, several historians of the French Revolution had pointed out the existence and importance of the class struggle, but Marx develops and rounds it off by stating that history arises from clashes between antagonistic classes, which have irreconcilable interests, and that the proletariat is the revolutionary class that will be able to completely change capitalist society.

Later we will see this is a little more complex because there is a very long period in which there is no class struggle in humanity. Classes have only existed for less than three thousand years, on the other hand, it is estimated that the human being has existed for more than a million years. In the mid-nineteenth century, this was not known. Above all, very little was known of the very long period of primitive communism, when human beings lived in egalitarian societies, sharing property, all working together in harmonious relationships. But this in no way invalidates his innovative and scientific interpretation. Many years later, Marx and Engels were able to get to know the first investigations on primitive communism and also the exploitation regimes that existed in China or Egypt thousands of years ago.

IV. Different conceptions of the functioning of society

As for this, there also were and are different interpretations. Aristotle claimed that society was very well organised, like nature, and that the only human beings were slave owners. As we have seen, he considered slaves to be talking machines, not human beings.

In the Middle Ages, on the other hand, it was believed that society had a hierarchical order established by God, at the apex were the king and the nobles, followed by the Christian priests and the military, and below the commoners of the cities and the serfs of the land. Later English and French thinkers, from the 17th and 18th centuries, questioned this conception and argued, such as Rousseau, that man was born free and everyone had to be equal. Marx and Engels will inaugurate a radically different approach to studying humanity.

Where to start? The infrastructure or productive forces

According to Engels, the first step discovered by Marx is to locate the relationship of the population, of the human beings with nature, their relationship to living and producing; how is their productive work (whether they hunt and fish, whether they cultivate the land, or install large factories...). Man works on nature, which gives him raw materials, through tools and techniques that he develops. Marx will call this infrastructure or productive forces.

The historian must investigate what resources this or that tribe had in prehistory to survive, surely very rudimentary, what the infrastructure was. Later, it will be to study what a craftsman or a shoemaker does, and what are his tools. Or what is done in a factory. There are different techniques and there are different tools. A man can be very capable, but maybe he doesn't have the right tools to work and vice versa. Man has also been improving tools and techniques. And also, the raw materials.

Let's see an example. If we take car repairs, we find the difference between Argentina and Europe is abysmal, precisely because of the problem of tools. In Europe, there is exactly one tool for each operation. Instead, here repairs are much more difficult because the same tool is used for different operations. For this reason, when a mechanic in our country has to disassemble a Fiat 1600 engine, he goes crazy. Instead, in Germany, in Italy, in France, they have one tool for each operation because they are great tool-producing countries; that is, they are highly specialised and this helps on making the work easier. This can be seen in Formula One competition where car parts are changed in minutes thanks to the variety of tools. Since human beings exist, they have been perfecting the tools and techniques to use them.

This is called the development of the productive forces, that is, the way to produce more, to transform more and more of nature in favour of man. The study of the productive forces and their development or restraint is key in the interpretation of Marx and Engels. Despite the insistence of both on this point, many Marxists have tried to ignore it. Since the works of Marx and Engels, the "red thread" to understand the different human societies and their evolution is the development of the productive forces, which are the engine of human development, of historical advancement.

We have a great practical example of how this is the most important factor in understanding the long march of humanity. Why does the United States have a huge number of Nobel laureates in science? Why is it almost impossible for an underdeveloped country to have at least one Nobel Prize? Are Yankees geniuses? Not at all. They are based on a greater development of the productive forces.

In short: the category from which we start is that of infrastructure or productive forces. It has three components: nature (which provides resources, and raw materials), man, and techniques and tools. Of the three, the most important for Marx—and this is fundamental—is man. From here we locate the other relationships or categories to understand what human beings do in each society as a whole. But this is the main one. Engels said it in simple words:

Men must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, therefore must *work*, before they can fight for domination, pursue politics, religion, philosophy, etc. [...].⁶

The structure: the relations between men and the means of production

Marx and Engels called this second category the social structure—it is the relationship of men to each other to produce and distribute products. If infrastructure is the man-nature relationship, external to society, this is the man-man relationship, within the economy of society, internal to it. Different groups of men emerge, which will precisely be the classes. Some work, they are the producers. Others are the owners of the means of production. Marx and Engels called these differences around ownership or not of the means of production the structure of society. That is to say, classes of individuals are defined in terms of their relationship with work, with the productive forces. Those who are private owners, and the dispossessed. Also, regarding another very important factor, which is the distribution of everything that is produced, that is, what portion of what is produced goes to

⁶ "Karl Marx", 1877, *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 24, p. 193.

the different classes. What do the landowners, the working class, the merchants, industrialists, the banks, and the farmers take with them?

The men who have the same relationship with respect to the ownership of the productive apparatus and its products form what Marx and Engels called a social class (and its class sectors). Bourgeois and proletarians; landowners and serfs; masters and slaves. Some live on the fringes of the classes, who manage as best they can, the vagrants, the marginalised or lumpen-proletarians. Everything we have just listed describes different situations regarding production and distribution.

In class societies, there is private ownership of the means of production. The owning class has economic power. The bourgeoisie owns the means of production and exchange (factories, mills, money, banks, transport, etc.), and the landowners own the fields and the mines. Bourgeois and landowners, by the right of inheritance, pass their properties to their descendants. The workers do not own the means of production and are forced to work for the capitalists, to get a wage with which to survive. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat are the antagonistic and fundamental classes of capitalist society.

Contradictorily, although this category of social class is basic to Marx's entire conception, he never defined it precisely. For example, in the *Communist Manifesto*, which is one of the first works published at the time on these issues, in which it is argued and developed that the history of humanity is the history of class struggle, there is no definition of what it is a "social class". Forty years later, in 1888, in one of the many reissues of the *Manifesto...*, Engels added a footnote where he says:

By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live.⁷

Thus, we Marxists must define the different societies by seeing what their social, class structure is. We define according to property: "This society has such classes", and each class has the following characteristic: the worker is the one who works in manufacturing and industry, the peasant is the one who works the land, the landowner is the one who does nothing and lives by collecting rents. The industrialist runs the factory, the merchant directs the exchange, the buying and selling of goods, and the financier runs the bank and lives by lending. They all have a different relationship with the production and distribution of that production.

The discussion about the modern middle class

Trotsky pointed to the existence of the "new middle class",⁸ characteristic of the imperialist era. This necessary precision can lead to confusion if we interpret it as a development, an artificial continuity of the old petty bourgeoisie and not as a new phenomenon. The modern middle class is made up not of small independent owners (as it was in Marx's day) but of wage earners. Bank workers, business employees, teachers, doctors, lawyers, architects and engineers who work for pay for large clinics, studios or construction companies, technicians and employees of advertising, entertainment and the media (radios, TV, cinema, theatres, etc.), etc. This social sector has become massive in the imperialist capitalist society of the 20th century.

The existence of this important mass of the population, which is salaried without being an industrial worker, and which for us is the modern middle class, poses the problem of Marx's definition. In *Capital*, even though he did not make an exhaustive development of the definition, Marx used the wage earner as a criterion to define the proletariat. This approach seems correct to us because it was associated with a certain relationship between production and property: they were not owners of the means of production, but dispossessed, and they sold their labour power, producing surplus val-

⁷ "Manifesto of the Communist Party", *Marx & Engels Collected Works*, op. cit., Vol 6, p. 482.

⁸ "Ninety Years of the Communist Manifesto", 30 October 1937, *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38)*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1972, p. 23.

ue. And, on the other hand, from the point of view of the society of his time, the character of wage earner was practically synonymous with the industrial worker, since there were almost no wage earners who were not workers (of industry, manufacturing, or the land). The old petty bourgeoisie was mainly made up of small urban or rural landowners. Today, with the terms middle class or petty bourgeoisie we usually refer to non-industrial wage earners, small owners and self-employed.

The Superstructure: Institutions and ideologies and beliefs

Now we come to a very controversial issue for Marxists. Unfortunately, it is the one that Marx and Engels least developed and systematized, although they gave it great importance. Today, even bourgeois historians and sociologists use the concepts of class, productive forces, infrastructure or structure. But, even among the many who also accept the category of the superstructure, it is very difficult to specify what we mean, and what it would be.

What did Marx discover? That, in addition to or above the economic base, organised around production and distribution, there were another series of activities of social life, very important, that did not enter into the productive infrastructure or the economic structure, and he called these activities superstructure. In the first place, the institutions, such as the state, police, army, church, school, parliament and, we could add, the political parties, unions, etc. And secondly, beliefs, ideologies or false consciences, such as believing in God or the homeland, have also appeared historically. Of course, we are referring to social beliefs, beliefs that are shared by many people. For example, there are 800 million Catholics. Both institutions and ideologies or beliefs are intimately linked and feed each other. And this superstructural framework is like cement, it is what manages to make cohesive the whole of society, which is torn by enormous contradictions, but which the dominant class or sector channels through these institutions and ideologies.

Let's start with the origins. About six thousand years ago—a short time regarding the history of humanity—a series of institutions emerged. These were appearing as the population grew, as exploitation arose, and as social life developed and became more complex. Groups of men began to specialise in activities that were not directly economic, or productive but aimed at administration: not just the use of water, irrigation or the storage of grains (as we will see later, it began to happen in what we call the Asiatic mode of production), but men themselves. And these specialists began to live from and for that activity. Thus, emerged specialists in waging war, priests, teachers, judges, policemen, and politicians. According to their specialty, these men organised themselves in the army, the churches, the school, the justice system, the police, and the political parties. These organisations, we call institutions.

At the same time, accompanying the institutional, emerge ideologies or beliefs that will give a justification or consistency to these new functions. Beliefs are very strong, and there are all kinds. For example, in Seville, during Easter, people from different neighbourhoods fight with knives to impose their own saints or virgin. In the same way, football fans fight. The social weight of beliefs is indisputable. There are patriotic people, who fight for their homeland; there are religious people who fight for their religion. Nobody can deny that, with 800 million faithful in the world, the Catholic Church is important and can turn that numerical weight in favour of the policy that it wants to support.

Many of the beliefs, if not the vast majority, are false. We Marxists call them ideologies or false consciousness. They are essential if the dominance of the exploiters is to be maintained. They are often—or rather, almost always—an obstacle to the advancement of humanity. For example, the ideology of class collaboration, the false belief that there are good bosses and bad bosses, is a disastrous obstacle to the struggle of the workers. In some particular and very specific circumstances, some false beliefs or ideologies have also been useful for the class struggle, in favour of the oppressed.

Until the 17th century approximately, the class struggle was expressed based on religious beliefs. In the Middle Ages, there were terrible civil wars between feudal lords and communist peasant currents. Both sectors quoted passages from the Bible and held that they were fighting over religious

issues. But in reality, the different biblical approaches served as a banner for different positions in a social war. In this case, that religious ideology that extracted egalitarian, communist positions from the Bible, even when it was a false conscience, played a circumstantially positive role. The Bible is not a call to communism but peasant sectors took some of its words to fight against the feudal lords who exploited them. Later, in the 18th century, during the French revolution, temples to Reason were built, instead of temples to God. This ideology also played a positive role: the anti-feudal revolutionaries said that all of society had to be rationally organised; there had to be no king, society had to be ruled by those who lived in it: the citizens, all equal to each other. There have always been ideologies; for a long period, there were reactionary ideologies and revolutionary, positive ideologies. But they were all false consciences.

For this reason, the Marxist not only confirms that such an ideology is false but also analyses its role in each historical moment, to see whether it cannot temporarily fulfil a progressive role, by fuelling a just struggle, without ceasing to be false. Starting in the 19th century, when the proletariat began to organise and Marxism emerged, all ideologies became generally negative. For the first time a current, a political and social movement—which therefore will have its own ideology—is guided by the sciences and by the scientific investigation of what is happening in reality. Since then, false consciences are nothing more than obstacles to the correct interpretation of reality and the revolutionary struggle for socialism.

In the superstructure are all the activities or productions that are not economic, and the different classes are reflected. There are institutions and ideologies of the bourgeoisie, of the exploiters, and there are those of the working class. For example, the CGT [General Confederation of Labour], the unions, the reformist and bureaucratic workers' parties (such as the Communist Party or the social democratic parties), the revolutionary workers' parties (such as the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky in Russia, or the party that we are building) they are institutional superstructures of the working class. The UCR [Radical Civil Union], the Justicialist Party, the Intransigent Party, the UIA [Argentine Industrial Union], parliament, justice, the Catholic Church, the Alfonsín government, and of course the police and the army are fundamental bourgeois superstructures. The vast majority of institutions and beliefs are at the service of maintaining and consolidating the socioeconomic power of the ruling class. And the "institution of institutions" that orders the political power of the superstructure is the state, to which we will refer extensively. And state power is based on repressive forces, which are the reinsurance of the domination of a minority over the vast majority.

In societies based on private ownership of the means of production, the class of owners (today the bourgeoisie), dominates the production and distribution of products (the structure), has economic power, and also dominates the superstructure, which guarantees it political power. It controls the state, the army and the police, the government, the justice system, and other fundamental institutions, such as the school, and spreads the different false consciences at the service of the bourgeoisie, in order to stay in power and continue exploiting and oppressing the other classes and sectors.

The bourgeois government administers and enacts laws that maintain "order" in favour of the bosses, the police repress those who rebel, and justice punishes them and puts them in prison. The priests convince that things have to be this way because this is how God arranged it; they call for passivity and resignation and promise a better life to the discontented, but after death. Teachers do something similar to priests, but through the education of children and young people, so that they fulfil the role that falls to them in production and distribution, according to the class to which they belong. Priests, teachers and today, too, the mass media, particularly radio and TV, transmit to the population the ideas and beliefs that the rich and powerful, the privileged, use at all times to maintain their dominance. Thousands of years ago, they said "the pharaoh or the Inca rule because they descend from God"; then they said that the king ruled by the will of God; today they explain that private property is a "natural right" of every individual, that we are all equal and that by working hard, anyone can get rich. All lies, false consciences.

One of the most colossal tasks of the revolutionary party is to help eradicate these false consciences from the heads of the workers and the people. But at the moment we are very much in the minority, the weight of our conscience or true ideology is very small.

V. Science and art

We have another difficult topic, about the location of art and in particular of science. Are they part of the superstructure? Are they forms of false consciousness? Among Marxists, the location of artistic and scientific activities in society is one of the most discussed and controversial points. For example, science is not an ideology. On the contrary, its reason for being is to discover the truth, to demonstrate it reliably, and to eliminate false consciences. But, does it or does it not have ideological elements? Is it part of the superstructure, without being a false consciousness? In our party courses, we placed for years science as the intellectual or subjective aspect of the development of the productive forces. Later we have been leaning to place it in the superstructure. And we distinguish the discoveries and statements of science from the use made of them by the ruling class.

In principle, it seems to us that science, art and play arise linked to the natural division of tasks in society, to the division of productive and general tasks that is done in an egalitarian and collective manner, without oppression for anyone, because it arises of the best use of aptitudes and characteristics of each individual or sector. Since its origins, human beings have been developing the production of goods that are not only economic, and material, but also cultural, and conceptual: whether knowledge (science) and emotions or feelings (art) and, also, the production of activities for free time, play, which seeks both recreation and the training and improvement of natural physical conditions.⁹

Unlike almost all the different specialties that we mentioned before (army, police, priests, and judges), directly linked to oppressive functions, art, science or games emerged independently and before exploitation and the state emerged and the functions of violent administration of men, called politics, began.

These activities, even when they can be used in the service of oppression and exploitation, do not have this specific purpose, as in the case of the other institutions that we mentioned, which are directly related to the oppressive state. Linked to this, we must also study the role of education and the school, which are complex. There has been teaching since the origins of humanity. It will also exist, just like science, art and games, in a future without classes and oppression and exploitation.

They are open discussions. What is fundamental is that we can locate the three categories and their relationships: the infrastructure and the structure (which form the economic or productive base) and the institutional and ideological superstructure. From this, we will advance in the study and elaboration.

VI. The engine of history is the development of the productive forces

The superstructure plays a very important role in social cohesion and all its functioning. Just as the structure refers to the economic power of the ruling class, the superstructure is the terrain of political and military power, which guarantees the ruling class its global power. But Marx goes on to insist that the main factor in history is the development of productive forces. This is the ultimate reason for the phenomenon. It is the determining factor, although they all influence. When we point to one factor as the determining factor, we do not mean that the others do not have an important influence. For example, political parties, which are also superstructures, and institutions, and have ideologues, people specialised in advancing the party. Radicalism is a superstructure, so is Peronism, and so is our party. The majority bourgeois parties exercise the government in all countries. They are specialised institutions that fulfil their functions and have their own laws and specific internal

⁹ See *Homo Ludens*, published in 1938, by the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga (1872-1945). In his research, he placed play as a constitutive part of human activity.

life. But, despite its importance in social and political life, the entire superstructure is determined by the degree of development of the productive forces and also by the structure of society. Conversely, for Marx, the superstructure acts on the structure, and, in turn, the structure acts on the infrastructure. That is, the development of the productive forces involves the classes. The three categories are part of a single whole of society at each moment.

Let's take Yankee imperialism as an example. Its productive potential is colossal. If it began to fully produce food, cars, televisions, and everything that is needed to live, in a very short time all of humanity would have beautiful homes and all the comforts. Proof of what we say is what happened during the Second World War. Hitler¹⁰ had factories producing for seven or eight years before the war in order to have the most powerful air force in the world. They would have had more than five thousand, perhaps ten thousand warplanes. Meanwhile, the United States did not increase its air force because it did not intend to enter the war. When they finally joined, President Roosevelt¹¹ called the big industrialists and asked how many planes they could produce. Ford replied that they could "only" produce about 10,000 planes per year and the entire Yankee industry, about 45,000 per year. Several times more than Germany in eight years. Think of that enormous productive capacity, plus that of the other imperialist countries focused on building millions of tractors, millions of trucks, millions of buses, etc. It could quickly improve the standard of living for all mankind.

But instead of using the technology to produce all that, they use it to produce atomic bombs, missiles and other weapons, and to increase the profits of multinationals. In the hands of one class, the imperialist bourgeoisie, the productive forces, instead of being applied for the benefit of humanity, are applied for its destruction.

A government of the working class —like that of Lenin, Trotsky and the Soviets— would develop the productive forces, make the exploiting classes disappear and raise the living standards of the workers. A bourgeois government, like Videla's, paralyses the productive forces and fires a third of the workers. In other words, the superstructural factor —the state and in the hands of which class it is— is decisive.

We are not going to stop now but it must be said that the social revolution, the change of domination from one class to another, begins in the superstructure. This is so because it is in the superstructure where we locate the political and repressive power and all the institutions and ideologies that give an overall cohesion to the domination of the exploiting class. When the struggle for the triumphant revolution for the working class is posed, it also begins with the conquest of political power, by imposing its government, ripping it out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. This was already said by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*. Only through the destruction of the dominant bourgeois superstructure (its state, the armed forces), with the workers' party taking political power, will it be possible to wrest economic power from the bourgeoisie, proceed to its expropriation, plan the new social structure and execute the technical measures that allow a new development of the productive forces, on the new bases of socialist planning of production.

VII. A look at the prehistory of humanity: Primitive communism

By the time of Marx and Engels, it was already known that there was a long period of human life during which neither exploitation nor classes existed. The latest research places the emergence

10 Adolf Hitler (1889-1945). Founder and top leader of the fascist and genocidal movement that took power in Germany in 1933, Nazism. With methods of civil war, he crushed the German working class with its trade unions and parties, the bourgeois opposition, and Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and leftist militants. He started the Second World War by invading Poland on 1 September, 1939. He went on to occupy almost all of Europe and also invaded the USSR. He was defeated in 1945, thanks to the Red Army and the heroic mobilisation of the Russian people, the armed resistance in the occupied countries, and the allied armies of England, the United States, and other countries.

11 Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945). Democratic Party politician. President of the United States from 1933 to April 1945. His mandates are associated with the economic measures (the New Deal) he adopted to overcome the great crisis of 1929, and his participation in the war against Hitler from December 1941. During the war he took part in decisive meetings in which, with Churchill and Stalin, they agreed on the distribution of the post-war world to save capitalism.

of the first human beings approximately one million years ago. This means that, by far, early communism is the longest historical period that humanity went through. More than a million years of equality against six thousand years of exploitation and three thousand years of private owners. We would have to say that the history of humanity is the history of the development of productive forces and, for a period, of the class struggle.

The three categories that we already mentioned (infrastructure, structure and superstructure) allow us to order the research and explain the historical location of the different societies from a Marxist point of view. Starting from the development of the productive forces, we make a first great division: the very long primitive and egalitarian communism, the so-called prehistory, and civilization, since man becomes independent of food gathering and rudimentary cultivation or breeding, which was accompanied by the emergence of exploitation.

The Origin of Man: Primitive Communism

The first form of social organisation, in its beginning as human beings, in prehistory, was savagery. The development of the productive forces was minimal and incipient. The first men lived by gathering food, hunting and fishing. Their tools were the mace, the spear, the bow and arrow, the traps and the nets. There was no real production, that is, the transformation of the raw material. This was minimal: a fish becomes food; wood becomes bow and arrows, stones into blades and arrowheads; they are transformed into objects that become theirs. It is the human condition; man differs from animals in that he appropriates tools.

A chimpanzee was studied and it was found that when the stick was taken out, he would get angry, but when it was taken out again, he was no longer angry. If he had defended that stick, he was a man. It has not been possible for any animal to keep what it uses. The monkey is extraordinary; he uses up to two sticks to get the fruits he likes. Up to two years of age, the intellectual development of the chimpanzee baby is faster than that of the human baby until it stagnates. Instead, when the human baby starts talking, he quickly outgrows the monkey and continues to progress. What the chimpanzee will never be able to do is keep the stick as the man does. The man used this stick and kept it to use in another situation; when he needs it, he grabs it. He doesn't have to look for another stick. That is what allows man to exist: he makes and keeps his tools. That is the infrastructure. The animal has no tools.

The development of man is potentially infinite. As he discovers new tools and new techniques, he advances in the conquest of nature. This is the development of the productive forces. This is the secret of human development: once man gets a good tool, he doesn't go back.

To the extent that the research of the time allowed, and based fundamentally on Morgan's book, *Ancient Society*,¹² published in 1877, Marx and Engels studied the stages of savagery and barbarism. After Marx's death, Engels overturned his conclusions in the book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, published in 1884. This book is much discussed and there are even Marxists who consider it outdated, and obsolete. Although subsequent research greatly enriched these topics, and even introduced modifications, in our opinion it remains a categorical and unavoidable reference.

Since the first human beings had to go after food, they were nomadic tribes. There was a certain natural division of labour between men and women. Women took care of the children and meal preparation and men went out to hunt. Regarding the structure, it was an egalitarian society, without exploitation and private and individual owners, without classes, which we call primitive communism. Everyone worked according to their abilities and skills. The tribe could not allow any of its members to stop working because it would condemn all the rest to starvation. There was an outline of superstructure: the mythical beliefs and the shamans. The best hunter or warrior was the

¹² Lewis Morgan (1818-1881). American lawyer and archaeologist, he was the founder of anthropology. He studied the Iroquois Indians and researched Asian tribes.

chief or leader but he worked the same as the rest and this changed whenever the tribe considered it necessary. Oral language arises and the first paintings have been found on the walls of some caves.

The second known stage of primitive communism is barbarism. It was born as a consequence of a revolution in the development of productive forces: food began to be produced instead of gathered, hunted or fished. Grains began to be cultivated and animals domesticated. It seems that it is because of the women since they did not go out in search of food.¹³ Proof of this could be that, in all primitive peoples, the gods linked to agriculture and livestock are always women. The deities that, among the Hindus, Aztecs, and Incas, “taught” the people the domestication of animals and the cultivation of vegetables, were female characters.

This completely changed life; although hunger was not overcome, food became more secure, because it no longer depended solely on the chance of finding game or fish, or more or less fruit. Those human beings stopped being nomads because they no longer needed to constantly move in pursuit of food. They became sedentary. They had a small garden next to the hut where the cow or the pigs or the domesticated birds were also kept. The cultivation was done with very rudimentary methods, barely scraping the ground. Villages appeared, which were very small. The population became stable. Other advances in infrastructure were the discoveries of the wheel, fire, weaving, and metallurgy. Anyway, everything was very precarious. A bad harvest and hunger reappeared; wars of people against people were waged, and they massacred each other for food.

From the point of view of structure and superstructure, barbarism is essentially the same as savagery. It continued to be an egalitarian society in which the division of tasks took place naturally. There was an organisation, which could be called a superstructure, but very elementary, functional and not oppressive. As there are more solid social structures such as the peasantry, in the superstructure, there are kings, and chiefs of more stable tribes than in the savagery stage. Great songs and poetry, and oral literature, emerge and have reached the present day.

As for the problem of whether they had a religion, we would have to ask ourselves whether they had it like the ones we know. This is also studied a lot, there are different interpretations. What is held is that totemism and the belief in magic existed. The totem symbolised the ancestor common to the entire tribe and affirmed the veneration of ancestors and the weight of the elderly in the communist society.

As in savagery, the tribal community was democratic and resolved everything. Many times, it appointed a chieftain, whom they could also turn to whenever they wanted. This chieftain, was he already an institution? We could say yes or no. It is a subject of discussion. They had no institutions, no permanent state or bureaucratic superstructure; that is, whoever they chose they could remove. It was a very democratic system.

Today, modern research shows that things were more complex than was believed in the last century and, of course, than Marx and Engels believed. They had more organisations. For example, of the young. Also, the shamans, who, according to an anthropological current, were already to a certain extent a semi-official religion because they transmitted the myths. They had institutions of all kinds, of adolescents, of artisans. More modern research shows that life was more complex and that these organisations were like small unions or clubs; that is, there was much more organisation than just the tribal community.

For example, the young people made a kind of generational lodge; generally, in every village, there was a large hut, separated from the village, where all the adolescents lived together; it was the stage of sexual initiation, which indicates the very high morality lacking repressions that the primitive communists had. No person of adult age was allowed to approach. The children, born of this coexistence, were considered children of the tribe; they were everyone’s pride and were protected by the entire community. Those children got into all the shacks and their arrival was a party; they were the only ones privileged in relation to the other children. The stage of sexual initiation lasted a few years during which everyone had relationships with everyone, and they made efforts to be the

¹³ See *Woman's Evolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1973, by the Marxist anthropologist and Trotskyist militant Evelyn Reed (1905-1979).

ones who had the most sexual relationships. After a few years, they established a relationship and returned to the village. This, which would correspond to a very advanced communist society, shows how women were on an equal footing.

The law of uneven and combined development allows us to explain current situations, incredible for our culture, which are the product of superstructural aspects of primitive communism that persist in this imperialist era, such as, for example, the strength of kinship ties. The capitalists in Africa used to move entire tribes, especially to the diamond mines and also to factories. Before, they would grab all the young boys in the village and take them to the mines. The boys died, and life lasted 27 years in the mines. They died from exploitation but also from sadness at being separated from their family and tribe.

The Spanish had already noticed in the conquest of the Americas this strong bond that was generated in the primitive community. At first, they forcibly took the young people alone to work in the mines. When they realised that the young people couldn't stand loneliness, they began to move the families, the entire tribe. With this support, the boys endured more time working. Afterwards, they renewed them and brought another tribe. In this way, the boys managed to work long hours and make great profits for the capitalists.

The capitalism of the year 1935 rediscovered something similar in a test that it did and that revolutionised sociology. It was proposed to a group of friends from a large factory that they organise themselves to work as they wished; the result was that they yielded almost 50 per cent more. The modern exploiters, as the conquerors had done, discovered that these forms of relationship could be used to increase capitalist exploitation: set them free and let them exploit each other in friendly relations.

The persistence of myths of early communist life can also be used in favour of the class struggle. Nigeria is an African republic that combines a large and unionised working class with a large population with ideological remnants of tribal life. A large textile factory went on strike but the workers, trade union inexperienced, returned to work after a fortnight without having achieved anything. The union leaders were clever; they summoned the tribe's shaman to perform some exorcisms for those who had abandoned the struggle and this caused everyone to go on strike again. This shows the influence of ideology, the strength it has, and how it can sometimes be used in favour of the class struggle.

Ideology also changes as historical conditions change, as a study done on the Pacific islands shows. The villagers had an ancient myth of an evil man with tanned skin. When white sailors and missionaries began to arrive in Tahiti and elsewhere, this is how they described it in their reports: the evil man of the myth had tanned skin. One hundred years later, the same myth of the evil man still exists but now the locals represent him as blond and blue-eyed. In other words, the British and Yankee imperialist colonisation has produced changes in their ideology.

An example of the different morality existing in a society of exploitation from that in which there is none can be seen in the different way of taming the horse that exists between our Pampa Indian and the gaucho. The horse, new to America, became an extraordinary element for the Indians because it made it possible to travel great distances, for example, travelling from Chile, crossing Patagonia and the pampas. The Indian, living in a primitive communist society, loves the animal, as does his family. To tame the horse, for several days everyone in the family caresses it; the little ones, the wife, and the father caress him all over his body to get him rid of the tickles. When the horse no longer has any, they mount it. They do it bareback, without saddle or bridle, achieving the famous Indian wonder of managing the horse without reins; they handle it only with their knees. With both hands free, the Indian warrior attacks with the spear on the left and the boleadoras¹⁴ on the right, which drove the white soldiers crazy. They advanced at a trot and attacked with both arms because they drove with their knees, without reins or bridles.

14 An instrument composed of two or three balls of stone or other heavy material, lined with leather and held with thongs, which is thrown at the legs or neck of animals to apprehend them.

In the same pampa, a few leagues further on, is the gaucho. Close to the Indian but in a capitalist society of exploitation, where he is mistreated, the estancia¹⁵ boss beats him up. How, then, does the gaucho tame the horse? He transfers this relationship of exploitation to the horse, which is his inferior. With the help of other gauchos, he lassoes the horse and ties it to a hitching post. Then the tamer grabs a *talero*, a big whip, and the first thing he does is give it a devastating beating: they give it the mother of all beatings. After that, then, they tie the horse's front legs. Hobbled, they put the saddle on him — which takes a lot of work because the horse jumps everywhere because of the pain — and then they mount him. Once mounted, the taming is lashes and more lashes of the whip, to dominate the bucking of the animal. The great tamer, the one who masters the art of taming, is that rider who, at the moment when the animal with its bucking is about to knock him down, knows how to hit it, here, next to the ear, knock! The horse faints; the poor animal falls and the tamer runs away. That gaucho is considered a taming artist when, in reality, he is a torturer who subjects the animal to whippings, culminating in a club blow. The opposite of how the Indians treat the horse. It is a magnificent and real example, typical of our country, described by many commentators. The Indians tamed their horses in this way because of their primitive communist morality which was transferred to their relationship with animals as well.

Marxists discuss whether primitive communism was a happy stage of humanity. Mandel holds that it was an unpleasant stage. Lefebvre, like Marx, does not think so. He says that the heyday of primitive communism was a very beautiful time of peasant life: a creative stage in which peasant science and art emerged, and where there was no exploitation of man by man. The flip side is that it was a life of great helplessness against the forces of nature: droughts, floods, plagues, epidemics and other natural catastrophes. Besides, the danger of starvation was always present. Marxists are divided between Mandel and Lefebvre-type opinions.

We have almost reached the conviction that there is not only exploitation in the world but also oppression. In this, we have to be very careful. We draw this conclusion not only from the condition of women and black people but also from the studies that we have done on the run because we are politicians and not researchers of prehistory.

In this beautiful primitive communism, in which there was a great democracy, the people who have investigated it — in love with this regime — point out, however, that those who did the work were the children. There was oppression of children; when they grew up, they worked less, but they always busted the youngest. At the age of seventeen or eighteen, practically nothing was done. Most of the work was done from ages three to seventeen. We call that oppression and not exploitation because as they grow, they are liberated.

Marxism has not solved all these issues. You have to study, read the research, think deeply and disagree. You can always disagree, and on these issues more so because no one, no Marxist would dare to say: "What I am saying is correct." Marxists who work on these questions recognise that there is a great deal of unresolved discussion, and new data is always being added with new research.

VIII. The emergence of exploitation and the different economic systems

The great historical break that inaugurates what has been called civilization or history is the rise of exploitation. In the third topic, Marx's concept of alienation, we have given it considerable prominence. At the opposite pole of social equality, in which humanity lived for more than a million years, minority groups and social sectors will emerge that will exploit others, the majority, dispossessed and exploited. This took place in different regions and times. The first was the Asian mode of production, with a hierarchical caste system, and then the slave mode of production, in which social classes emerged —masters and slaves— and individual private ownership of the means of production.

¹⁵ *Estancias* are large landholdings spread over extensive areas, often 10,000 ha or more. In the Argentinian grasslands, the pampas, *estancias* have historically been estates used to raise livestock (cattle or sheep).

The Asian mode of production: the state and bureaucracy emerge

Approximately 7,000 years ago, the greatest revolution in the productive forces took place before that generated by capitalism. A new form of agricultural production is discovered: farming next to large rivers by making irrigation canals. For the first time, man can solve the problem of hunger. It was a gigantic revolution to such an extent that it opened up a whole new era or historical period for humanity, infinitely superior to primitive communism, and from which we have not yet come out: the exploitation of man by man.

Human beings begin to use the waters of the great rivers (the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia or the Middle East, the Nile in Egypt, the Yellow in China, and the Ganges and the Indus in India) for irrigated agriculture, which allows them to produce a lot, approximately between three or four times more than what each inhabitant needed to survive. Thus, for the first time, a surplus appears in the production of the entire society, which can be stored for the times of the year when production drops or to face catastrophes. For the first time, peoples emerge that can defend themselves from hunger, which systematically attacked the primitive communists.

With irrigated agriculture comes civilization, that is, cities, commerce, written language and all the basic institutions we know today (state, army, church, school, etc.). Although we have Egyptian society more in mind, because of its proximity to Europe and because of the pyramids and the movies of the pharaohs, the largest of the Asian societies was China.

The Incas, Mayans and Aztecs of America, are a variant of the use of irrigation and the mode of production with castes, of the Asian type. Instead of rivers, they had a special irrigation format adapted to the characteristics of mountainous regions. They cultivated terraces on the fertile slopes of the mountains and took advantage of the meltwater from the high peaks. The Inca empire, in the Andes mountain range, was similar to but less advanced than the great civilizations of the Aztecs in Mexico, and the Mayans in Guatemala. Contrary to what some historians and anthropologists hold, the Inca system was also Asian because it was based on irrigation management. It was also heavily exploited, although the technique for using water was different.

In terms of social structure, the Asian mode is a caste system. They are no longer all the same and, although private property and the right of inheritance do not predominate, privileged sectors emerge (the upper castes) that brutally exploit the peasants and artisans (grouped in the lower castes). The privileged do not own the water, the land and canals, or the tools (that is why they are not classes), but they take advantage of their position as bureaucrats, as administrators of the distribution of water and, by that means, of the production by others and the distribution.

A study of these populations, carried out by Soviet researchers persecuted by Stalin,¹⁶ shows what these small riverside tribes were like, and their difference from the same tribes but cattle farmers and away from the rivers. It is as if we had one here, in Buenos Aires, next to the river and another in La Plata, without a river. The tribe from La Plata has to cultivate dry crops and hunt: their social system is almost primitive communism, with meetings. In the river tribe, there is a guy who manages the use of water. Although it is a very small tribe, there is one who puts feathers on his head and does not work anymore. He has at least two who help him, they are armed and they don't work either. These bureaucrats have spears and take care that the peasants do not have them, they administer and receive a part of the production to be administered. In the tribe of La Plata, everyone has a spear, when something has to be resolved, a meeting is held and a vote is taken; that is, there is a big difference and the cause is irrigation. So far, we are talking about a small tribe with a small river. But the same study shows that, with a larger river, the one with feathers would have eight bureaucrats helping him.

16 At a congress of Marxist orientologists in January 1931, the Stalinist bureaucracy rejected the existence of the Asian mode of production, and its main supporters were accused of being Trotskyists. Lajos Magyar (1891-1940), a Hungarian revolutionary in charge of the Eastern Department of the Third International, was banished to a gulag and disappeared around 1940. Another one was the great researcher and historian David Riazanov, already mentioned in note 4 of the chapter "What is Marxism".

For the first time, social differentiation appears between those who work and produce and those who manage the work and production of others. This is possible, in the first place, because there is a surplus of food, which allows the existence of people who do not produce but eat. It also has to do with the solution to a need. Irrigation requires organisation, with judges who administer the waters. The one who cultivates tries to make the water go his way. Hence, there has to be an administrator to prevent some (the strongest) from keeping all the water. The distribution of water generates an antagonism and someone has to appear to regulate it, to prevent that antagonism from destroying social life. Then, for the first time in the history of humanity, the state arises to manage the waters and the construction of canals and dams.

We will dwell on an important and very interesting question: the emergence of the state, which we have already said is the backbone of the superstructure. How did it emerge? Let's forget a bit about Marxism, although Marxists have studied this question a lot. Outside of Marxism, there are great historical works. For example, I recommend a book by Samuel Kramer: *History Begins at Sumer*,¹⁷ translated into Spanish. In a short and easy-to-read text, which is not made from a Marxist point of view, it is shown that just 4000 years B.C. (that is, about 6,000 years ago) in a region of Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the state and the bureaucratic institutions that we mentioned arose. Accidentally, some written tablets were discovered that could be deciphered. Thus, they found huge surprises. For example, in that ancient state, there were the same accommodations that exist in Russia today. The ministers and the military recommended their children and pressured the teachers to give them good grades. With those high qualifications, they managed to be state officials.

This book was a true revolution in anthropological studies. It showed that, at that time, when writing appears, the state also appears. A state that represses those who work. At that time there were already peasants, artisans, priests, teachers, and judges; all around an emperor and a very strict government. In this way, one of the variants of the Marxist conception of the state was confirmed and enriched.

Marx and Engels had two oscillating interpretations of the question of the state. One is based on the Asian mode of production, and the other is based on the slave mode of production, which we will see in detail later. The two interpretations can be found depending on which work of Marx and Engels is consulted. Both were great scholars and kept abreast of advances in science. The history they knew best was that of the Mediterranean: Greece and Rome, and also the Germanic peoples. In their time, the societies of Asia, especially China and India, began to be studied in Europe. So, Marx and Engels, in some works and correspondence, reflected the development of the state in the Mediterranean¹⁸ and in other works, they took these new studies on the state in Asian regimes.¹⁹

There are quite profound differences. The Asian —older, but studied later— was characterised by the fact that there were no classes. In contrast, in Mediterranean societies, the state emerges with the classes, as a tool for the domination of one class over another. About a thousand years before Christ, or even less, the classes arise. There is structured private property and there are slaves. The state appears as the organ of domination of the slave owners, who establish a kingdom or a republic, with armies and police to prevent rebellions.

If the Asian mode of production is taken, the interpretation changes: the state arises with exploitation, even though there are no classes. In this economic system, there are no classes as we know them. A class is a sector that has properties and passes them by inheritance to their children or relatives. If an individual is bourgeois, owner of a factory, his son will be bourgeois and will inherit the factory. If he is a landowner, his son will inherit the land and will be a landowner. Not so in the Asian system. One can be very poor but if he is capable, he can become a high official. He would take an exam, the village scribe would take him under his protection, and he could rise to the

¹⁷ Samuel Kramer (1897-1990). He was born in Kyiv, Ukraine; he emigrated to the United States as a child, fleeing pogroms. A scholar of Assyrian civilization, his best-known work was *History Begins in Sumer* (1981).

¹⁸ In 1884, Engels published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, already mentioned.

¹⁹ Both Marx and Engels refer to the Asiatic mode of production in numerous works and correspondence. The most widespread mention is that of 1859, in the *Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy*.

highest magistracy. As happens today in the USSR, there was accommodation. But the position was not inherited.

As capitalism standardises the world, there are fewer and fewer contemporary examples to study. In Tibet, where some institutions and customs of the Asian regime remain, the lamas —Buddhist priests— go through peasant homes looking for a boy with certain characteristics that they interpret to be the reincarnation of Buddha. When they find him, they educate him for years, and then he goes on to lead the religion and the country. Between him and the exploited peasants, there is still a scale of civil servants who live off the latter.

In the states of the highest development of the Asiatic mode of production, there was an emperor, who surrounded himself with officials chosen by their ability. In China and other larger states, the highest offices of state were held by eunuchs, officials castrated so they could not have families, and then answered unconditionally to the emperor. The Catholic church, which has Asian-type elements, also had a custom of castrating boys. It was still done until the 19th century.

Without ignoring or approving its totalitarian and exploitative character, we have to point out that, contradictorily, the state fulfilled a progressive function, vital to guarantee economic production, such as achieving the peaceful distribution of water and preventing peasants and villages from warring with each other for control. The administrative officials fulfilled a specific role concerning production because the different sectors linked to production and with specific tasks belong to the structure but these officials also combined with the superstructure because they depended on the state. The state was part of the superstructure but also of the structure because it dominated all production. The officials fulfilled, then, a double role concerning the state and concerning production.

As the flow of the river, the number of people it covered, and the surface of the irrigated land grew, the number of bureaucrats, of officials also increased. The tendency was to divide tasks: who was in charge of teaching, who was armed, and who collected taxes. This is how the state developed and acquired incredible dimensions, as in China, Sumer, and Egypt. Apparatuses of thousands and thousands, controlling millions of people, managing the largest rivers in the world, headed by omnipotent emperors.

The land belonged to the state. In the Inca system, one-third was worked for the Inca, one-third for the peasant, and one-third for the army and priests. No one could say “this is mine”. The exploitation was done through the state and officials and higher castes had all kinds of privileges and advantages. Everything belonged to the state. In this mode of production, there were also artisans and merchants. But economic and social life was dominated by state officials, who were a caste with a very high standard of living, much higher than that of peasants. But we repeat what was said at the beginning of the chapter, they did not own the land, or the tools, or anything.

On a small scale, trade appears, and there appears, then, a minimal private property. Trade was not intense since, in general, all the production gave similar products given it was done on similar lands and climates. In Egypt, for example, since wheat was produced along the Nile, it was not this grain that was traded. Rather, it was a fine craft made in large state-dependent workshops and this became the basis of trade. In Mexico, on the other hand, before the arrival of the Spanish, there were merchant neighbourhoods but they were dominated by the emperor and officials. At any time, the merchants could be expropriated. In this stage —when cities arose and each one had its artisans— luxury items were made and those were the products that were exchanged in trade.

In Asian society, the superstructure developed into its current outlines. As we already mentioned, those who administer, those who teach, those who write, the priests, the soldiers and the police emerge. They did not work on the land or in the artisan workshops but forced the rest to work and prevented the peasants and artisans from having weapons or administering. The whole complex social life is controlled by this bureaucratic state apparatus in a totalitarian way. Apparently, writing fulfilled a state function, which was keeping accounts, and which was done in the temples and at the service of the emperor or absolute monarch. The three main layers of the Asian bureaucracy are the

military, the administrators, and the priests. For the first time, religious beliefs emerge that directly serve to strengthen the dominant castes and subjugate the lower ones.²⁰

In their development, these societies begin to have an important idle workforce. There are very capable builders and engineers who, responding to the needs of production, build large canals and dams, based on the mobilisation of tens of thousands and thousands of peasants who are forced to work for free.

These societies were already very complex; with colossal states and institutions as we have seen. They had some common characteristics. For example, in art, they had a mania for monumental constructions. Immense works, like the pyramids of Egypt, for the vindication of the state. They are imposing constructions, not very subtle, they have nothing to do with man: they are immense geometric shapes. The pyramids in Egypt, the Great Wall of China and the great temples of the Sun and the Moon in Mexico are some of the best known. They were built by idle labour after the completion of the large irrigation works. It is a common feature with other bureaucratic regimes: Stalinism, for example, also built monumental constructions. Later we will see that in the following stages, already with the existence of classes, another type of art emerged in which the influence of the individual is greater.

There is an important development of science, but empirical: it gives partial solutions and does not rise to formulate general laws. This is because of the scant development of trade, which will be the great engine for the progress of arithmetic, geometry and the more abstract sciences. But in the field of concrete applications, new methods and techniques, great advances were achieved: from gunpowder to printing, passing through writing, and the resolution of the Pythagorean theorem for specific cases. There were also advances regarding the measurement of time, the determination of the four seasons and the solar year that, for example, the Aztecs made. The Aztec civilization that emerged from the tenth century, and reached its maximum splendour between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, also developed meteorology, as a logical consequence of the application of its knowledge to facilitate its agricultural work.

The numerous discoveries and inventions of this stage of humanity will prepare the ground for the emergence of modern abstract science—the science of general laws—which will only come about with the Greeks, accompanying the great development of trade in the Mediterranean.

Summarising, the Asian mode of production emerges together with exploitation but without ruling classes; with castes of officials, of bureaucrats. Let's review the three basic categories:

Infrastructure: irrigated agriculture, construction of dams and canals, minimal trade, and the rise of cities.

Structure: castes and class embryos.

Superstructure: the institutions that will characterise the different civilized societies arise: state, army, church, school, etc. Monumental art and empirical science.

Based on the non-existence of a class of proprietors, some intellectuals hold an idealised, totally false version of the Inca regime. For example, Maritegui²¹ saw in the empire of the Incas a kind of socialism, supposedly based on the collective and the communist solidarity of the villages (*ayllus*). Another author²² speaks of the “socialist empire of the Incas” but uses the word socialist in the sense that liberals give it, a despotic, repressive regime. The reality was the existence of a ferocious exploitation of the peasants sustained by a repressive state; the opposite of socialism. The legend

20 In 2019, the prestigious journal *Nature* published online a multidisciplinary study produced by various institutions in the United Kingdom, United States, Japan, and Germany whose research in various ancient cultures shows this dominance mechanism in exploitation systems: “Complex societies precede moralising gods throughout world history”] See www.nature.com/nature.

21 Jose Carlos Mariategui (1894-1930). Peruvian Marxist politician and intellectual. In 1928 he broke with APRA and founded the Socialist Party which, after his death, merged with the Communist Party. His most popular work is *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality*.

22 It refers to the Belgian economist Louis Baudin (1887-1964), who wrote *A Socialist Empire: The Incas of Peru*. It refers to the Belgian economist Louis Baudin (1887-1964), who wrote *A Socialist Empire: The Incas of Peru*.

that explains the fall of the Incas is also false because the Spaniards deceived the Incas and this is why they stopped fighting. Our Marxist interpretation is different. The Incas fell for two reasons: the first, because of being an exploitative regime, the peasants had no interest in defending the Incas. The second reason is that, when the Spanish arrived, there was a civil war between two brothers, which reflected economic phenomena. One of the brothers, Atahualpa, was in Quito, Ecuador, and the other, Huascar, was in Cusco, Peru. They warred with each other, which made them weak against the invader. A similar situation took place in the conquest of Mexico, in which peoples subjugated by the Aztecs allied with Hernan Cortes.

It is an unknown for specialists to answer but perhaps it was the worst stage of exploitation, even worse than the slavery stage. We have as an example what was already mentioned in the alienation topic, and which can be appreciated in the British Museum. Artisans who deviated from the established model were punished. This shows what the exploitative regime was like: the state regulated everything, but the upper castes—the merchants and high officials—lived very well, thanks to exploitation.

Around the Asian system—it was Marx who studied it and gave it a name—there is a great discussion. Stalinism has systematically denied its existence. Although it is conceivable that Stalin, who was very ignorant, was unaware that Marx had studied it, this denial likely originated in the polemic developed with Trotsky on the Chinese revolution. Stalin argued that China was feudal and concluded on the need for the revolution in stages, with a first democratic stage of unity and capitulation to the bourgeoisie. Trotsky and others argued that what was decisive was the combination of the Asian regime with the capitalist, which is why he insisted on an independent policy of the proletariat in rupture with the bourgeoisie.²³ As we have already said, there was a large current of Soviet researchers who deepened the studies of Marx who placed the Asian system as one of the four modes of production of exploitation. Despite placing their research on a theoretical level and not participating in the political discussion at the time, its main figures, as we have seen, paid with their lives for departing from official science.

The fact is that since the 1930s, the popularisation manuals of the communist parties explain that there were three systems or modes of production. They deleted the Asian. A good example is given by Marta Harnecker, a well-known publicist linked to the Chilean and Cuban CPs. In her manual, *The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism*,²⁴ a work in which entire generations of Latin American leftist militants were formed, she mystified the Asian mode of production, dissolving it into a variant of feudalism. She says:

Therefore, to study the essential characteristics of each mode of production, we must focus our analysis, not on the exchange relations but on the ‘social form of the existence of the workforce’, that is, on the relations of production. Slavery, servitude and free wage labour would be the basic forms of existence of the workforce in economic systems where there is a relationship of exploitation. So far, we have used the word ‘feudal’ in quotation marks since we considered it important to dwell on a critical study of it.

[...] Another specific historical form of the servile mode of production would be ‘Asiatism’ or what has been called the ‘Asian mode of production’. Marx says the following in this regard: ‘Should the direct producers not be confronted by a private landowner, but rather, as in Asia, under direct subordination to a state which stands over them as their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign (...) there need exist no stronger political or economic pressure than that common to all subjects to that state. The state is then the supreme lord.’ [*Marx & Engels Collected Works*, vol 37, Capital Vol III, p. 776, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 2010. Translator.] There would therefore

23 Stalin published his “Questions on the Chinese Revolution” in *Pravda*, on 27 April 1927. Trotsky virulently criticised them in a text dated 7 May 1927. See “The Chinese Revolution and Comrade Stalin’s Theses”, in *Leon Trotsky on China*, Pathfinder Press, NY, 1976.

24 There is an English version, published by the University of Sydney, 1976. However, for this work, it has been translated directly from the Spanish original, *Los conceptos elementales del materialismo histórico*, <http://www.rebellion.org/docs/87917.pdf>.

exist a servile mode of production, which would take different forms in each concrete historical case.

In the quote, we can see how this disseminator omits the recognition of a privileged caste of non-proprietary state bureaucracy, which sustains that absolutist and exploitative state.

The slave mode of production: classes and private property emerge

Approximately 3,000 years ago, around the Mediterranean Sea (Southern Europe, North Africa, the Near and Middle East), a new type of exploiters' society emerged, the slave-owning one, whose greatest exponents were the Greek civilization (its main city was Athens) and the Latin (its main city was Rome). In the Mediterranean, primitive communism jumped to the regime of slavery, without going through Asian society. If we start from the Germanic tribes, or the Greek tribes (before Ancient Greece), the process is as follows: from primitive communism, we move on to class society. Instead, as we said before, if one takes the geographical setting of the great rivers of Asia and Africa or the Andes, from primitive communism we move on to the Asian mode of production or irrigation society.

The new slave society was born as a product of two great changes in the development of productive forces. The first was the invention of the light metal plough that made it possible to extend agriculture to dry lands (which is why we call it rainfed agriculture). As it is a light plough, its furrows are shallow and it is only used to cultivate soft land, without forests, such as those that exist on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The second modification is the development of navigation, which allowed the exchange of the various productions that occurred on the shores of the sea, as a product of the different climates and soils. Wheat grew very well in Sicily and Egypt, which became the granaries of the Mediterranean world, like Canada, the United States and Argentina now. It was traded for the grapes and wine of Greece and Italy, and for the products of metallurgy—first bronze, then iron and steel— which began to develop in Greece and the Middle East.

At this point, we have to make an alert. Traditionally, these advances have been considered a great merit of the European Mediterranean peoples. The most recent studies show, however, that there was a great influence from the Middle East and even from India and China. At that time, those were the advanced civilizations; the Europeans, even the Mediterranean, were the barbarians, the backward ones. We have a mentality educated in the West, with a pro-European approach to the study of history, but it is increasingly known that the Asian influence was very large, even persisting until much later. For example, when studying the history of science, it has been found that great books and discoveries that were believed to be the work of Europeans were actually translations into Latin or Italian of works in Arabic. It seems that the Marxist law of value, which Aristotle came close to discovering at the time, was formulated by an Arab philosopher and economist from southern Spain, Averroes.²⁵

The development of production and trade gave rise to the emergence of a new socio-economic relationship: individual private property. The owner of a business and the owner of some land or the merchandise that was exchanged begin to emerge. Some men own other men, whom they make work like beasts until they die, the slaves. Until then, no prisoners were taken in wars; those captured were either killed or assimilated as equals to society. For example, the original peoples of our country, who did not yet know private property, assimilated Christian captives who even became great chiefs. The most famous was Colonel Baigorria.²⁶ This is explained in the episode of *Martín Fierro*

²⁵ Averroes, Abu al-Walid ibn Rušd (1126–1198). Andalusian Muslim philosopher, jurist and doctor. He was qadi (judge) in Seville and Cordoba, his hometown and seat of the caliphate. He introduced the works of Aristotle in Europe. These, which had been faithfully translated into Arabic since the third century, were disseminated in European universities accompanied by the commentaries of "Averrois Cordubensis". The final reconquest of the territory of Spain took place at the end of the fifteenth century.

²⁶ Manuel Baigorria (1809-1875). Argentine military man who participated in the civil wars and spent many years as a refugee among the native peoples who came to consider him chieftain. His life serves as inspiration for the story of the

when he escapes from justice and takes refuge in indigenous territory. There, either they killed him or he was incorporated as one more. In the slave society, the slaves will emerge from the vanquished.

In the ancient world, for the first time, the defeated peoples were transformed into slaves. With private property, man acquired a new economic-social value: he can work for his masters, and he can be transformed into a slave, just another property of the master. Thus, in the social structure of the ancient world, well-differentiated classes appear for the first time. There are the landowners, the masters, the merchants, and the slaves. There also appears, albeit on a small scale, a proletariat: free workers who receive a salary for working in the small workshops of Athens and Rome (proletarian originates from the Latin word *prole* —progeny—; those who have nothing, except their progeny, their children). But the fundamental classes are the masters and the slaves: the master owns the slaves—who are considered a special type of tool—and makes them work to their physical limit, with the right of life and death over them.

At this time the state emerges as the armed arm of the dominant, exploiting classes, which will be common to all class societies. Its appearance is a product of the irreconcilable character of class interests. Its fundamental feature is the special detachments of armed men and its function is to defend the interests of the exploiting minority. The state, in the ancient world, was the organ of the owners of the slaves and the great empires. In turn, the different sectors of exploiting owners fight among themselves for control of the state; it begins to look a lot like what we know today.

With the rise of classes, the class struggle also appears and develops. All antiquity is crossed by great insurrections of slaves, but there are also struggles between class sectors. Thus, for example, there were great fights between the landowners and the commercial bourgeoisie and, many times, the slave insurrections of antiquity decanted from these frictions. The case of Spartacus²⁷ is not as told by Howard Fast²⁸ or the film but expresses these conflicts. Spartacus was very rich and had been such a great gladiator, like Cassius Clay²⁹ now, that he was given his freedom, and become an entrepreneur in the gladiator business. Because of his condition, he was linked to both the gladiators and the great Roman landowners. These were furious because they were displaced by the usurious and commercial bourgeoisie managed by the state. This is how the landowners decide to stage a coup using the gladiators. Spartacus enters the conspiracy and prepares for it, pleading with the gladiators. When the landowners see their interests as exploiters in danger due to the dynamics that the intervention of the slaves could take, they back down. Spartacus continues, but the origin of that rebellion was linked to friction between exploiters.

We already said that Julius Caesar was assassinated in the Roman Senate. In Hollywood movies this fact is painted as a personal matter but, in reality, it had to do with a serious social conflict. He was from a large landowning family but he had made agreements with other sectors, with the lending bourgeoisie. Other landowning oligarchs, in decline, are the ones who kill him because they opposed that pact.

Another example of a clash between different sectors of exploiters was Nero.³⁰ He went down in history as a tremendous murderer and madman, capable of setting Rome on fire while playing the

refuge among the pampas Indians of the protagonist of the 19th century gaucho poem *Martín Fierro*.

27 Spartacus (113 BC–71 BC). Thracian slave who led the most important rebellion against the Roman Republic on Italian soil, which occurred between 73 BC and 71 BC, known as the Third Servile War or Gladiator War.

28 Howard Fast (1914–2003). Communist American writer who broke with the CP in 1956 over the invasion of Hungary. Persecuted by the McCarthy Commission, his most famous novel, *Spartacus*, was banned by the FBI. Made into a movie in 1960, it won four Oscars. Beyond its idealised vision of the uprising and Spartacus himself, the film was an important milestone in the fight against McCarthyism.

29 Cassius Clay (1942–2016), Muhamad Ali after converting to Islam. Exceptional African-American boxer, world champion in the 1960s, who was stripped of his title for refusing to fight in Vietnam.

30 (37–68). Roman emperor who took over at 16 and was driven to suicide at 30. The widely released Hollywood movie *Quo Vadis* (1951) portrayed him as a cruel and insane lyre-playing tyrant as Rome burned. This picture of Nero has been reviewed for years by new investigations, which reveal that he would have taken measures that contributed to relatively ease the living conditions of commoners, freedmen, and slaves, the dispossessed classes of imperial Rome. In 2021, a five-month exhibition at the British Museum in London showed an alternative vision to that infamous reputation. Both in Rome in 2011 and in Treves (Germany) in 2019, there were similar exhibitions.

lyre. Actually, as emperor he did the same atrocities as the others but, doing a Marxist analysis, we see he was a fairly progressive ruler, with acceptance among the slaves and the plebeian classes. He tried to make a Bonapartist government arbitrating between the different sectors of the ruling class. His bad reputation comes from his progressive measures, especially towards slaves since he tried to liquidate the existing legislation by which when a slave killed his master, all the other slaves of that master were killed and buried with him.

There are class antagonisms between slave owners and merchants, between commoners and slave owners and merchants; there are wars between cities and even between nations. This is why in this period powerful armies are organised, intending to bloodily repress slave insurrections and war against other peoples to enslave or colonise them. The development of international trade and large cities that monopolised it gave rise to the great empires, that of Alexander in Greece, and those of Carthage, Rome and Alexandria, which oppressed innumerable peoples.

The political regime in the slave society is an oligarchic democracy, in which only slave owners and merchants had citizen rights. Commoners were not citizens and slaves were not considered human.

Contradictorily, this society of brutal exploitation allowed a great development of art and science, since those who had the status of citizens had all their time for speculative leisure, to think or have fun. On the other hand, the development of commerce imposed a great leap for mathematics.

Greece gave birth to modern science, the atomic theory of physics, mathematics, arithmetic, geometry, logic, biology, and medicine. The Greeks contributed the ability to generalise by giving the first laws of abstract thought. They also contributed to the delimitation of the scientific object, which answers the question: what is it that is studied? But they are sciences without movement. They find it hard to understand that things move, that lines move, and that numbers move, perhaps with the single exception of Heraclitus of Ephesus.³¹ Movement will be the great discovery of the Arabs, and, above all, of the Renaissance.

Modern art was also born in Greece, which reaches our days. Theatre as we know it: the division into acts emerged at that time. Also, the custom of great public spectacles. The music appears, separated from the choirs; sculpture and painting. Everything has the characteristic of immobility. Take, for example, sculpture. It is a human art, not monumental like the previous one, of irrigation societies. But all the sculptures are static, they have no movement.

In all that time there are only two moving statues: the Winged Victory of Samothrace and Myron's Discus Thrower. Both art and science were static and, the latter was little linked to production because they were the product of a class, the slave owners, simply concerned with enjoying overproduction. It was not a dynamic, vigorous class, launched to dominate the world or nature.

This caused phenomena that, even now, surprise scholars. In Alexandria, there was a character who was a colossal genius, named Heron.³² He made hydraulic toys, with mechanisms that took advantage of falling water or the force of steam, of incredible perfection and ingenuity. But it never occurred to them to apply that talent, those techniques, to making machines that could be applied to production. The merchants also had no interest in developing production because they gained from exchanging the products of the different regions under influence of the empire. Their profits arose from this exchange and sometimes from usury as well.

What daily life was like can be seen in Pompeii, a small town near present-day Naples, Italy, buried by the eruption of the Vesuvius volcano in 79 AD. When digging it up, it was possible to see with surprise how many customs of today's life already existed in that class society. For example, in electoral campaigns: "Vote for such" or "Vote for such and such." Or advertising, "Drink such a wine, it's the best" and this even when it was a small city. Also, there are the barracks, where they practiced swordsmanship all day.

31 Heraclitus of Ephesus (540 BC–480 BC). Greek philosopher considered the discoverer of the dialectic and the movement of reality. Alluding to that constant flow, he is assigned the phrase "No one bathes twice in the same river".

32 Heron of Alexandria. He lived in the 1st century; he died in AD 75.

The Mediterranean system, once it introduced rainfed agriculture into the infrastructure and slavery into the structure, came to a standstill and achieved almost no new development in production.

The ancient world entered an inexorable process of decay and disintegration because the ruling class was not interested in progress, or the development of productive forces. If at any time they needed more production, they exploited their slaves more, and that was it.

In the 4th century of the Christian era (year 313), the Roman Empire, already in full decline, officially adopted the Christian religion. In the 5th century, the fall of the Western Roman Empire occurred before the advance of the Germanic tribes, and the year 476 (the fall of the last Western Roman emperor), is considered the date of the beginning of the Middle Ages. The Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire, with its capital in Constantinople, persisted until 1451, when the Ottoman Turks conquered the city, renamed it Istanbul, and made it the capital of their empire.

The feudal mode of production

The third economic system of exploitation, feudalism, roughly corresponds to what is called the Middle Ages. It begins approximately in the 4th and 5th centuries and began to be overcome by capitalism in the 15th century. In schools, they paint the Middle Ages as a period of total darkness and regression in the history of humanity, but the reality is that it was a complex, contradictory period, where undeniable regressions were combined with great advances in infrastructure, which led to an important development of the productive forces.

On the one hand, because of the invasion of the Arabs, who from North Africa occupied Southern Spain from 711 AD, trade between the populations of the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea was closed for centuries (which we have already seen was a very dynamic factor for the development of previous societies). The whole of Europe was transformed into an agricultural economy based on self-sufficiency and the big cities languished.

But, at the same time, there was a great leap in the development of productive forces, which allowed the colonisation of the entire European continent. The use of the much heavier iron plough made it possible to cultivate the hard lands and wooded areas of central and northern Europe. There was also a great technical breakthrough: the rotation of cultivated land. If we have three pieces of land, we leave one uncultivated for a whole year, so that it recovers its fertility (it remains "fallow"), and it is rotated one by one. This was the great technique for restoring soil fertility and lasted two thousand years until chemical fertilisers were invented in the 20th century. Thus, as Argentina expanded the production of the countryside at the end of the 19th century, the same thing happened in Europe in the Middle Ages, over a thousand years ago, thanks to the iron plough and rotating cultivation.

New feudal relations of production emerged at the end of the Roman Empire and combined with the advance of the Germanic tribes. There was a coupling, an integration of two civilizations, which has nothing to do with the picture that is usually presented of the "invasions" of the "barbarians". It is the Roman Empire itself that imposes the system of serfs, of serfdom. As the imperial regime imposes so many taxes, having slaves no longer paid, so large slave owners get rid of them. The slaves worked less and less because of their disinterest since everything they produced was for the owner. At the same time, the big landowners left Rome because of the crisis and returned to their farms, and their estates. That is when they begin to give their slaves a share as if they were farmers. That was called settlement, which comes from settler. They told the slave: "Well, you are no longer a slave. You no longer work for me. You are free but you cannot move from this piece of land that I am giving you. You can work it and you only have to give me a quarter or a fifth of what you produce." In other words, in exchange for that freedom, they demanded a percentage of the production and, over time, of their work. So that they did not move from the assigned land and deliver the tribute, there were the armed knights. The dominant social sector always monopolises the arms. At that time, having a horse was like today having a tank or a plane, that's why the feudal lords were called knights. In

addition, metal armour and, above all, steel swords were very expensive. The peasants only had axes and other tools for working the land. The knights gave them barbaric beatings, although sometimes it was the other way around.

In the social structure of this new system, the two fundamental classes will be, on the side of the exploiters, the individual private owners, that is, the noble landowners who were the owners of the fiefdoms. On the other, the exploited, the peasants, the serfs of the glebe. Slavery disappears—or rather, it remains as a marginal, domestic phenomenon—and service relationships arise: the serf has to render services for the feudal lord.

The serf belongs to the fief. If the lord goes to another place and leaves his lands, or someone takes it from him, or he gives it to a relative, the peasants who work on it—the serfs—do not follow him but stay there and change lords. In slavery, the exploiter owns the men and the land. In feudalism, landed property is linked to the service of serfs. In slavery, everything the slave produces is for the owner. In feudalism, the magnitude of exploitation is clearly delimited: a tenth part is for the Christian church (the tithe) and of the seven days of the week, on one he rests, he works three days for the lord and three for himself.

At first, the colonising feudal lords played a very progressive role in favour of the people. To get the former slaves to accompany them to settle in new regions, the feudal knights invited them through edicts (similar to today's advertising), promising them many freedoms. It was usual for them to sign a contract, where they promised to defend their serfs, particularly from armed attacks (the feudal lord set up the military institution around them), and they demanded few services.

As production and population increased, the feudal mode of production—which lasted over a thousand years—became increasingly exploitative and reactionary. In its beginnings, the rights and privileges of the lords were very small; over the centuries they grew larger. In the second half, and towards the end of the Middle Ages, the situation of the peasants was dire. Taxes and services had been savagely increased and the feudal lord had all kinds of privileges and rights, some even capricious. For example, they were all maniacs for hunting and so they could enter the cultivated fields with their horses and dogs to go after the prey destroying the crops. The peasants were overwhelmed by dozens of rights from the lords and the Christian church, which was the other great exploiter and one of the largest landowners in Europe. France was the most feudal country—there came to be almost two hundred different serfdom obligations there on the eve of the great revolution of 1789. In Germany, the church was the main landowner for a long period of several centuries.

In the superstructure, the two main institutions of power were the state and the church, and each lord had his own military force. The state was in hierarchical steps: first, there was the lord or baron, who controlled a small piece of land, called a fiefdom (hence the word feudalism). A count or a duke commanded several lords. A prince commanded several counts or dukes. Above the princes was the king. Although there were some very strong ones, it was usual for princes, dukes and others to choose the weakest as king, so that he would not become much greater than them. The formula used by the Justice³³ of Aragon when crowning a new king is famous: “We, who are as much as you and altogether more than you, make you king of Aragon if you swear the privileges and if not, no.”

The Christian church—which remained united until the 16th century—had a decisive importance, and for a whole period it was a factor of domination superior to the kings themselves because it was the institution that gave unity to the feudal system since it monopolised the teaching, the registry office, and almost all cultural expressions, art, and science, also it was a great landowner.

In fact, in one period, the religious, the church—also totally hierarchical, with the pope at the top—controlled the entire state superstructure, except for the nobility (the king, the princes, and other lords, who were also indirectly influenced by it). The absence of large cities, the disappearance of commerce, and the role of the church made the population very uneducated, particularly the nobles themselves, who were mostly illiterate, such as the great emperor Charlemagne.³⁴

³³ The Justice was chosen among the richest families of Aragon and had to mediate between the king and the lords.

³⁴ Charlemagne (742-814). King of the Franks. In the year 800, he was anointed by the Pope as the Germanic Roman Emperor in an attempt at the imperial recomposition of feudal Europe.

Except in the convents, where the monks read and studied all day, the cultural level drops sharply. The picture of princes and other feudal nobles as gentle, educated and romantic knights does not reflect reality. They were brutes, they ate with their hands, they relieved themselves under the stairs, there were no bathrooms, and they never bathed.

Medieval art was essentially rural and revolved around the nobles and the churches. As cities developed, a more evolved urban art emerged, largely sustained by the growth of craft and merchant guilds. Its maximum expression was the great Gothic cathedrals, the pride of the cities and a demonstration of the wealth and power of these guilds. Painting and sculpture also developed, initiating the Renaissance.³⁵

In this period of feudal Europe, science was much more backward than in the Arab world. There is a stagnation or retreat, linked to the withdrawal of life towards the countryside and the great weakness of trade. Beginning with the Renaissance —fifteenth century— scientific achievements began to be translated from Arabic, serving as the basis for the colossal development of modern science and technology.

Between the 13th and 14th centuries, with the development of agriculture and the growth of the population, new social sectors appeared in the bowels of feudalism. Linked to exchange and usury, a commercial and financial bourgeoisie began to take shape, which received a new impetus with the re-establishment of trade in the Mediterranean, and the opening of communication channels with the Far East. This fuelled the reappearance and growth of cities, which were called burghs —hence the word bourgeoisie. Trade and money were concentrated in these territories, and bourgeois merchants and moneylenders became rich. An even international bourgeoisie, as is the case of the Medici,³⁶ and other great families of the late Middle Ages.

Every time the king or feudal lord needed money, the cities lent it to him but made him sign a contract: to respect their autonomy. Merchants and moneylenders took great care to remain independent from the nobles, strengthening their burghs.

Alongside this commercial and moneylending bourgeoisie, the artisans grew. The most important centre of artisanal development was in Italy, in particular in Florence, and later in the Netherlands. Craftsmanship techniques were perfected: tailors worked fifteen days or a month to make a single suit.

The artisan guilds were made up of petty bourgeois, independent workers who spent 12 or 15 hours a day in their workshops. Owners of their tools and very rich, they constituted a strong urban middle class, of good living. The artisans formed corporate organisations by trade called guilds, with severe regulations that allowed keeping the secrets of the trade. Each guild had strict hierarchical scales; an organisation that Freemasonry³⁷ copied later. The secrets of the trade were learned as one moved up the hierarchy. The guilds set the prices. For example, the shoemakers' corporation said: "A shoe of such characteristics and quality costs so much", and everyone complied with it.

As they developed, the bourgeoisie and the artisan guilds entered into an implacable struggle. The bourgeoisie needed cheap labour, they wanted low-priced products and large-scale production; They did everything to steal the secrets of the artisans. Capitalism was born by attacking the organisation of the guilds and the monopoly of production they exercised. To break it, they began to take raw materials to the peasants' homes, so they could do some of the work cheaper. Another process takes place in parallel: many serfs, overwhelmed by the taxes and services they had to fulfil, aban-

35 It is called Renaissance a broad cultural movement that occurred in Western Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the transition between feudalism and capitalism. It encompassed both the natural and human arts and sciences. It was born in Florence, Italy, and spread throughout Europe.

36 The Medici were a powerful and influential Florentine Renaissance family, whose members included four popes, two queens of France, numerous Florentine leaders, and members of the royal houses of France and England. The Banca Medici was one of the most prosperous and respected banks in Europe.

37 Freemasonry: institutions —often secret— that emerged from the 17th century that brought together bourgeois references that confronted feudalism and, in particular, the power of the Vatican —politicians, intellectuals, military, scientists, and artists. They also had a significant role in the wars of independence in the Americas. Their initiation rites were inspired by medieval builders' guilds, which gave them their name.

doned the fiefs to take refuge in the cities. The artisans did not let runaway serfs enter the cities and become artisans. Thus, they stayed there, like a semi-agricultural proletariat, a starving sector, like the slums of today, with little chance of finding work, and cultivating small farms.

Every city had its wall and surrounding small states, and farms to produce their food. To lower costs and break the monopoly of the artisans, the capitalists and merchants began to make those peasant families that surrounded the city work for their benefit. This was called home work, similar to what is currently happening in the US. To lower wages, companies give work to Latin American families, many of whom are illegally in the country and fear being denounced and fired and, therefore, put up with any working conditions. There were cities where the artisan guilds were so strong that they controlled all production. They said: “No sir, here a cloth is not made unless we make it, a shoe is not made unless we make it; do not give any work to the peasants.” The capitalists, then, go to other cities where they can exploit the workforce, making production cheaper. New cities are then developed where the capitalists are freer, and less controlled by the powerful artisan guilds.

The bourgeoisie also clashed with the landowners and the church, as they wanted the land to be bought and sold freely, instead of being given in perpetuity for reasons of nobility or certain services rendered to the monarch. On the other hand, the existence of small fiefdoms was a brake on the development of internal trade, and thus the new exploiting class fought for the liquidation of fiefdoms and the unity in national states without internal borders.

In the fifteenth century, capitalist production begins to change the face of the feudal world. With the conquest of America and the East Indies by the Europeans, the interoceanic routes and the great discoveries of modern science and technology, the conditions are ripe for the emergence of the world market and the new production system is imposed throughout the planet.

The capitalist mode of production

We will look at this system very briefly. It is the one we are living, that we already know, or rather we are suffering it, so we are almost not going to stop on it. The exploiting class that dominates is the bourgeoisie, the owners of the means of production, and the exploited are the workers, the wage-earning workers and the dispossessed. For the first time in human history, a mode of production is installed on a global scale: the capitalist system unifies and dominates the entire planet, which means a colossal revolution in production and all orders of social life. The list of discoveries and inventions that constantly revolutionise production is inexhaustible. For example, currently in a year more books are published than humanity did in its entire history until the nineteenth century.

The bourgeois regime arose in the struggle with feudalism and has dominated for 400 or 500 years. It navigated around the world, spanning all continents. The industrial revolution is the culmination, of the full domination of the bourgeoisie. It started shortly before our revolution of 1810,³⁸ some 20 or 30 years earlier, but the bourgeoisie had been dominant for several centuries. King Charles V³⁹ was elected German Emperor in 1519 because a powerful Austrian banking family, the Fuggers, bought off the prince-electors to elect him. He was from the ruling family in Austria. When he died, he entrusted his son Philip II⁴⁰ to follow the advice of these bankers who dominated Europe for 150 years. By that century, the strength of capitalism was already enormous. Another capitalist family of great power were the Medici, already mentioned. They began as great manufacturers of carpets, giving them to the peasants to weave and paying them starvation wages. They flooded Europe displacing those carpets that came from the East and became immensely rich by becoming bankers. This is already very capitalist.

³⁸ It refers to 25 May 1810 when the first creole government was formed in what would become Argentina, thus starting the process of independence from Spain.

³⁹ Charles I (1500-1558) of Spain and V of the Holy Roman Empire was king of all of them, and of the Hispanic overseas territories, thus uniting, for the first time in the same person, the Crowns of Castile and Aragon. Because of his spread around the globe, it was said that “in his domain, the sun never sets.”

⁴⁰ Philip II of Spain (1527-1598). He succeeded his father Charles I. Both reigns made up most of the so-called Spanish golden age.

The fundamental advances in the development of the productive forces, linked to new forms of exploitation, were, first, the passage from craftsmanship (characteristic of feudalism) to manufacturing, and then to large-scale industry. Manufacturing was the liquidation of craft work, grouping many workers in the same place and specialising each one in a part of the production process; thus, the result is faster and cheaper than in the craft workshop. For example, if a table was made, one person made the legs, another the top, and another assembled it.

Between 1770 and 1830, with the introduction of steam power and machine tools, which was called the industrial revolution, the period of the great industry began. From then on, the bourgeoisie takes on full control.

Colossal advances will continue to take place, such as new energy sources (electricity, oil and others), the invention of trains, the automobile, tractors, agricultural machinery, aeroplanes, etc. In the 20th century, with petrochemicals, cybernetics, rocketry, electronics and other advances, the so-called “third industrial revolution” took place.

As we have already said, in the structure of capitalist society we find that the two main and antagonistic classes are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the wage earners, those who do not have private ownership of the means of production.

In the superstructure, in the first stage, where feudalism is combined with capitalism, absolute monarchies, also called enlightened despotism, arise. They are strong regimes that arbitrate between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. These absolute monarchies were a continuation of the feudal system. And although the exploitation of the peasants increasingly worsened, the monarch took power away from the feudal lords, relying on the bourgeoisie.

Later, the bourgeois state began to appear, with regimes that eliminated all the privileges of the nobility, and granted citizens the right to choose their rulers. In the 17th century, the great English revolution took place and imposed the regime of the parliamentary monarchy, which rules today. At the end of the 18th century, the great French revolution took place, with which the first republican regime emerged, the parliamentary bourgeois democracy.

Art and science knew a deployment unprecedented in previous systems. The colossal development of the productive forces and social wealth brought about by capitalism reached its climax in the 19th century. From the end of that century, with the rise of monopolies, and the planetary domination of the world market, capitalism will enter its imperialist era. The existence of the bourgeoisie (owner of the means of production and exchange) and the bourgeois states, countries with their national borders, became a barrier, an absolute stopper for growth. The productive forces stopped growing. The first world inter-imperialist war started in 1914, with its sequel of millions of deaths (a bloody destruction of productive forces), and was an expression of the new era, of the decadence of capitalism.

In the 20th century, humanity entered the era of imperialist capitalism, an era of brake and decline of the productive forces: an era of crisis, wars and revolutions.

We will not develop this period here. Let us simply say that, in 1917, the chain of the world domination of the imperialist bourgeoisie was broken by one of its weakest links, the tsarist dictatorship in Russia. The first workers’ and socialist revolution triumphed, led by the Bolshevik Party and the democratic workers’ and peasants’ soviets, the first workers’ state and its revolutionary government, headed by Lenin and Trotsky.

Despite that the workers’ state, the USSR, was isolated because the world revolution did not continue advancing, and despite its bureaucratisation and the imposition of Stalin’s counter-revolutionary regime, the application of socialist measures gave rise to great achievements: the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the reorganisation of the economy according to state planning and ownership allowed a spectacular development of the productive forces of the USSR. The backward and peasant Russia began to rank among the top countries in various aspects of production, nipping at the heels of (and sometimes surpassing) the United States and other great imperialist powers.

We will not go into the characteristics of the class structure and the superstructure of the USSR and of the countries where the bourgeoisie was expropriated after the war, and also on the relationship between the victory of the revolution in one or several countries and the defeat of imperialism throughout the world. Let's just say that these processes have to be located as part of a single economic system, as part of the world domination of the capitalist-imperialist mode of production.

IX. More about science and art

We have already asserted that we place both science and art in the superstructure, after years of saying otherwise. These are complex questions, with countless answers and different definitions among Marxists. There is also the discussion of what language is, and where we place it in the analysis of human society.

As we mentioned, the exploiting class dominates the superstructure and manages its institutions and ideologies, but we also place in the superstructure, for example, the unions or the revolutionary parties, which are workers' institutions. They are the combinations and contradictions of reality, which must be understood correctly. And we have already talked about the activities that human beings did before classes existed, such as artistic creation or the beginning of scientific thought.

The Stalinist conceptions, which were imposed on Marxism since the mid-1920s, meant great distortions, with changes and jolts to the beat of what Stalin said. As for the superstructure, they adopted a mechanical and simplistic approach: all activity in this field was essentially defined by its class character: bourgeois or proletarian. Everything that exists on earth, if it is not structure, is superstructure —like art and science— and is defined by the class to which it responds.

This dogmatic scheme reached an extreme in the case of language (regardless of whether it is located in the superstructure or, as Stalin did, in the structure). Shortly before Stalin's death, the Moscow Institute of Linguistics made a categorical definition: the different languages are defined by their class. Thus, its theory claimed that French had been the language of feudalism, English was the language of capitalism, and Russian, the language of socialism. Moša Pijade,⁴¹ a Yugoslav Marxist theorist, responded in a pamphlet against this conception of linguistics, making fun of the Muscovite theorists. He said that they deserved all respect, that they were the men who had made the revolution, and that their theories seemed very good to him, but that a small question arose: Marx and Engels had written in German, in what class did the theorists from Moscow place German?

Well, the same goes for art and science. According to the Stalinists, bourgeois or proletarian art and science existed. During Stalin's lifetime, it was decreed that psychoanalysis was bourgeois: its practice was prohibited, and the works of Freud⁴² banned in the USSR. The theory of relativity and electronic machines were bourgeois science. Electronic calculating machines only entered Russia after the death of Stalin. One of the better-known nonsenses was the "Lysenko Report",⁴³ in which the Academy of Agricultural Sciences of the USSR stated that genes did not exist and that genetics was bourgeois science. This was unanimously approved by the all-powerful Central Committee of the CPSU.

Stalinism was strict about this schematic and unscientific dogma. It argued that there was a proletarian military science and another bourgeois military science, proletarian art and bourgeois art. For example, according to them, they put a worker in a uniform and told him: "Lead such a regiment", and then he was going to lead them splendidly. On the other hand, a tsarist officer, who had spent 15 or 20 years learning military science —which is a science in all aspects, with mathematical

41 Moša Pijade (1890-1957). Yugoslav Marxist, Marx scholar and close collaborator of Josip Broz, Tito, leader of the CP and of the resistance to Nazism. In 1948, the Tito government broke with Stalin and moved away from Soviet influence.

42 Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Austrian neurologist, founder of psychoanalysis. Trotsky rejected the Stalinist condemnation.

43 Trofim Lysenko (1898-1976). Soviet agronomist who led the Academy of Agricultural Sciences with the support of Stalin. He persecuted scientists who opposed the official view of genetics that acquired characters are inherited, which was for Stalin "the only view that makes a valid approach".

calculations, if you shoot with cannons you have to do all kinds of calculations— was useless. They believed that it could be improvised. If in 1918 Stalin had led and applied that line, the USSR would have lost the civil war. Lenin and Trotsky were of the opposite view, that specific military science existed, and that there were people experienced in it. This is why Trotsky appealed to the Tsarist officers and Lenin supported him. This discussion extended to all terrains.

There is another conception: that science (regarding art it is more confusing) would be located in the infrastructure; it would be the subjective aspect — let's call it that — (especially the natural sciences) of the development of the productive forces; it is the conceptual, subjective, abstract side of the objective, the material domain of nature. What does this mean? Industry uses wood to make tables or planks; science grasps nature but in a conceptual way. And science also dominates nature but intellectually and through knowledge, through general laws: instead of making tables, it formulates laws to know nature. Technique works materially, and science works conceptually. Both are the domain of man over nature; it is to allow man to dominate nature, to transform it in that sense. Here, subjective is the opposite of objective, material or concrete. It refers to the abstract, the intellectual, to science. Within the domain of nature, there are, then, an objective side —the elaboration of matter — and a subjective side, which is elaborated in an abstract way — science. This is so. Some phrases of Marx would pave the way towards this type of definition. Some Marxists take it up, though without extending it to the social sciences. As we said before, years ago we leaned towards this conception

Regarding art, the problem is more confusing, there are different positions. Stalin and the bureaucracy solved it with a repressive decree: “Bourgeois art is forbidden and we will prosecute whoever practices it. We define whether or not the work is bourgeois (often according to Stalin's taste); on the contrary, what we qualify as proletarian art—socialist realism—we encourage and subsidise.” What is socialist realism? To represent it, the simplest thing is with painting, sculpture, cinema or literature. The paintings, generally quite large, were figurative, and the women, men and children appeared happy building the “socialist homeland”, with ploughs, cultivated fields, ears of wheat, lots of sun and workers celebrating the progress of cities and fields. Never a poor person, someone with problems, with some social conflict to be painted. All abstract painting was persecuted and eradicated. There were also monumental sculptures with similar themes, or with Stalin, Lenin, Marx and Engels. The novels were about work heroes in factories regimented by bureaucrats.

The acid test for the artists of socialist realism was that the great bureaucrats, and in the first place Stalin, approved their work. Lefebvre, when he was still in the Communist Party, wrote a book on aesthetics. He said on the first page: “Art is the greatest joy that man provides to himself. Karl Marx”. In his autobiography, he confesses that he invented that phrase, so the French Communist Party would not ban his book. According to him, although Marx had not written it, it reflected his position. This shows that there is no agreement, that each Marxist has a different definition of art. Lefebvre had the luxury of putting an invented quotation into Marx's mouth and everyone believed him.

The great Marxist specialist in aesthetics is Lukács, considered an authority. For him, art and science are two different ways of apprehending reality: art apprehends it through particulars and science through universals. What does this mean? That science captures the species, the genera. Science defines man or studies the dog, the plants, the cow, or the stars, it is interested in the general and essential characteristics; Aristotle had already said this.

According to Lukács, from Aristotle to the present, everyone has accepted that science grasps universals. Thus, in medical science, for example, if we ask “what is this bone like, or that other one”, the anatomists would tell us: “I am not interested in that case. I am interested in general cases, the general structure of the organism.” That is, on average, science is only interested in the specific phenomenon, it studies the general. Pathology would also try to find the general characteristics of each disease. They would not try to say: “There are twenty million tuberculosis patients and we are going to explain to each tuberculosis patient how it is”, but it does the opposite: “Tuberculosis is caused by such a microbe and it is fought in such a way.” It makes universals out of the disease. This is called universal: what has general characteristics, of species.

On the contrary, art, according to Lukács, is interested in the particular, because within reality there are not only universals but also segments of reality with specific characteristics that differentiate them, a variant of the generality: these are the particulars. That is, Aristotle took the universals, the particulars, and the individual; the individual was in the middle and had special characteristics. For example, science is interested in man; it may be interested in classes—the feudal class and the capitalist class—but science is not interested in the fact that there is a small sector of petty nobles, who, upon the arrival of the capitalist regime become desperate and individually fight against it. But this is reflected in art, and that is how, for example, Don Quixote,⁴⁴ that famous errant knight who expressed a particular sector of society, is created. The goal is to paint reality but in its small segments, through symbols or archetypes. That is why it is realism but of particular segments, not of entirety. The more reality you cover or the better you paint the chosen segment, the better you will be rated as a great artist or not.

Returning to pathology, art would take some type of tuberculosis. For example, the work *Cancer Ward*⁴⁵ is not a treatise on cancerology in general—that corresponds to medicine—but, according to Lukács, it is a special segment, a particular one where cancer patients come to the ward within Stalin's dictatorial regime. So, that novel is an artistic work, because it describes cancer patients in a Stalinist hospital. That combination makes it a particular, small sector of reality. For Lukács, there is no proletarian art or bourgeois art, he has a different conception. Lukács vindicates realism, Balzac⁴⁶ and the great novelists of the 19th century. But, although with comings and goings, Lukács, at heart is a supporter of socialist realism.

For years in the party, we have discussed Palito Ortega.⁴⁷ What he does, is it or is it not art? There are passionate discussions, sometimes almost virulent, with the comrades who like his music. A few of us have insisted that it is. Whether we like it or not, his songs are part of artistic creation, since they produce emotions and feelings. But, that's where, of course, the discussion about what kind of artistic creation it is comes in. There are all kinds of artistic creations. We can talk of works that are more or less complex, popular or for an elite, of works that will last, or just a fad for a season, for a little while. As we would understand it, what Palito does would be art, in music or his films. But we would immediately add that there is a noble art and an ignoble art. A noble art tends to create emotions and feelings that do not mean denying the current situation, numbing the workers and the popular sectors, or strengthening the feelings of submission, the most backward beliefs.

What Palito does is an art of mystifying reality, the situation of the people. The most evident proof is his song *La Felicidad* [Happiness]. It is greater opium than religion. When he premiered it, we had in all the slums, among the most backward sector of the proletariat, playing “happiness, Ah! Ah! Ah!”, under the Onganía⁴⁸ dictatorship. The whole country was sinking and starving. The struggles of the workers of the Tucuman sugar mills had been repressed. Palito was from Tucuman, and his music and films played a very useful role for the military dictatorship, the bourgeoisie and the monopolies. In this sense, we do not comment on whether or not we like his songs to dance or listen to. Let each one listen or dance what he likes. All artistic creation provokes emotions and feelings, in

44 *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*: a novel written by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616), first published in 1605. It is the most outstanding work of Spanish literature.

45 *Cancer Ward*: novel by Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008). Published outside the USSR in 1967. It recounts the daily life, reflections and conversations of a group of hospitalized cancer patients while receiving treatment. It is considered as an allegory of Soviet life under the Stalinist bureaucracy. Solzhenitsyn received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970 and was exiled in 1974. He was an opponent of the totalitarian bureaucracy but vindicated the old Russia of the tsars.

46 Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850). French author representative of the so-called realist novel of the 19th century. In dozens of his works, he described almost exhaustively the French society of his time.

47 Ramon Ortega (1941-), known as Palito. Singer-songwriter, actor and show business man born in Tucuman. He also made a political career in Peronism, as governor of his province, candidate for vice president and senator.

48 Juan Carlos Onganía (1914-1995). Argentine general who led the military coup of 1966 and was dictator until 1970. As a product of the workers' and popular semi-insurrection of 1969 known as the “Cordobazo”, he was displaced in 1970 by another general. See *The struggle has just begun* in nahuelmoreno.org.

a certain cultural and socio-economic context, in a certain reality. We are for freedom in art but we reserve the right to say and show that such an artistic work seems to us to be reverend crap.

Thus, we can state that, if Lukács knew him, according to his criteria he would say that what Palito does is not directly art. The Marxist method requires an honest and exact interpretation of what each author, or each person, thinks. The song *La Felicidad*: What segment of the reality of the moment, under Onganía and after the Cordobazo, did it represent? None. Someone could add that he helped the dictatorship and the interests of the bourgeoisie, but that is not in his song. Palito Ortega tried to associate the Tucumán workers with a poor boy, very poor, but who was still happy. It was a mystification, infamous servility. In the same way, soap operas paint us as a perfect, harmonious family, when in the reality of the moment in which we live, the family is undone, marriages divorce, they cheat, and nobody is faithful to anyone. What they are doing is a disgusting mystification in the service of the regime. If Lukács saw this, he would say: "This is not art because it reflects nothing of reality, it is a mystification; it is making the reality that the church wants us to see, but not the reality that exists. So, it is something rotten, it is not archetypal, it does not characterise any segment of reality." And we say that it is art, but mystifying, ignoble art.

X. Relationship between the state, the regime and the government

In recent years we have advanced among ourselves in the elaboration of these three aspects or categories of the superstructure.⁴⁹ Although they are closely linked, it is necessary to distinguish between them, to make a correct interpretation of the political-social functioning of each society, and thus specify our program and slogans.

We already mentioned that the state arises with exploitation and is an apparatus of control of the entire society, whose fundamental element is an armed institution, and the monopoly of arms by the dominant, exploiting class or social sector. If there is no police or army, there are no states. This is a classic definition. Now, after many experiences, over the years, we are having more and more clarity, and we are specifying more what regime is, what government is and its relationship with the state.

In the superstructure, many institutions are combined with each other. Institutions are organisations of men specialised in a function or a task. The state, an institution of institutions, has its administrative bureaucracy. The army brings together people whose mission is to be military and the police, who have the task of being cops. There is no institution without its bureaucracy. As we said before, in the long period of primitive communism this was not the case. There were no permanent bureaucrats but functions that everyone could fulfil. For example, there was education, like now, but there were no people specialised in being a teacher and there was no school or any institution of this type. In the same way, as we have also said, anyone could be the chief of the tribe or the military chief. This is why we say that in primitive communism there was no state, no permanent institutions and no bureaucrats.

When we say that the state is the organ of the ruling class that serves to keep the exploited classes under its rule, we say something true but still very general. Historically, there have been five types of states so far: the Asian, the slave-owning, the feudal, the bourgeois, and a first workers' state, non-capitalist or transitional. With these definitions, we begin the study. One thing is what the state is, and another is how it works. And there we enter the field of regimes and governments.

We call regime or type of government to how the state works. The question, then, is how? not what? How do the various institutions combine to rule? According to the historical stage, the functioning of the state varies greatly, that is, what the institutions of domination are and how they are combined. Returning to what was seen in Greece and Rome, in both cases the state of the masters ruled the slaves and other sectors of society but there were different combinations of the institutions to rule.

⁴⁹ See in nahuelmoreno.org the 1984 work *Revolutions of the 20th Century*, in which Moreno extensively refers to these three aspects and their connection with the reformist and revolutionary processes.

In Rome, there were three regimes, three totally different successive ways that the same slave state adopted for its ruling: that of the kings, the republican of the senate—which we can call “democratic”—and that of the emperors. Three regimes, three totally different successive forms that the same slave state adopted for its ruling. First, it was a monarchy. Later came a republic in which only the slave owners voted and chose (in this it resembled Greece). Finally, Rome became an empire with an emperor. In Greece, instead, there was a permanent trend towards urban republics, especially in Athens. They were always independent cities, there was never a government of all of Greece; they joined and disjoined in an unstable federation. Such was its regimen. That is, there can be several different regimes for the same state of the masters, in the same mode of production. Many ways of articulating the institutions, of making the state work, but whose objective is always to control and repress the slaves.

Summing up, we distinguish these three categories of the superstructure. The state answers the question: which sector of society or which class rules? The regime, to the question, how does this sector exercise its political power? With what combination of institutions does it rule? Finally, the government answers the question: Who governs? What person or party?

The regime in the transition from feudalism to capitalism: absolute monarchies

Capitalism, in its first stage of development, is combined with feudalism. Since the 16th century, at the end of the Middle Ages, centralised political regimes begin to emerge in Europe and are characterised by having strong governments called absolute monarchies, which will give rise to modern nation-states. These are no longer the weak kings of feudalism but despotic monarchs, with a lot of personal power. In England and France, which is where capitalism is most developed, these regimes appear more clearly. They also existed in Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Austria, Sweden, Russia and minor kingdoms. Absolute monarchies were a superstructural continuation of feudalism. As we have already said, while the exploitation of the peasants by the nobles was getting worse, the absolute monarch was taking power in society from the feudal lords, relying on the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie obtained great concessions, especially the moneylender, to whom the kings owed a lot of money.

An example of these clashes in the face of the importance that the bourgeoisie was acquiring, is that of the famous question of duels. Cardinal de Richelieu,⁵⁰ prime minister of France in the 17th century, banned duels and persecuted swordsmen. This measure protected the bourgeois who did not know how to fight, leaving them defenceless against the nobles who were experts in duelling. For the feudal lord, duelling was a formidable way to eliminate troublesome bourgeois. In Russia, where there were still duels in the 19th century, the great writer Pushkin,⁵¹ who was very progressive politically, was the victim of such a manoeuvre: he was sent a nobleman, a great swordsman, who provoked him by making a pass at his wife. He had to hit him, and the other challenged him, they went to the duel and Pushkin died at the age of 37.

It is very interesting how the private life of those monarchs reflected this combination of feudalism and capitalism. The kings had their official wife, a noblewoman, who was the link with the feudal lords. But they also had lovers, who were the ones who maintained the relationship with the bourgeoisie. These lovers were highly educated women and were connected with the great scientists, artists and thinkers of the time. The famous Voltaire,⁵² who criticised the feudal lords of

50 Duplessis, Cardinal Duke of Richelieu (1585-1642). Prime Minister of Louis XIII from 1624 to 1642. He limited the power of the nobility, transforming France into a strongly centralised state.

51 Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837). Russian poet, playwright, and novelist. Belonging to the romantic school, he is considered the founder of Russian-language literature.

52 Voltaire, pseudonyme of François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778). French bourgeois intellectual who, defending reason and equality among human beings, fought the Catholic Church and the nobility in the decades prior to the French Revolution, of which he is considered an ideological precursor. For his defiant attitudes, he suffered imprisonment and exile on several occasions, which did not prevent him from being welcomed for periods in the French court and also in the Prussian court. He is buried in the national Pantheon in Paris near Rousseau, with whom he bitterly argued.

France, was saved because he was a friend of Madame de Pompadour,⁵³ the mistress of King Louis XV.⁵⁴ Still, on one occasion the nobles kicked him out of the theatre. The king then sent his mistress to apologise so he would not leave France. This relationship of the absolute monarchies with the most educated men, who advised the government, is the reason that they were also called enlightened despotism.

This combination of a feudal state and capitalist features has a certain resemblance to what is happening now with the workers' movement, although, as we will see later, it is not the same. The workers' movement is so strong that, with its struggles, it has achieved conquests in almost all countries. Organisational conquests, such as unions and legal parties and, on the other hand, economic conquests such as pensions, paid leave, medical care and others, what is called a social salary. In other words, part of the salary is not collected individually in money but is for all wage earners equally. At the union clinic, everyone can get treatment or surgery, whether they earn a lot or a little. That is a right of the socialist future: that everyone receives what they need. The state remains bourgeois, it does not change its class character, but it has to make concessions to the working class so that capitalism does not burst. The feudal state also had to make large concessions to the bourgeoisie trying that it would not break feudalism open.

The Marxist elaboration in the field of political regimes is very weak. Our elaborations do not overcome this weakness at all; the only merit they can have is that they raise the problems and the answers that we consider. Little has been written on this subject. There are commentaries in passing of the classics but not exhaustive studies.

Perry Anderson,⁵⁵ who is an independent English Marxist, and a very educated historian, has investigated the whole subject of absolute monarchies. According to his studies, they were the last regime, the last trench of decadent feudalism, still facing capitalism, but with great differences from the other previous regimes of the Middle Ages. There are authors who, on the contrary, define them as the first political regime of capitalism.

We need to study the issue of regimes and their link to the economic structure because we as Marxists always seek to make very precise class definitions of all phenomena. And in the study of history, these definitions are sometimes complicated by the combination of different elements, especially in the great periods of transition from one mode of production to another. And like other issues, they are important definitions for our program and policy, that is why we have to study reality well because we base our policy on science.

The different sectors of the bourgeoisie, the political regimes and the governments

The bourgeoisie was getting increasingly stronger, and different sectors were appearing that dispute power among themselves. It is very interesting, for example, to see how these different bourgeois sectors act in the different stages that the French Revolution went through. According to the sector of the new exploiters that predominates, a political regime may correspond. In the first stage, the lending bourgeoisie prevailed. And since the king owed a lot of money, he proposed a parliamentary monarchy regime, put another way, they supported the king to collect from him. Something similar to what is happening today with imperialism and semi-colonial governments, such as Alfonsín's: let him rule calmly, and fulfil his mandate, so that he pays them. In the second stage, from 1792, the republic is proclaimed, the king's head is cut off, and the industrial bourgeoisie predominates. For the development of production and to take power away from the lending bourgeoisie, it needs the republic so to break free from the king and his court of feudal nobles and the landowning church. In the third stage, in 1793, came the radicalised petty bourgeoisie and "the plebs", the Jac-

⁵³ Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, Madame de Pompadour (1721-1764). Favourite mistress of Louis XV who protected French intellectuals during the so-called Age of Enlightenment.

⁵⁴ Louis XV (1710-1774). He was part of the Bourbon family and great-grandson of Louis XIV.

⁵⁵ Francis Rory Peregrine "Perry" Anderson (1938-). Historian and Marxist political essayist, editor of the *New Left Review* magazine. Two of his most important books, both from 1974, are *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* and *Lineages of the absolutist state*.

obins, with Robespierre at their head, and the revolution reached its climax. The weak working class was not yet an alternative, neither economically nor politically. Nor could a petty-bourgeois state be achieved because it was the bourgeoisie that dominated the economy. There are three very delimited stages and each one of them had different political parties that directed them. As the bourgeois state apparatus was formed and strengthened, there were different regimes and different political parties and leaders headed the government.

Regarding the government, we have already said that it answers the question: Who governs? What person or party? In Argentina, we can say that Alfonsín governs, or the military junta governs, or Rosas,⁵⁶ in the 19th century, governs. In 1916 the radicals governed, with Yrigoyen⁵⁷ as president. Party, group, person, that is the government. The same thing that happens with the regime regarding the state, happens with the government regarding the regime. That is, a state can have many different regimes, and a regime can have many governments. For example, we have defined that there was a counter-revolutionary regime in Argentina since 1976, with the military junta, but there were several presidents within that regime: Videla, Viola and Galtieri⁵⁸ who were governments within the same regime and, obviously, with the same state. bourgeois.

In today's imperialist capitalism, we find different regimes: there are parliamentary monarchies like Spain, England, Holland, Belgium and Sweden. In this combination of institutions, it is often said, "the king reigns, but he does not govern". The parliament runs the government, it appoints the prime minister. In Spain, for example, the socialist Felipe Gonzalez⁵⁹ was appointed by parliament, not by the king. The laws are voted in parliament, which is an institution of bourgeois democracy but coexists with a survival of the feudal era, the monarchy. So, they are two distinct and combined institutions. Today, the kings and their families look like movie stars, film their weddings, smile for television, pick up a boy and kiss him. There are sociological studies that show how all the aristocracy that comes from feudalism has a passion for looking like Hollywood stars, which is the maximum expression of capitalist show business. This shows, by the way, that what dominates is the capitalist system, even in those institutions inherited from previous times.

It is by no means a shared power between feudal nobles and bourgeois politicians. The contemporary king is already part of the bourgeoisie, a great bourgeois. A good example is the English royal family. The United Kingdom has been a parliamentary monarchy since the end of the 17th century, and its political regime has been in existence for over three centuries. The British government is like that of any other imperialist country. It is not held by the nobility. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher⁶⁰ is not from the oligarchy, she is a good commoner, from the middle class, like Alfonsín. Her father was a merchant; she had a degree in chemistry, she worked as such and later she dedicated herself to politics. The oligarchic wing of the Conservative Party is against her; it has no liking for her. However, she is the one who heads the government of a parliamentary monarchy.

56 Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877). He dictatorially ruled the province of Buenos Aires, becoming, between 1835 and 1852, the supreme leader of the Argentine Confederation, and of federalism. He was a representative of the cattle ranchers of the province of Buenos Aires and, in particular, of the salters who worked for export.

57 Hipolito Yrigoyen (1852-1933). First Argentine president of the Radical Civic Union; also, the first elected by male, secret and compulsory vote for the period 1916-1922; re-elected in 1928, he was deposed by the military and conservative coup of 1930. The Radicals were the political movement of the middle class and rural producers, and promoted an adaptation of political institutions to bourgeois democracy, following the influence of the United States.

58 Roberto Viola (1924-1994), Leopoldo Galtieri (1926-2003). Presidents of Argentina under the regime of the genocidal military junta between 24 March 1976 and 18 June 1982. The first president was Jorge Videla and the last Leopoldo Galtieri.

59 Felipe Gonzalez (1942). General Secretary of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) from 1974 to 1997. One of the protagonists of the negotiations of the "transition" that followed the Franco regime. President of the government of the Spanish state between 1982 and 1996.

60 Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013). Conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990. She imposed the privatisation of state enterprises, education, and public services; she produced unemployment and a drop in wages. She unleashed the imperialist war for the Malvinas [Falklands] which had been recovered by Argentina.

The nobles, in turn, behave like the bourgeois. For example, the prince consort of Holland⁶¹ is linked to the multinational company Philips. In 1974, he took a bribe in a purchase for the army. They discovered him, they proved it, and they threw him out; that is, the royal families are bourgeois families, they no longer have anything to do with feudalism, except for the crown, bows and suchlike. It is all a farce, a colossal lie. They no longer exploit peasants, but, for example, this Bernard from Holland exploits thousands and thousands of wage earners because he is a shareholder in Philips and Shell. They make a representation as if they were feudal kings, but they are big business people, very rich partners of the big imperialist companies.

Apparently, they would not fulfil any function. But this is not the case: they are very useful for maintaining and consolidating bourgeois rule. In the first place, they poison popular beliefs more than any republican government. The people pay homage to them, and on top of that, finance their sumptuous expenses with taxes. When there are political crises or revolutionary situations, these kings act and prove their dangerousness.

In the 1930s, there was a big scandal in England. As King Edward VIII⁶² wanted to marry a commoner woman, divorced and who was not English but Yankee. The legend was mounted that the king renounced the crown for love, so he could marry her. Nothing falser. The king, in fact, supported the attempt to execute a pro-Hitler coup by a fascist and conservative wing of the British bourgeoisie, which was thwarted by the mass movement. As a pretext for the coup, to deceive the masses, the king was presented as a victim of the traditions that prevented him from marrying a commoner, the impossibility of realising his dream of love with someone who was not from the nobility. Then he would stage a coup saying: "I have the right to marry whoever I want", which would cause great sympathy in the people. Under the guise of love, this king, who was a reactionary rabid fan of Hitler, was going to crush the working class if he were crowned king. It was a very well-thought-out political manoeuvre. But finally, the Labour Party and the entire anti-fascist bourgeoisie opposed and forced the king to abdicate the crown. In other words, when the time comes, the monarchy can become very dangerous because it is an institution that always serves the bourgeoisie. It is not noticeable in quiet times but when the chips are down; as in England at that time, of strikes and great unemployment.

In Spain, the monarchy was abolished in 1931. The monarchical restoration was planned by the fascist and genocidal dictator Franco,⁶³ together with Juan de Borbon, father of the one who resumed the crown, Juan Carlos.⁶⁴ Since the late 1960s and in the 1970s, the dictatorship and the Spanish bourgeoisie, with a growing economic crisis and to control the rise of the workers, were making important reforms in the Franco regime. Negotiation with the traitorous socialist and communist leaderships, who abandoned the republican slogans and supported the monarchy, was key. All the reactionary legislation of the Franco regime was kept, as well as its army, but combined with a relative democratic opening that included formal freedoms, the legality of political parties and parliamentary elections. This was called the "transition". Franco died in 1975, one of the last acts of his government being the execution by garrote of five Basque nationalist fighters.

61 Bernard of Lippe-Biesterfeld (1911-2004). Married to the Dutch Queen Juliana I. He accepted a US\$ 1,100,000 bribe from Lockheed for the Netherlands to buy its planes. Bernard became a director of 300 business around the world.

62 Edward VIII (1894-1972). King from January 20, 1936 until his abdication on December 11 of the same year. Great-grandfather of Charles III, king since 2022.

63 Francisco Franco (1892-1975). Spanish fascist and ultra-Catholic general, who rose against the republican regime in July 1936. He had the support of Hitler and Mussolini to crush the workers' and peasants' revolution. The republican side was weakened by the betrayal of the socialists, anarchists and Stalinists who were part of the bourgeois governments and did not promote the independent mobilisation of workers and peasants to defeat fascism.

64 Juan de Borbon (1913-1993). Pretender to the throne since 1941, when Alfonso XIII abdicated in exile. He supported the Franco regime, with periods of estrangement. He was key in the negotiations that led to the appointment of his son Juan Carlos as Franco's successor and the return of the monarchy. In 1977, he formally abdicated. His son Juan Carlos de Borbon (1938-) was king from 1975, after Franco's death, until 2014, when he abdicated amid corruption scandals, infidelities, and great discredit, in favour of his son Felipe. Another of his vices was going to Africa to hunt elephants with one of his lovers.

Today, Juan Carlos I looks like an angel who is for democracy. When the chips are down in Spain, the bourgeoisie will have the monarchy to crush the people. Suppose that tomorrow there is a very unstable situation in the country. Then the king will be able to intervene and, with the support of the bourgeoisie, he will be able to say “this is a kingdom, the parliament no longer works, now I am in charge”. He already showed this capacity when Tejero⁶⁵ attempted a coup in 1981. The king tipped the scales in favour of bourgeois democratic institutions. But, if the king had lent to the side of the coup, it would have triumphed. He says he is advised by his wife, who has a lot of experience and is a great politician. She may be; she is the daughter of the former king of Greece,⁶⁶ who incredibly squeezed his people. These monarchies have weight, they have their own institutions such as the Court, and the Military House, which are combined, in these regimes, with parliamentary institutions to consolidate capitalist dominance and stability.

The bourgeois democratic regime

The anti-feudal revolutions gave rise to new political regimes. For the first time, emerged the institutions of bourgeois democracy, the modern republics, with parliaments and governments elected by vote, the division of powers (executive, legislative and judicial), and the “equality before the law” of citizens. In the beginning, only one sector of society voted, the male owners. In the 20th century, the universal vote was achieved, not without struggle. First men and then women became included. In the history of bourgeois democracy, there were all kinds of combinations and new phenomena. In the 17th century, with the English anti-feudal revolution, emerged the parliamentary monarchy that is still in effect. Something similar happened in Holland, the product of almost a century of struggle for independence from the Spanish crown. The French revolution was properly anti-feudal, against the system of production that characterised the Middle Ages, and its state was dominated by the landed nobility and the church. In 1792 the first republic was established and since then there has been a succession of republican and Bonapartist regimes. They are already in the Fifth Republic.

Shortly before the French Revolution, in 1776, the United States of America was born. It was the product of the combination of a great bourgeois-democratic revolution (although there was strictly no traditional European feudalism), with an anti-colonial war of independence against the capitalist power, England. With its victory, the longest-lasting bourgeois democratic regime was born, with over 200 years. With individual liberties guaranteed by the constitution of an extent unknown until then, but with the great contradiction of maintaining slavery in the southern states of the country.

This would lead, decades later, to a very bloody civil war from 1861 to 1864. With the victory of the northern troops against the southern slave states, slavery was finally legally abolished. Thirty years after the American revolution, at the beginning of the 19th century, the Latin American revolutions were also carried out by the colonial bourgeoisie against a semi-capitalist empire –the Spanish– and a decadent empire –the Portuguese.⁶⁷

These definitions allow us to understand the issue of Watergate and the resignation of President Nixon.⁶⁸ A true scandal. Nixon, who was president for the Republican Party, ordered to spy on the opposition Democratic Party in its national headquarters, the Watergate building in Washington, and also to steal some papers inside the premises. Two journalists discovered the operation and denounced the president. At first, the situation was ignored but once it became public, it was such a scandal that Nixon had to resign.

65 In February 1981, a sector of the army led by Antonio Tejero Molina (1932-) lieutenant colonel of the Civil Guard, dissatisfied with the democratic opening and the legalisation of the left-wing parties, took parliament by storm. King Juan Carlos quickly repudiated the coup, and in a few hours, the coup plotters withdrew.

66 Sophia of Greece, (1938-). Wife of former King Juan Carlos, she is also the sister of former King Constantine of Greece who, despite being a constitutional monarch, dismissed the Prime Minister and appointed his successor without calling elections.

67 See *Feudalism and Capitalism in the Colonisation of the Americas* (1948) at nahuelmoreno.org.

68 Richard Nixon (1913-1994). Republican Party politician, President of the United States, between 1969 and 1974, the year in which he was forced to resign.

For us Marxists, Nixon was trying to move towards a Bonapartist regime. He was breaking the rules of the country's traditional bourgeois-democratic game. By this, what do we mean? That, in their customs and their legislation, the great bourgeois leaders respect each other, they do not spy on each other. Nixon, by using the state apparatus to spy on the Democratic Party, was attempting to dominate the state with an omnipotent bureaucracy. It was the first time this had happened in American history.

In the United States, certain rules in the relations between parties exist and are respected. For example, no one receives money to campaign politically if they do not declare it. It is not frowned upon for a company to put up money for a candidate's campaign, but it has to appear in the book. The bourgeoisie puts up money publicly. Big companies give candidates a lot of money to secure contracts. Thus, it is legislated that lobbying is carried out, something similar to what we call here "parliamentary advocacy", to get votes in favour of one or another business or political group. There is an incredible number of bribes but not directly to the president. By tradition, there cannot be a group of bribe-takers in the presidency. Nixon had started stealing with his group of friends in an incredible way. To everyone who presented a bill, the president himself directly asked: "You give me this and I'll give you the contract."

The Watergate affair is linked to this. Nixon believed himself to be more and more in control of America every day, exempt from respecting the rules of the game. Reagan,⁶⁹ being also a Republican president, is different, he respects the rules of the game. For example, he is now discussing with the Democrats the policy for Central America. Instead, Nixon tried to go towards Bonapartism, to dominate both parties, and to destroy every representative and senator who opposed him. It is proven that he had been investigating Edward Kennedy⁷⁰ for the episode in which he fell into the water with a car and the secretary, who was with him, drowned and he did not. That's why he couldn't be president. These are the classic Bonapartist methods that Nixon wanted to impose and ended up removing him from office.

The issue of individual freedoms is deeply rooted in the American people and is fully guaranteed by their constitution. For us, it is natural that everyone carries their identity document with them and takes care not to forget it when going out. There, this practice does not exist, it would be violating individual freedom. No one goes out with his identity document and no one can ask for it. The Yankee says: "We never had to carry the document and the police are not there to control citizens." All the governments try to see how they can identify all the Yankees and they can't, because they refuse.

The great hobby of the Yankees is to have weapons. They are all legally armed and hunting is a popular custom. It is most common to have weapons and sell or buy them. Notices appear in the newspapers: "I am selling a heavy machine gun; I am selling a double-barrelled shotgun." Violence is a national characteristic. They have killed presidents and political leaders like John Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Luther King;⁷¹ even Reagan was shot. The government wants, whether through a Bonapartist government or otherwise, to be allowed to control arms sales. But by bourgeois democratic means it cannot be; the representative or senator who votes in favour of gun control, or to impose the use of identity cards, loses the election the next day.

The same thing happens in justice. The bourgeois democratic regime guarantees individual and institutional rights. The FBI⁷² began to monitor the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist party

69 Ronald Regan (1911-2004). President of the United States between 1981 and 1989, of the Republican Party. Parallel to Margaret Thatcher, he developed a policy of wage cuts and elimination of social benefits for workers.

70 Edward Kennedy (1932-2009). Democratic senator for Massachusetts from 1962 until his death. Brother of President John Kennedy (1917-1963) and Senator Robert Kennedy (1925-1968), both assassinated.

71 Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968). Pastor of the Baptist church and leader of the civil rights movement for African Americans since 1955. He participated in numerous protests against the Vietnam War and poverty. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968.

72 FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation). Official agency of the Department of Justice of the United States, founded in 1908 with just fifty employees. In 2010, it already had a budget of US\$ 7.9 billion and 35,605 employees, over 400 offices in the United States and 50 international offices in Yankee embassies around the world.

like ours, with the legality to participate in the elections. It spied on them for 10 years. The party sued the FBI in the Supreme Court and won. The powerful FBI was forced to give the names of those they were spying on and surveillance of the party was banned. Now it seems the Yankee government will have to give millions of dollars and apologise to this small party. This is bourgeois democracy, not Bonapartism.

America is the imperialist country that dominates the world and the other capitalist countries, against everything that is claimed. This is the economic definition. But the definition of its political regime is that, for now, it is a bourgeois democracy, which makes monopolies and imperialism enormously uncomfortable.

It is a people full of contradictions, with a very low cultural and political level, and one of the most combative and violent in the world. Millions and millions believe to the letter that the Bible is what explains the origin of humanity. Very many do not send their children to school, to avoid being told about Darwin (1809-1882) and other “heresies”. They can do it, no one can be forced to send their child to school. Individual freedom is part of the national tradition, as is the combative character. They conquered national independence, and the liberation of the slaves, they conquered the west of the country, all with bullets. The workers’ strikes were, from the beginning, with bullets and those very heavy baseball bats. The working class managed to build the unions with bullets because the Yankee bourgeoisie didn’t have qualms about the repression of the workers either. It is very difficult, then, for the bourgeoisie to reverse those conquests and freedoms obtained so hard by the Yankee people. There are bourgeois sectors that want to achieve a Bonapartist regime but they are terrified of the people because, for them, individual freedoms are a great achievement of which they are proud. The enormous contradiction, too, is that this bourgeois democracy is for whites because extreme racism continues to exist.

Economics should not be confused with politics, although they are linked. The reason why the United States can maintain, for over 200 years, a regime of bourgeois democracy is that it is a very rich country. If it were not a powerful imperialist country, these freedoms could not ultimately be maintained. If it were like Bolivia, no matter how much tradition there was, the army would go out and beat the living daylights out of people because there would be no way to keep the working class happy. Yankee imperialism, on the other hand, can.

Napoleon’s armies and the first Bonapartist regime

The first Bonapartist regime, which we can call classic, was that of Napoleon Bonaparte, with a very progressive role in history. Once the French Revolution triumphed in 1789, and the land was distributed to the peasants, Bonapartism emerged. It was based on the new army, created to defend the revolution. All the countries that attacked France were feudal, and they fought the revolution because they wanted to restore the old regime. England, which was no longer feudal and was in the industrial revolution, was also fighting France so that it would not compete with them since France was beginning to be capitalist.

Revolutionary France had to defend itself, and create a new army and new generals emerged who changed the entire feudal military structure of the previous regime. The armies that attacked France were slow and led by great lords who went to war with their servants. Soldiers were often mercenaries, or forcibly recruited and forced to fight, with poor fighting morale.

With the French Revolution, instead, another type of army emerged. Compulsory military service is established for the first time, and every man over the age of eighteen must fight, and defend the revolution. The base of the new revolutionary army is now the common people, workers from the city and the countryside, where the peasants were the majority. They did not want the nobles to return because it meant losing the land that the revolution had given them. This desire led them to fight like lions. They are strong, accustomed by their work to walking; so, they walk and walk, without the need of horses. Besides, they carry their food and equipment on their shoulders; each soldier is self-sufficient. The genius of Napoleon and the generals of the French revolution is based on this

type of army. They have fantastic mobility. The feudal military calculated that the French army, to reach Italy, for example, would take the usual time as its own troops, several weeks. Instead, Napoleon drove them crazy. He crossed the Alps in three or four days and took them by surprise. Thus, he gave the feudal armies beating after beating. Napoleon was a great soldier but his secret was that he had the support of the peasants who made up his troops.

In Paris and the other big cities, the revolution was developing more and more, under the government of his left wing, the Jacobins. The bourgeoisie, converted into the new ruling class, decided to stop it. On 27 July 1794 (8 Thermidor of the year II, according to the new calendar created by the revolution)⁷³ the army staged a counter-revolutionary coup. Similar to the process of Videla and the Argentine military, but opposite because it also played a progressive role. Napoleon and his Bonapartism were an expression of this contradictory process. It was counter-revolutionary, and negative in the political arena because it liquidated the democratic republic and installed a regime that cut off the revolutionary advance. The Jacobins, supported by the petty bourgeoisie and all the popular urban layers, were swept away. The “*pitucos*”⁷⁴ of that time came to govern, the bourgeoisie who had become very rich during the war, with shady deals and corruption in the supply of military campaigns. They were called the “golden youth”. When the army carried out the coup, they invaded the working-class and popular neighbourhoods, they went out to kill people from the left, from the Jacobins.

Why is it progressive? Because there is a war of all the European feudal lords of that time against France, to re-impose feudalism and take the land from the peasants. Napoleon wanted strong governments, but bourgeois ones, he hated feudalism, and he didn't want it to come back, he made war on it. For this reason, Trotsky could say that this coup was relatively progressive because, although it was against the left wing of the revolution, it also defeated the feudal counter-revolution. So much so, that in the period of Napoleon, all the institutions of the modern bourgeois state originated, as well as the laws that later all the bourgeois countries had, including ours. From Napoleon's code will emerge all those codes that were replacing the feudal ones. This authoritarian and generally personal regime was fully bourgeois. Even when Napoleon later declared himself emperor, he did not become a feudal monarch of the old regime, but a new type of monarch, a bourgeois emperor.

Classical Bonapartism, with one man, and one ruling institution, was studied by Marx and Engels in the 19th century. Let us recapitulate by saying that, in France, the bourgeois counter-revolution, to further develop capitalism, crushed the revolutionary people and established a stable political regime. This was Bonapartism, a totalitarian regime, in which an individual, Napoleon Bonaparte, placed himself above the classes and sectors, arbitrating between them, and, relying on the state apparatus, fundamentally on the army, ignoring the other institutions of the bourgeois state, the political parties and the parliament. His regime, which was reactionary regarding the deepening of the revolution, was progressive regarding the time, as it confronted the feudal counter-revolution, consolidating and trying to extend the capitalist system to the rest of Europe. Classical Bonapartism defended the revolution against the feudalists but did not carry it out. The revolution was made by the masses.

Decades later, another Bonapartism comes to France, a decadent Bonapartism, which is that of his nephew Luis Bonaparte⁷⁵ and is, rather, a Bonapartism supported by the vagrants, the lumpens, similar to what a government of Herminio Iglesias⁷⁶ would have been if he has not lost the elections

73 The revolution had abolished the Gregorian calendar used in Western Europe and created a new one. Each month now had a name according to a significant event. Thermidor was the summer month when the grapes began to ripen at the end of July. By analogy with the French Revolution, Trotsky called the enthronement of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union a “Thermidorian reaction”.

74 In Argentina, people of high class were called *pituco*.

75 Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873). Being president of the Second French Republic (1848-1852), he staged a coup on 2 December 1851, to perpetuate himself in power. In 1852, he proclaimed himself emperor under the name of Napoleon III until his fall in 1870. This process was analysed by Marx in The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.

76 Herminio Iglesias (1929-2007). Former worker at the Siam Di Tella factory in Avellaneda. He was a typical exponent of the Peronist union bureaucrats who led groups of lumpen and thugs to persecute any attempt at opposition and settle

in 1983 against the radicals and Alfonsín. This second Bonapartism is already beginning to be directly counter-revolutionary, without progressive traits, it liquidates the republic, it represses the revolution, which by then was already a workers' one. In the 20th century, there will no longer be progressive Bonapartists. For example, we define the Onganía regime as a Bonapartist and repressive dictatorship, without anything positive.⁷⁷

Throughout the 19th century, other anti-feudal, bourgeois-democratic revolutions took place, although the bourgeoisie was less and less revolutionary. In Germany, the numerous principalities were unified under the direction of the Prussian state and a Bonapartist regime was established, whose dictatorial figure was Bismarck,⁷⁸ with characteristics different to the Napoleonic model. The German bourgeoisie, fearful of popular mobilisation, tried to change the character of society and the state through increasingly reformist ways; It no longer relied on the mobilisation of the people but instead agreed to this transformation with the feudal classes. This regime, also with an individual arbitrator, conceded to both sides, but always with the line of achieving a unified and capitalist Germany. It did not seek the crushing of the nobles, like in the French revolution, but their transformation into capitalists. Even repressing and giving concessions alternately to the working class.

Bonapartism *sui generis*

Trotsky analysed and defined new political regimes of the 20th century, particularly in colonial and semi-colonial countries. It is what he called Bonapartism *sui generis*. In our countries, the pressure and domination of imperialism are so great that stable freedoms and democratic bourgeois regimes can hardly ever be achieved. As soon as democratic freedoms and elections are obtained, parties begin to emerge, even petty bourgeois, that can pose the fight for national independence. In this climate, the struggle of the workers against the bourgeoisie and its governments, which are almost all pro-imperialist, can also be developed and strengthened. For imperialism, democracy in our countries is a dangerous game, because of the terrible misery of our peoples and the impossibility of solving these problems under its domination. In Argentina, being a relatively rich country, anyway, we have had several military coups. And the same thing happens in Brazil. In Bolivia, which is much poorer, there have been dozens and dozens of military coups. Hardly any government, exceptionally, completed a presidential mandate. In Latin America, we have all suffered numerous coups, orchestrated by imperialism.

The Bonapartist *sui generis* regime is typical of underdeveloped countries, exploited by imperialism. They have strong rulers who control everything, and they can be from the left and the right. Perón's, for example, had strong friction with Yankee imperialism in its first stage, in the 1940s and 1950s; in this sense, it was on the left. In Chile, Pinochet,⁷⁹ who is also Bonapartism *sui generis*, is right-wing, favourable to imperialism and bursts the working class, persecutes it, tortures it, and massacres its most important activists.

internal fights within the apparatus. He personally participated in several shootings. He was a candidate for governor of the province of Buenos Aires in 1983. In the central closing rally of the Peronist electoral campaign, on Avenida 9 de Julio, he burned a cardboard coffin with the initials of the Radical party, which caused a repudiation widespread, and strengthened the vote for the Radicals.

⁷⁷ See *The struggle has just begun* at nahuelmoreno.org.

⁷⁸ Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898). Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Prussia from 1862, and Chancellor of the German Empire since its proclamation in 1871, under Wilhelm I of Prussia, afterwards German Emperor. To rein in the German working class, he outlawed trade unions and sanctioned anti-socialist laws. At the same time, to win the acceptance of the workers, he established free medical care for workers and their families, compensation for work accidents, and retirement, antecedents of the so-called "welfare state." He ceased his duties in 1890, being Emperor Wilhelm II.

⁷⁹ Augusto Pinochet (1915-2006). Chilean military dictator who, through a bloody coup, ruled from 1973 to 1990, forming part of the period of genocidal dictatorships in the Southern Cone of South America. At the end of the 1980s, already weakened, Pinochetism negotiated a series of agreed reforms with the Christian Democracy and the Socialist Party (also supported by the CP). Elections were held again but in a regime with strong Bonapartist elements and severely conditioned by the armed forces. The Pinochet constitution was maintained, with senators for life. In 1998, while in London, he was charged with crimes against humanity and arrested. He managed to be released and returned to Chile. When he died, he had ongoing charges of genocide and corruption.

In France—an imperialist and exploitative country— there was solid Bonapartism, with fewer contradictions. Instead, in the Bonapartism of a backward country, the strong ruler can turn to the left and resist imperialism. In this case, it has to rely on the working class because the bourgeoisie does not have enough strength to resist alone. Imperialism is stronger than him because it dominates the foundations of the economy and the bourgeoisie is weak. Imperialism can only be confronted if it is opposed by another giant, which is the working class and the people. So Bonapartism *sui generis* has to manoeuvre with the working class to see if it can resist. If the bourgeoisie does not get that support, imperialism swallows them. If a national car factory were built here, it could only survive if the foreign factories were expropriated, but to do so, the Bonapartist government would need the support of the working class and the people. If the national factory is left to the game of free competition, no factory can resist the world giants like Ford and Chevrolet. There is nothing to fight them with.

These are the Bonapartist *sui generis* regimes, which have different stages and governments. The bourgeois Sandinista government of Nicaragua, for example, has been for a few years, since 1979, a Bonapartism *sui generis* of the left, pressured and harassed by imperialism. Galtieri's was right-wing, genocidal, counter-revolutionary, the worst, even during the confrontation with British imperialism over the Malvinas Islands. The war was a manoeuvre but the Galtieri government was semi-fascist. Another thing is that we, once the war began, supported the military struggle to defeat England.

Regarding the support for the war against imperialist England, there is a precedent of a discussion in world Marxism. Abd el-Krim⁸⁰ was an Arab feudal lord from North Africa who confronted European imperialism. He was of the purest Arab tradition and culture, having nothing to do with Western civilization, upholding all Arab feudal conceptions, and he himself was a sheik. He drove the French and the Spanish mad by waging war on them in defence of their land. The Second International ruled in favour of the European countries against Abd el-Krim, arguing that he was barbaric. The Third International, on the other hand, said: "No sir, Abd el-Krim fights to get rid of imperialism. Then we are going to fight, or we are already fighting against women wearing hijabs, all the feudal monstrosities that Abd el-Krim imposes. But the only way to be able to fight against it is for imperialism to fall."

In this, the Third International was right, because, under imperialist domination, the people go backwards. For example, Algeria was one of the most cultured countries on earth and there were hardly any illiterates. French imperialism conquered it in the middle of the last century and a hundred years later, Algeria had almost 90 per cent illiterates. The imperialist domination, which they say is more progressive, in a hundred years transformed an educated people into a frighteningly backward and dominated people.

There is another historical example that is Andalusia.⁸¹ When it was part of the Arab world, it was a centre of world culture. They came from all over Europe to learn. Instead, from the late 15th century, the Arabs were expelled from southern Spain, which was dominated by Castilian noble landowners who transformed Andalusia into a region of brutally exploited and illiterate peasants. Any domination of one people over another brings disaster. The argument that this domination is progressive because, in the advanced people, there are such and such progressive institutions is false because those institutions are not the ones that are imposed on the dominated people. If it is a literate people, they make it illiterate. With each reactionary government, our country for example—which was at the level of the most cultured in Europe, far superior to Portugal, Spain or southern Italy— has been declining. And let's not talk about Uruguay, which was a jewel of world culture, and

80 Between 1921 and 1927, the Riff War took place; this is a region of Morocco, divided after the First World War between French and Spanish imperialism. The resistance of the Riffians was led by Abd el-Krim (1882-1963) who maintained an independent state until the combined force of both imperialisms —mustard gas against the civilian population included— led to the surrender of Abd el-Krim. in 1927.

81 Cordoba, the capital of Andalusia, had 100,000 inhabitants, the largest city in Western Europe in the 10th century. It had 70 libraries, which kept treasures from Greco-Latin antiquity and contributions from Muslim thinkers such as Avicenna and Averroes, and Jews such as Maimonides. The library belonging to Caliph Al-Hakam II (915-976) had 400,000 volumes.

that with the pro-imperialist reactionary governments became more and more illiterate, more and more miserable and uneducated. For this reason, we always position ourselves against imperialism and we are willing to fight it, even together with a reactionary, if he confronts it, even if it is temporarily; even if it was a semi-fascist regime like Galtieri's, which we also fought.

More about Bonapartist regimes

In the world, the trends towards Bonapartism are very great. The fact that there is such a trend does not mean all governments are Bonapartist. There are bourgeois-democratic regimes, even though they have enormous Bonapartist tendencies, for example, Alfonsín's. And also, those of France, Switzerland, Germany, the United States, Canada, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. Mexico is another case. It would be almost entirely Bonapartist with some democratic trappings: bourgeois democracy has little weight there. One party rules, the PRI,⁸² which since 1920 has dominated everything, gets 80 or 90 per cent of the votes, commits electoral fraud, kills, and controls the workers' movement with a union bureaucracy as sinister and violent as the one here but allows all other parties to exist. It has completely dominated for 60 years, and it is the only party that governs, so it is a complex issue. The direct Bonapartist regime is when armed forces assume the government without intermediaries, as was the case, for example, of the military dictatorships of Pinochet in Chile and the Argentine genocidal military.

The government of Isabel Peron,⁸³ on the other hand, was a regime with strong Bonapartist elements but a bourgeois-democratic one. Different from the 1976 military coup that installed a regime that was Bonapartist. We have looked for another term to characterise the government of the military junta because each armed force elected governors, was in charge of a sector of the government, and the commanders' committee functioned by consensus; if the three forces did not agree, the decrees could not be issued. We call it directorial, not typical Bonapartist because it is a type of government that has rarely occurred in the world. It is not a centralised government with an individual in charge, but a junta, a committee, of three military personnel where each one represents his force. This happened in France after the counter-revolutionary coup against Robespierre. A government of five members emerged, which was called the Directory. This government was later overthrown by Napoleon, which is when the first classical Bonapartist government emerged. In Argentina, it was the Junta of Commanders in Chief that was in charge; there was no strong man. Videla, from the army, constantly clashed with Massera, from the navy. However, it can be said that, as a whole, the regime of the military junta was Bonapartist and counter-revolutionary. Different from the also Bonapartist regime of Pinochet in Chile; in these 10 years Pinochet was always in charge. It is the typical model of Bonapartism.

There may be different Bonapartist variants. It may be that one party rules, as in Mexico, and not the army, even if it is supported by it. In Brazil, on the other hand, with the military dictatorship, Bonapartism takes place as a combination, controlled and repressive, of the dominant military regime with some democratic institutions. There can be an enormous number of combinations. For Marxism, there is a fundamental law, the law of uneven and combined development, which says that there are always combinations of everything. There are very few pure phenomena.

82 Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Founded on 4 March 1929, it ruled Mexico for 70 consecutive years, from 1930 to 2000. That year, it lost the federal elections at the hands of the PAN, a directly pro-imperialist party, and Vicente Fox, a great business executive of the Mexican Coca Cola, assumed the presidency.

83 Maria Estela Martinez de Peron (1931-). The third wife of General Peron, she accompanied him into exile. In 1973, the Peron-Peron ticket triumphed, and she became president when Juan Peron died in 1974. During her government, there was an increase in the class struggle, assassinations of labour activists, militants and left-wing intellectuals by ultra-right gangs and armed actions of guerrilla groups. She was overthrown on 24 March 1976 by the genocidal military coup.

XI. The weight of the state bureaucracy in capitalist countries

In imperialist capitalism, the bourgeois state apparatus becomes so large, with so many specialised technicians that, in fact, the bureaucrats, especially in the upper echelons, acquire enormous weight and become an almost stable, permanent phenomenon. In the United States, this phenomenon is colossal: the head of the state department is always from the same team. They are all great friends, this bureaucrat leaves and the other goes up; everyone is addressed by their first name. They are bureaucrats directly at the service of capitalism. The influence of professional officials in the management of the bourgeois state is enormous. They tend to act independently of parliament and political parties. The world trend is for more bureaucracy because of the great growth of the bourgeois state. Bureaucracy inevitably tends towards verticality, towards hierarchical authoritarianism, and in this sense, it generates a tendency towards Bonapartism, towards not being controlled by anyone. At present, any bourgeois regime is based on immense estates, with hundreds of thousands of employees and technicians; no president can totally control the state apparatus. He encounters great contradictions and obstacles. Contrary to what happened in the 19th century. For example, Rosas controlled everything and no paper moved if he didn't read it. Today, it is the bureaucracy that manages the state apparatus; not even a specific party can do it. The army, which, as we have repeatedly said, is the fundamental support of all the economic and political power of the ruling class, is also part of the state bureaucracy.

This trend towards an increasingly independent bureaucracy runs parallel, under capitalism and imperialism, to the development of the monopolies that encourage it. It becomes stronger because the monopolies and the businessmen want the governments to sign contracts, to give them bids of all kinds. It is in their interest, for their businesses and profits, that the state bureaucracy, the officials, have permanence and a certain independence, they do not have control of the political parties or parliament. For example, here in Argentina, to sell uniforms to the police or the army, the big clothing companies want to have an official who responds to them, so he gives them contracts; They don't want anyone to control them. It is very similar to the union bureaucracy that tries to be independent of the rank and file, without control, that there are no workers' assemblies in which any worker can ask. Bonapartist tendencies are linked to the weight of the bourgeois state apparatus.

Appendix:

Works by Karl Marx

Thesis on Feuerbach (1845)

1

The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that things [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the *object, or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the *active side* was set forth abstractly by idealism—which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity. In *Das Wesen des Christentums [The Essence of Christianity]*, he therefore regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and defined only in its dirty-Jewish form of appearance. Hence, he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary”, of “practical-critical”, activity.

2

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.

3

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*.

4

Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-estrangement, of the duplication of the world into a religious world and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But that the secular basis lifts off from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the inner strife and intrinsic contradictoriness of this secular basis. The latter must, therefore, itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionised in practice. Thus, for instance, once the earthly family is discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then itself be destroyed in theory and in practice.

5

Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, wants [*sensuous*] contemplation; but he does not conceive sensuousness as *practical*, human-sensuous activity.

6

Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is hence obliged:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment [*Gemüt*] by itself, and to presuppose an abstract —isolated— human individual.

2. Essence, therefore, can be regarded only as “species”, as an inner, mute, general character which unites the many individuals *in a natural way*.

7

Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the “religious sentiment” is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual which he analyses belongs to a particular form of society.

8

All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

9

The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is, materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is the contemplation of single individuals and of civil society.

10

The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or social humanity.

11

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.

Estranged labour

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property, the separation of labour, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land —likewise division of labour, competition, the concept of exchange-value, etc. On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands, and thus the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; and that finally the distinction between capitalist and land rentier, like that between the tiller of the soil and the factory worker, disappears and that the whole of society must fall apart into the two classes—the property *owners* and the propertyless *workers*.

Political economy starts with the fact of private property; it does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulas the *material* process through which private property actually passes, and these formulas it then takes for *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws, i.e., it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property. Political economy throws no light on the cause of the division between labour and capital, and between capital and land. When, for example, it defines the relationship of wages to profit, it takes the interest of the capitalists to be the ultimate cause, i.e., it takes for granted what it is supposed to explain. Similarly, competition comes in everywhere. It is explained from external circumstances. As to how far these external and apparently accidental circumstances are but the expression of a necessary course of development, political economy teaches us nothing. We have seen how exchange itself appears to it as an accidental fact. The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are *greed* and the *war amongst the greedy —competition*.

Precisely because political economy does not grasp the way the movement is connected, it was possible to oppose, for instance, the doctrine of competition to the doctrine of monopoly, the doctrine of the freedom of the crafts to the doctrine of the guild, the doctrine of the division of landed property to the doctrine of the big estate— for competition, freedom of the crafts and the division of landed property were explained and comprehended only as accidental, premeditated and violent consequences of monopoly, of the guild system, and of feudal property, not as their necessary, inevitable and natural consequences.

Now, therefore, we have to grasp the intrinsic connection between private property, avarice, the separation of labour, capital and landed property; the connection of exchange and competition, of value and the devaluation of men, of monopoly and competition, etc.— we have to grasp this whole estrangement connected with the *money* system.

Do not let us go back to a fictitious primordial condition as the political economist does, when he tries to explain. Such a primordial condition explains nothing; it merely pushes the question away

into a grey nebulous distance. The economist assumes in the form of a fact, of an event, what he is supposed to deduce — namely, the necessary relationship between two things— between, for example, division of labour and exchange. Thus, the theologian explains the origin of evil by the fall of man; that is, he assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained.

We proceed from an *actual* economic fact.

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size. The worker becomes an ever-cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. The devaluation of the world of men is in direct proportion to the increasing value of the world of things. Labour produces not only commodities: it produces itself and the worker as a commodity— and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general.

This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces—labour's product— confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realisation is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realisation of labour appears as *loss of realisation* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage* to it; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.

So much does labour's realisation appear as loss of realisation that the worker loses realisation to the point of starving to death. So much does objectification appear as loss of the object that the worker is robbed of the objects most necessary not only for his life but for his work. Indeed, labour itself becomes an object which he can obtain only with the greatest effort and with the most irregular interruptions. So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the less he can possess and the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital.

All these consequences are implied in the statement that the worker is related to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien* object. For on this premise, it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself —his inner world— becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the more the worker lacks objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien.

Let us now look more closely at the objectification, at the production of the worker; and in it at the estrangement, the *loss* of the object, of his product.

The worker can create nothing without *nature*, without the *sensuous external world*. It is the material on which his labour is realised, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces. But just as nature provides labour with [the] *means of life* in the sense that labour cannot live without objects on which to operate, on the other hand, it also provides the *means of life* in the more restricted sense, i.e., the means for the physical subsistence of the *worker* himself.

Thus, the more the worker by his labour *appropriates* the external world, sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of *means of life* in two respects: first, in that the sensuous external world more and more ceases to be an object belonging to his labour —to be his *labour's means of life*; and secondly, in that it more and more ceases to be means of life in the immediate sense, means for the physical subsistence of the worker.

In both respects, therefore, the worker becomes a servant of his object, first, in that he receives an *object of labour*, i.e., in that he receives *work*; and secondly, in that he receives *means of subsistence*. This enables him to exist, first, as a worker; and, second, as a *physical subject*. The height of this

servitude is that it is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject*, and that it is only as a Physical subject that he is a worker.

(According to the economic laws the estrangement of the worker in his object is expressed thus: the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilised his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the more powerful labour becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the less ingenious becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature's servant.)

Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production. It is true that labour produces wonderful things for the rich — but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces — but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty — but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labour by machines, but it throws one section of the workers back to a barbarous type of labour, and it turns the other section into a machine. It produces intelligence — but for the worker, stupidity, cretinism.

The direct relationship of labour to its products is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production. The relationship of the man of means to the objects of production and to production itself is only a consequence of this first relationship — and confirms it. We shall consider this other aspect later. When we ask, then, what is the essential relationship of labour we are asking about the relationship of the *worker* to production.

Till now we have been considering the estrangement; the alienation of the worker only in one of its aspects, i.e., the worker's *relationship to the products of his labour*. But the estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the *act of production*, within the *producing activity* itself. How could the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself? The product is after all but the summary of the activity, of production. If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. In the estrangement of the object of labour is merely summarised the estrangement, the alienation, in the activity of labour itself.

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

First, the fact that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labour*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates on the individual independently of him —that is, operates as an alien, divine or diabolical activity— so is the worker's activity not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.

As a result, therefore, man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.

Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions.

We have considered the act of estranging practical human activity, labour, in two of its aspects. (1) The relation of the worker to the *product of labour* as an alien object exercising power over him. This relation is at the same time the relation to the sensuous external world, to the objects of nature, as an alien world inimically opposed to him. (2) The relation of labour to the act of *production* within the labour process. This relation is the relation of the worker to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him; it is activity as suffering, strength as weakness, begetting as emasculating, the worker's own physical and mental energy, his personal life —for what is life but activity?— as an activity which is turned against him, independent of him and not belonging to him. Here we have *self-estrangement*, as previously we had the estrangement of the *thing*.

We have still a third aspect of estranged labour to deduce from the two already considered.

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but—and this is only another way of expressing it— also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being.

The life of the species, both in man and in animals, consists physically in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature; and the more universal man (or the animal) is, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., constitute theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art —his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make palatable and digestible— so also in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, etc. The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his *inorganic body*— both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity. Nature is man's inorganic body—nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man lives on nature— means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man. It changes for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life. First it estranges the life of the species and individual life, and secondly it makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species, likewise in its abstract and estranged form.

For labour, *life activity, productive life* itself, appears to man in the first place merely as a means of satisfying a need—the need to maintain physical existence. Yet the productive life is the life of the species. It is life-engendering life. The whole character of a species — its species-character—is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species-character. Life itself appears only as a *means to life*.

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its *life activity*. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labour reverses this relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life activity, his *essential being*, a mere means to his *existence*.

In creating a *world of objects* by his practical activity, in his *work upon* inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being. Admittedly animals also produce. They build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally. It

produces only under the dominion of immediate physical need, whilst man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom. An animal produces only itself, whilst man reproduces the whole of nature. An animal's product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product. An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty.

It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of his production, therefore, estranged labour tears from him his *species-life*, his real objectivity as a member of the species, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him.

Similarly, in degrading spontaneous, free activity to a means, estranged labour makes man's species-life a means to his physical existence.

The consciousness which man has of his species is thus transformed by estrangement in such a way that species[-life] becomes for him a means.

Estranged labour turns thus:

(3) *Man's species-being*, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a *means* for his *individual existence*. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his *human aspect*.

(4) An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being is the *estrangement of man from man*. When man confronts himself, he confronts the *other* man. What applies to a man's relation to his work, to the product of his labour and to himself, also holds of a man's relation to the other man, and to the other man's labour and object of labour.

In fact, the proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other, as each of them is from man's essential nature.

The estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man [stands] to himself, is realised and expressed only in the relationship in which a man stands to other men.

Hence within the relationship of estranged labour each man views the other in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as a worker.

We took our departure from a fact of political economy— the estrangement of the worker and his product. We have formulated this fact in conceptual terms as *estranged, alienated* labour. We have analysed this concept— hence analysing merely a fact of political economy.

Let us now see, further, how the concept of estranged, alienated labour must express and present itself in real life.

If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong?

If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien, a coerced activity, to whom, then, does it belong?

To a being *other* than myself.

Who is this being?

The gods? To be sure, in the earliest times the principal production (for example, the building of temples, etc., in Egypt, India and Mexico) appears to be in the service of the gods, and the product belongs to the gods. However, the gods on their own were never the lords of labour. No more was na-

ture. And what a contradiction it would be if, the more man subjugated nature by his labour and the more the miracles of the gods were rendered superfluous by the miracles of industry, the more man were to renounce the joy of production and the enjoyment of the product to please these powers.

The *alien* being, to whom labour and the product of labour belongs, in whose service labour is done and for whose benefit the product of labour is provided, can only be *man* himself.

If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, then this can only be because it belongs to *some other man than the worker*. If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must give *satisfaction* and pleasure. Not the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man.

We must bear in mind the previous proposition that man's relation to himself only becomes for him *objective* and *actual* through his relation to the other man. Thus, if the product of his labour, his labour objectified, is for him an alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him, then his position towards it is such that someone else is master of this object, someone who is *alien, hostile, powerful, and independent* of him. If he treats his own activity as an unfree activity, then he treats it as an activity performed in the service, under the dominion, the coercion, and the yoke of another man.

Every self-estrangement of man, from himself and from nature, appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself. For this reason, religious self-estrangement necessarily appears in the relationship of the layman to the priest, or again to a mediator, etc., since we are here dealing with the intellectual world. In the real practical world self-estrangement can only become manifest through the real practical relationship to other men. The medium through which estrangement takes place is itself *practical*. Thus through estranged labour man not only creates his relationship to the object and to the act of production as to powers" that are alien and hostile to him; he also creates the relationship in which other men stand to his production and to his product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he creates his own production as the loss of his reality, as his punishment; his own product as a loss, as a product not belonging to him; so he creates the domination of the person who does not produce over production and over the product. Just as he estranges his own activity from himself, so he confers upon the stranger an activity which is not his own.

We have until now considered this relationship only from the standpoint of the worker and later we shall be considering it also from the standpoint of the non-worker.

Through *estranged, alienated labour*, then, the worker produces the relationship to this labour of a man alien to labour and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labour creates the relation to it of the capitalist (or whatever one chooses to call the master of labour). *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of *alienated labour*, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself.

Private property thus results by analysis from the concept of *alienated labour*, i.e., of *alienated man*, of estranged labour, of estranged life, of estranged man.

True, it is as a result of the *movement of private property* that we have obtained the concept of *alienated labour (of alienated life)* in political economy. But analysis of this concept shows that though private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labour, it is rather its consequence, just as the gods are *originally* not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later this relationship becomes reciprocal.

Only at the culmination of the development of private property does this, its secret, appear again, namely, that on the one hand it is the *product* of alienated labour, and that on the other it is the *means* by which labour alienates itself, the *realisation of this alienation*.

This exposition immediately sheds light on various hitherto unsolved conflicts.

(1) Political economy starts from labour as the real soul of production; yet to labour it gives nothing, and to private property everything. Confronting this contradiction, Proudhon has decided in favour of labour against private property. We understand, however, that this apparent contra-

diction is the contradiction of *estranged labour* with itself, and that political economy has merely formulated the laws of estranged labour.

We also understand, therefore, that *wages* and *private property* are identical. Indeed, where the product, as the object of labour, pays for labour itself, there the wage is but a necessary consequence of labour's estrangement. Likewise, in the wage of labour, labour does not appear as an end in itself but as the servant of the wage. We shall develop this point later, and meanwhile will only draw some conclusions.

An enforced *increase of wages* (disregarding all other difficulties, including the fact that it would only be by force, too, that such an increase, being an anomaly, could be maintained) would therefore be nothing but better *payment for the slave*, and would not win either for the worker or for labour their human status and dignity.

Indeed, even the *equality of wages*, as demanded by Proudhon, only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labour into the relationship of all men to labour. Society is then conceived as an abstract capitalist.

Wages are a direct consequence of estranged labour, and estranged labour is the direct cause of private property. The downfall of the one must therefore involve the downfall of the other.

(2) From the relationship of estranged labour to private property it follows further that the emancipation of society from private property, etc., from servitude, is expressed in the *political* form of the *emancipation of the workers*; not that their emancipation alone is at stake, but because the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation—and it contains this, because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and all relations of servitude are but modifications and consequences of this relation.

Just as we have derived the concept of *private property* from the concept of *estranged, alienated labour* by *analysis*, so we can develop every category of political economy with the help of these two factors; and we shall find again in each category, e.g., trade, competition, capital, money, only a *particular and developed expression* of these first elements.

Before considering this phenomenon, however, let us try to solve two other problems.

(1) To define the general *nature of private property*, as it has arisen as a result of estranged labour, in its relation to *truly human and social property*.

(2) We have accepted the *estrangement of labour*, its *alienation*, as a fact, and we have analysed this fact. How, we now ask, does man come to alienate, to estrange, his *labour*? How is this estrangement rooted in the nature of human development? We have already gone a long way to the solution of this problem by *transforming* the question of the *origin of private property* into the question of the relation of *alienated labour* to the course of humanity's development. For when one speaks of private property, one thinks of dealing with something external to man. When one speaks of labour, one is directly dealing with man himself. This new formulation of the question already contains its solution.

As to (1): The general nature of private property and its relation to truly human property.

Alienated labour has resolved itself for us into two components which depend on one another, or which are but different expressions of one and the same relationship. *Appropriation* appears as *estrangement*, as *alienation*; and *alienation* appears as *appropriation*, *estrangement* as *truly becoming a citizen*.

We have considered the one side —*alienated labour* in relation to the worker himself, i.e., *the relation of alienated labour* to itself. The product, the necessary outcome of this relationship, as we have seen, is the *property relation of the non-worker to the worker and to labour*. *Private property*, as the material, summary expression of alienated labour, embraces both relations— *the relation of the worker to labour and to the product of his labour and to the non-worker*, and the relation of the *nonworker to the worker and to the product of his labour*.

Having seen that in relation to the worker who appropriates nature by means of his labour, this appropriation appears as estrangement, his own spontaneous activity as activity for another and as activity of another, vitality as a sacrifice of life, production of the object as loss of the object to an alien power, to an alien person— we shall now consider the relation to the worker, to labour and its object of this person who is alien to labour and the worker.

First it has to be noted that everything which appears in the worker as an *activity of alienation, of estrangement*, appears in the non-worker as a *state of alienation, of estrangement*.

Secondly, that the worker's *real, practical attitude* in production and to the product (as a state of mind) appears in the non-worker confronting him as a *theoretical attitude*.

Thirdly, the non-worker does everything against the worker which the worker does against himself; but he does not do against himself what he does against the worker.

Let us look more closely at these three relations.

[At this point the first manuscript breaks off unfinished.]

Biographical Appendix

Althusser, Louis (1918-1990). French philosopher, professor and politician, who in 1948 joined the Communist Party and was one of its most influential intellectuals since the post-war period, in the left linked to the Stalinist parties and in the left-wing academic circles. According to his approach to Marxism, nothing could be taken from the work of Hegel, he vindicated only the works of Marx from 1845-46 onwards and sought to incorporate structuralism into them. He rejected the concept of alienation as “bourgeois” and according to him, Marx had abandoned it after his youthful “pre-Marxist” works. He was a defender of Mao’s views on contradictions. He had a very prolific written work. Among others: *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses*, *For Marx*, *To read Capital*, and *Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon*. One of his best-known disciples was the Chilean Martha Harnecker. In 1985, he wrote his last autobiographical work, *The future lasts a long time*, published after his death. He suffered from mental disorders that led him to have periodic hospitalisations. In 1980 he strangled his wife but was declared unfit to stand trial and spent three years in a hospital.

Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) was born in the kingdom of Macedonia. For 20 years he was a disciple of Plato at the Academy of Athens, the main city of ancient Greece. He returned to his homeland to be the teacher of Alexander the Great, the creator of the first great slave empire in the West. Returned to Athens, he surrounded himself with disciples, establishing the Lyceum. Along with Plato, he is considered the founder of Western philosophical thought. Unlike his teacher, he recognised the reality of the object and its attributes, moving towards scientific thought. His writings cover philosophy, logic, biology, physics, astronomy, politics, economics, aesthetics, and ethics, among other topics. One of his great contributions has been the discovery of the principle of identity, the cornerstone of formal logic. His logic combines the observation of the attributes of the object with the classification and definition by close gender and specific difference. He was rediscovered for Europe by the Muslim philosopher Averroes from Cordoba in the 11th century and Thomas Aquinas incorporated him into Christian scholasticism in the 13th century. See, about Aristotle, *Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences*, in particular, “1. Aristotelian logic and epistemology” in chapter VI, at www.nahuelmoreno.org.

Darwin, Charles (1809-1882). English naturalist who, in his work, *The Origin of Species* (1859), proposed the theory of the evolution of living beings over millions of years through natural selection. He built on decades of research that included a five-year round-the-world ship trip. He toured, among other regions, the Argentine pampas and Patagonia. His discoveries meant a huge denial of religious conceptions about the creation of human beings by a god. Marx and Engels paid close attention to Darwin’s discoveries and considered that the theory of evolution was in the direction of their materialist conception. There is an unproven version that Darwin rejected an offer from Marx to dedicate a volume of *Capital* to him; what is certain is that he sent the naturalist in 1873 the second edition of the first volume of the work with the following note: “To Mr Charles Darwin from his sincere admirer, Karl Marx”. The different Christian fundamentalisms, even today, fight this theory and defend to the letter the biblical account of the creation of the world in seven days and from nothing.

Engels, Friedrich: see Marx, Karl.

Feuerbach, Ludwig (1804-1872). He began as a defender and disciple of Hegel and evolved towards the denial of the existence of God and of the prevailing idealistic conceptions in Germany at his time. The publication of his work *The Essence of Christianity* in 1841 shocked the intellectual environment. Marx and Engels considered him the founder of modern materialism.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770-1831). The leading German idealist philosopher from the end of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century. He was a university professor, first in Jena, then in Heidelberg (1816-1818) and then in Berlin until his death. In 1806, he published one of his most important works, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Then, among others, he published *Science of Logic*. A Protestant by religion, he politically supported the Prussian autocracy and was its official philosopher for many years.

Kautsky, Karl (1854-1938). He was born in Prague (then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire) and was one of the most important leaders of German and international social democracy. He went from revolutionary positions to centrism and opportunism. From 1875, he was connected to Marx and Engels and for years worked closely with them, fighting reformism. From 1883, he directed the prestigious magazine *Die Neue Zeit*. He wrote *Foundations of Christianity* and *The Road to Power*, both published in 1908. In the years before the imperialist war, he turned to centrist positions. Lenin and Trotsky argued very harshly against “Kautskyism”. When the revolutionary internationalists rejected the betrayal of the Second International and met in 1915 in Zimmerwald, Kautsky attended but at the head of its right, pacifist wing. He then turned from pacifism to direct capitulation to imperialism and the German bourgeoisie. In 1917, he opposed the seizure of power by the Soviets and the Bolsheviks, vindicating Menshevism. In 1918, he published a pamphlet, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, in which he attacked the power of the Soviets and workers’ democracy from a liberal bourgeois point of view, demanding to apply “democracy”, the “conquest of the majority” by universal vote and rejecting the dissolution of the constituent assembly by the Soviet government. In response, Lenin then wrote *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*. For his part, Trotsky wrote *Terrorism and Communism* in 1920, rejecting Kautsky’s position against all revolutionary violence.

Lefebvre, Henri (1901-1991). He was a great French Marxist, with his own thinking, who escaped from the schemas imposed by Stalinist dogma. He studied philosophy and left behind an initial inclination for Catholicism and idealism, to join Marxism. He joined the French Communist Party in the late 1920s. He was a professor at various universities and in 1941 he was expelled by the collaborationist government with the Nazis installed in the city of Vichy. He actively joined the resistance against the Nazi occupation. Because of his non-dogmatic works and conceptions, which deviated from the dictates of Stalinism, he was expelled from the CP in 1958. He participated in the revolutionary mobilisation of the French May in 1968. He wrote, among others: *The Sociology of Marx*, *Formal Logic and dialectical logic*, and several books on art, on contemporary urban daily life and alienation.

Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich (1870-1924). Russian revolutionary, founder of the RSDLP (Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, which was part of the second international) and later of Bolshevism, the first workers’, internationalist, and revolutionary party that was built to seize power. He constantly polemicized and fought against the reformist revisionist sector of Marxism in the Second International led by Eduard Bernstein. At the start of the First World War, in 1914, he rejected the betrayal of the majority of the Social Democracy that supported the imperialist bourgeoisie of their respective countries. Along with Luxemburg, Trotsky and others, he led the minority that broke and denounced the inter-imperialist war and the need for a new international.

In 1917, after years of exile, he returned to Russia shortly after the February revolution that overthrew Tsarism. He immediately began —initially in a minority— to reorient the Bolshevik Party towards rejecting the new bourgeois government headed by the reformist parties and towards the perspective of the socialist revolution and the seizure of power by the workers’ and peasants’ soviets. Since the victorious revolution of October of that year, he headed with his party the first revolutionary workers’ and peasants’ government that existed until now, supported by the mobilisation and democratic soviets and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. After the civil war, he promoted measures for the revolutionary reconstruction of the USSR. He early on began to detect and combat the danger of an incipient bureaucracy in the workers’ state. His health began to deteriorate in 1922 and he was practically absent from activity throughout 1923. His last efforts were devoted, with the support of Trotsky, to fighting Stalin and the bureaucratic sector that was advancing in the state apparatus and the party. After his death, the advance of the bureaucratic sector headed by Stalin was unstoppable, which imposed a political counter-revolution in the USSR and the world. Trotsky continued the consistent fight for the revolutionary politics of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Lenin’s written work spans 45 volumes.

Luxembourg, Rosa (1871-1919). She was born in Poland and was one of the main leaders of the revolutionary wing of the Second International and the Polish and German Social Democracy. In high school in Warsaw, she became a member of the underground revolutionary movement. In 1889, she had to emigrate and settled in Zurich (Switzerland) whose university admitted women. In 1892 she was one of the founders of the Polish Socialist Party. She came into conflict with the PSP leadership because she rejected the fight for the independence of Poland, directly opposing it with the fight for socialism. In 1894, she broke away and founded another party, which would become the Polish Social Democracy. In 1896 she participated as a delegate to the congress of the Second International and argued over the national question with Kautsky and other revolutionary leaders. In 1898 she settled in Berlin and from then on, she was in the front row in opposition to the reformist wing headed by Bernstein. In 1900, she published her famous polemic *Reform or Revolution*. She disagreed with Lenin's conception of the revolutionary party, its objectives and the method of democratic centralism. In 1906, she published *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*. She also devoted herself to the topics of Marxist economics and in 1913 she published *The Accumulation of Capital*. In 1914, she was part of the internationalist minority that rejected the betrayal of German Social Democracy in the face of the inter-imperialist war. In 1916, she formed the Spartacist League. She supported, with criticism and discrepancies, the revolution in Russia of 1917. When the revolution broke out in Germany she actively participated; she was arrested and murdered by the police of the new Social Democratic government in January 1919.

Mandel, Ernest (1923-1995). Belgian, he was one of the best-known Trotskyist leaders and a Marxist economist. He fell prisoner of the Nazis and managed to flee to France where he came into contact with Michel Pablo. Both led to the reorganisation of Trotskyism in the post-war period. They began a revisionist course without return of opportunist capitulation to the Stalinist and bourgeois nationalist leaderships. This led, from 1951 to the crisis and division of the Fourth International, which has not yet been reversed. Mandel promoted the reunification of 1963 together with the leadership of the American SWP, and the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat) was formed, which quickly fell into capitulation to Castroism, promoting a guerrilla deviation in Latin America. In the 1970s, Mandel became well-known in academic circles for his works on Marxist economics. In 1970, his *Marxist Economic Theory* was published, in two volumes and, in 1979, *Late Capitalism*. That same year he supported the bourgeois Sandinista government in its repression of the Trotskyists of the Simon Bolívar Brigade. This gave rise to the definitive distancing of Morenoism from the ranks of the United Secretariat, which continued deepening its abandonment of the task of building revolutionary Trotskyist parties. In the late 1980s and until his death, he continued to support Castroism and Gorbachev's Perestroika and denied the advances of capitalist restoration. Faced with the fall of the Berlin Wall, he rejected German reunification and continued to vindicate the GDR. Some of his last books were *The Meaning of the Second World War*, *Delightful Murder*, *Beyond Perestroika: The Future of Gorbachev's USSR*, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*, and *Trotsky as Alternative*, among others.

Marx, Karl (1818-1883) and **Engels, Friedrich** (1820-1895). Both were born in Germany and were the founders, in the 1840s, of scientific socialism, the revolutionary movement for the liberation of the workers, which later became known as Marxism. They met as young men when both were active on the left wing of the democratic and critical movement in Germany and became lifelong friends. They evolved from Hegel-influenced idealism to materialism. They went into exile early. Some of their works from those years were *The Holy Family*, published in Frankfurt in 1845, the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, and *The German Ideology* (these two were not published until the 20th century). They developed the first scientific conception of human society and its evolution, historical materialism. In 1847 they wrote the program of the Communist League, the first workers' and internationalist party: *The Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848, shortly before the revolutionary wave that shook Europe. In this work they stated that capitalism would lead to increasing misery for the working class, which should organise and fight not only to defend their living conditions but also to seize power and rule, to end the political and economic power of the bourgeoisie and begin to build a new system, communism, abolishing private ownership of the means of production. They were active in the workers' and democratic struggles of their time and the workers' organisation. In 1864, they participated in the founding of the First International, which was dissolved after the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. They fought the reformists, among them the "utopians" of different signs and the anarchists. They wrote numerous works and were referents of the revolutionary workers' movement in many countries. Marx's last work was

Capital, a monumental work on the workings of the capitalist economy, in three volumes, which was published in its last part by Engels after Marx's death in 1883. Engels accompanied the first steps of the transformation of the Marxist workers' parties into large mass organisations in various countries. In 1889, he participated in the founding of the Socialist International, the second. And he continued until his death the fight against reformism that was beginning to take root within the German and European social democracy.

Moreno, Nahuel (1924-1987). Hugo Bressano was born in Argentina and was the most important Latin American Trotskyist leader. In the 1940s he started the first group of Argentine Trotskyism that was linked to the working class and its struggles, at a time when Peronism was emerging. The GOM (Marxist Workers Group) later became POR (Revolutionary Workers Party), Buenos Aires Federation of the PSRN, Palabra Obrera (Workers Word), PRT, PRT-La Verdad, PST, and when he died, he headed the MAS (Movement Towards Socialism). He always maintained his activity and political and theoretical elaboration linked to the construction of parties in Argentina and other countries, to the internationalist tasks of the Fourth International and the monitoring of the main revolutionary processes. In the 1950s he was part of the sector of the divided Fourth International that fought the opportunism of Pablo and Mandel. Before the reunification of 1963, Moreno promoted the entry of his current a year later, critically, denouncing that the SWP had capitulated to the opportunist Mandelist sector and that it tended to yield to Castroism. In the 1970s, under his leadership, the PST of Argentina became one of the most important Trotskyist parties in the world. In July 1976 Moreno went into exile in Bogota. In August 1979, both Mandelism and the SWP supported the bourgeois Sandinista government that expelled the Simon Bolívar Brigade, which had participated in the armed struggle against the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. Since then, Moreno and his current broke with the Unified Secretariat, promoting an international organisation that would fight consistently for the reconstruction of the principled and revolutionary Fourth International. After he died in 1987, his international organisation entered into a crisis process, which resulted in its division into various groups. His legacy continues today in the construction in many countries of the International Workers Unity–Fourth International (IWU–FI). Besides his daily and practical dedication to party construction in Argentina and his international current, Moreno left behind extensive written work on topics of Marxist politics, theory, history, and logic. Much of his written work is available at www.nahuelmoreno.org, sponsored by the International Workers Unity– Fourth International (www.uit-ci.org) and by Izquierda Socialista (Socialist left) of Argentina (www.izquierdasocialista.org).

Naville, Pierre (1903-1993). A French Marxist leader and intellectual, he was the founder of the first Trotskyist organisation in his country, the Communist League. Although in 1934 he opposed entryism in the French Socialist Party that Trotsky advised, he participated in the founding of the Fourth International in 1938. At the beginning of the Second World War, he left its ranks, developing since then an approach different from that of Trotsky and the Fourth. International regarding the USSR, although he continued to vindicate Trotsky and a large part of his positions. He was a very prominent Marxist researcher and sociologist, and the author of numerous books. Among them, *Traité de Sociologie du Travail* (with Georges Friedmann), *Le Nouveau Leviathan*, and *Gorbachev et la réforme de l'URSS*. In 1962 he published the biography *Trotsky Vivant*.

Novack, George (1905-1992). An American, being intellectual who graduated from Harvard, in the 1930s he joined the revolutionary struggle. He joined Trotskyism and since then has been one of the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the United States. Between 1937 and 1940 he was the secretary of the American Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky, which formed the “Dewey Commission” which examined the charges made against him by Stalin in the “Moscow trials” and in 1938 declared them a complete fraud. He was one of the leading intellectuals of the SWP and published numerous articles and several books on the theoretical issues of Marxism. His works include *Introduction to the Logic of Marxism*, *Sociology and Historical Materialism*, and *Understanding History*.

Piaget, Jean (1896-1980). One of the leading scientists of the 20th century. Swiss researcher, epistemologist, and biologist who made great contributions in the field of psychology, genetic epistemology and modern logic. His studies on the cognitive development of childhood have had an important influence on the fields of psychology and educational plans in different countries. He wrote over 50 books and countless articles. Among others, *The psychology of intelligence*, *Genetic Epistemology*, *Memory and intelligence*, and *Understanding Causality*. Nahuel Moreno, in his book *Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences*, refers to Piaget's studies in epistemology, logic and other related topics (see in full at www.nahuelmoreno.org). The courses on logic that Moreno gave at the party since the early 1970s included the study of works by Piaget.

Robespierre, Maximilian (1758-1794). Nicknamed “the incorruptible”, he was the petty-bourgeois leader who led the most radical faction of the French Revolution, the Jacobins, who ruled with the Committee of Public Safety. A lawyer, he was deputy and chairman of the National Convention on two occasions. Supported by the revolutionary poor people of Paris, he ruled France between 1793 and 1794. With the bourgeois revolution threatened on its borders and also internally by the defenders of feudalism, a revolutionary dictatorship known as “the Terror” was established that persecuted the nobility and also the sectors of the bourgeoisie that wanted a regime of constitutional monarchy and to stop the advance of the popular rise. In July 1794, the external threat averted, Napoleon staged the so-called “Thermidorian” *coup d'état* that ended the Jacobin government and guillotined Robespierre and the main plebeian revolutionary leaders and established the government of the Directory. Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky vindicated the “iron dictatorship of the Jacobins” (Trotsky). Nahuel Moreno, polemicising with Ernest Mandel, who capitulated to bourgeois democracy, defined those of Cromwell and Robespierre as revolutionary dictatorships. See *The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat* at www.nahuelmoreno.org.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712-1778). He was one of the most important European thinkers of the 18th century; His works were feeding the central ideas of the bourgeois revolution against feudalism in France. He had multiple intellectual and scientific concerns, from philosophy to music, passing through botany. One of his central definitions was that men are born free and equal, thus challenging the prevailing ideology in feudal society and the monarchy. He influenced the Jacobins and the left of the 19th and 20th centuries. Among others, his works were *The Social Contract*, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, and *Emile*.

Stalin, Joseph (1878-1953). He joined the social democratic movement in Georgia towards the end of the 19th century and joined Bolshevism. He was arrested several times and sent to Siberia. In 1917, he was part of the wing of Bolshevism headed by Zinoviev and Kamenev that opposed the October insurrection that brought the Soviets and Bolshevism to power. He was the leader of the incipient bureaucracy that began to emerge in the revolutionary workers' state. His erroneous policies (such as abolishing the monopoly of foreign trade) and his brutal methods were fought, with Trotsky's support, by Lenin until his death. Stalin then succeeded in imposing control of the bureaucracy over the party and the soviets. He defeated Trotsky and the oppositionists who advocated maintaining the internationalist and revolutionary course of Lenin and the Third International until 1922. In 1924, he managed to impose the counter-revolutionary orientation of “socialism in one country”. From then on, he promoted conciliation with the bourgeoisie in the different revolutionary processes, the “popular fronts” and “peaceful coexistence with imperialism”. He kept betraying the revolutions, starting with the one that took place in the USSR. Since the 1920s, he gradually imposed a totalitarian dictatorship within the USSR. He expelled Trotsky from the party and the country and shot or sent to death in Siberia almost all the former leaders of the revolution, including Zinoviev and Kamenev and some of their closest associates. He died in 1953. Since the 1920s, Stalinism seized the banners of Marxism, Lenin and the socialist revolution of 1917, formed a very powerful world bureaucratic apparatus with the communist parties of each country, which almost totally imposed dogmatic and non-scientific “Marxism” and counter-revolutionary policies, which were fought by the Fourth International.

Trotsky, Leon (1879-1940). He was Ukrainian and joined the Russian Social Democracy in Odesa. He remained independent of the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. According to his conception, the revolution against tsarism in Russia should not only be led by the working class (and not the bourgeoisie, as the Mensheviks said) but should also advance from bourgeois-democratic to socialist, in a permanent dynamic. In 1905, he was the vice president of the Saint Petersburg Soviet and was later arrested and sent to Siberia. He rejected Lenin's conception of the centralised party to seize power until 1917, when he joined Bolshevism upon his return from exile in May 1917. Together with Lenin, he led the October 1917 insurrection and the seizure of power by the soviets. He founded the Red Army and led it through the three years of the civil war. He accompanied Lenin's fight against the incipient bureaucratisation in the USSR and after Lenin's death, Trotsky was defeated by Stalin. He was expelled from the party in 1927 and from the USSR in 1929. From exile, he continued to promote the opposition to Stalinism and the revolutionary struggle, always defending the USSR. Since 1933, he promoted the formation of new revolutionary parties and a Fourth International. He guided groups of his followers to participate in numerous countries, for example, in the fight against Franco in the Spanish revolution. In 1938 he founded the Fourth International. He produced a very extensive corpus of articles, pamphlets and books. Among others, *Results and Prospects*, *Lessons of October*, *History of the Russian Revolution*,

The Third International After Lenin, The Permanent Revolution, My Life, The Revolution Betrayed, Whither France?, The Impending Danger of Fascism in Germany, The Spanish Revolution, The Transitional Program, In Defense of Marxism, Lenin, a biography of Stalin and a compilation in eleven volumes of his articles, interviews and correspondence in exile (1929-1940), not included in the aforementioned books. He was assassinated by an agent of Stalin in August 1940, in Mexico. After his death, the Fourth International began entering into crisis and was divided between consistently revolutionary sectors and opportunist and sectarian sectors. Currently, the Trotskyist movement exists in numerous countries but is dispersed. It has different currents, some of which, although they vindicate Trotsky and the *Transitional Program*, politically support bourgeois governments, have reformist leaderships, and do not promote the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

International Glossary

The League of Communists and the First International

In the first half of the 19th century, to the beat of the expansion of the industry, numerous organisations of activists developed in Europe that promoted the struggle of the nascent labour movement. With one of them, the League of the Just, Marx and Engels converged to form the Communist League, whose founding program, the *Communist Manifesto*, they wrote in 1847. The continuous growth of workers' struggles in the main European countries gave rise to the Foundation in 1864 in London of the International Workers Association, convened by the English trade unions, which would become known as the First International. Political organisations and unions participated and Marx and Engels had a great influence. Its internal life became polarised into two main currents: the anarchists (who were revolutionaries but did not accept participation in the political struggle and encouraged individual terrorism) and the socialists (who proposed the combination of the revolutionary struggle in the trade union and political arenas). and the actions of the masses). In 1871 the first workers' revolution took place —known as the Paris Commune. Its defeat shocked workers across Europe and in 1872 the First International dispersed. Marx and Engels formally dissolved it and the anarchist sector continued as a minority organisation that rejected the dissolution.

The Second International and pro-imperialist reformist socialism

In the following years, the growth of socialist workers' parties in Europe and other continents laid the foundations for the creation of the Socialist International in 1889. Unlike the first, it was made up of parties that recognised themselves as Marxists and called themselves Social Democrats. Its first major action was the realisation of an International Day of Struggle for the eight hours workday on 1 May 1890. Its main component was the powerful German Social Democracy.

The development of world production and the world market and the imperialist pillage in the colonies gradually gave rise to the appearance of privileged layers in the European working class. These, based on the leadership of large unions and the parliamentary seats obtained by the socialist parties, generated reformist tendencies in the International. They argued that, given the general progress of the economy and the union and political organisation of the workers, it was possible to reach socialism peacefully and evolutionarily, through the accumulation of social reforms and the growth of the parliamentary weight of the socialist deputies. Its main leaders were Auguste Bebel and Édouard Bernstein.

The social democratic International definitively lost its revolutionary character when, at the beginning of the inter-imperialist war in August 1914, its deputies approved in each country the funds for the war that their respective bourgeoisies demanded. Instead of rejecting them and opposing a war that was destroying the class solidarity of the European proletariat, they collaborated in leading millions of workers to slaughter. A handful of leaders opposed the imperialist war, including Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin, Trotsky and others. Meeting in Zimmerwald (Switzerland) in 1915, the anti-war socialists of the world could fit, as Trotsky said, in the four cars that took them to the hotel. From there, they launched an appeal to the world against the war and for revolutionary defeatism, facing the betrayal of the Social Democratic leadership. Since then, the reformist socialist workers' parties of the social democratic International continued to weigh in many countries,

particularly in Europe. When the workers' revolution began in Germany in 1918, its main party, the German Social Democracy, formed a bourgeois government and its vigilante gangs assassinated Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

The communist parties and the Third International

The Russian revolution of 1917 opened up a new possibility for the international organisation of workers and the forging of a world revolutionary leadership. In 1919, the Third International was founded in Moscow, in the middle of the civil war, with the participation of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups detached from the reformist socialist parties of a significant number of countries. It was called the Communist International, after the name that Bolshevism had adopted in the USSR and that was taken by the revolutionary parties. Its first four congresses, from 1919 to 1922, served to elaborate a revolutionary socialist policy whose axis was the revolutionary seizure of power by the workers, peasants and other popular sectors to put an end to the capitalist system, promoting the transformations that would lead to socialism.

The first two congresses consolidated the rupture and differentiation with the reformism of the Second International, retaking the programmatic and political principles and the tactics of revolutionary Marxism and Leninism. The next two, within the framework of an ebb in the revolutionary wave in the 1920s, faced the debate with ultra-leftist tendencies, elaborated the tactics of the workers' front to unite the forces of the workers, and began the debate on the struggle in colonial countries like China and India. Those texts and resolutions from 1919 to 1922 continue to be the fundamental, programmatic, political and orientation bases in the construction of revolutionary parties today.

The bureaucratisation of the Soviet Union quickly reached the Third International which began to transform into an appendage of the foreign policy of the Stalinist regime of the Communist Party of the USSR. The policy of supporting the nationalist bourgeoisie of the Kuomintang led to the defeat of the workers' revolution in China in 1926-27. A subsequent sectarian turn led the German communists to reject unity with the Social Democratic workers against Nazism, dividing the working class and paving the way for Hitler's rise to power in 1933. At its seventh congress, in 1935, the Third International made official the politics of the "popular fronts", that is, towards political unity with the "democratic" bourgeois sectors and class conciliation. This orientation has been faithfully maintained by all the Stalinist communist parties in each country. In 1943, Stalin formally dissolved the Communist International, to strengthen his agreement with the imperialist powers that faced Nazism, mainly the United States and England, to agree with them on a division of the post-war capitalist world.

To learn more, read *The First Five Years of the Communist International* (1924), and *The Third International after Lenin* (1928), by Trotsky.

The Fourth International and Trotskyism

In 1933, Leon Trotsky began to call for the foundation of a new revolutionary international. The Fourth International was founded in Paris in 1938, on the eve of the start of the Second World War. A handful of representatives of small Trotskyist revolutionary parties and groups came together to advance the program of the international socialist revolution in the face of the political betrayal of the bureaucracy of the Communist International and its parties.

In its foundational document, the *Transitional Program*, written by Trotsky, the Fourth International rescues the program of revolutionary Marxism, which does not abandon the "minimum" program that the reformists claimed and defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. but integrating them into a system of transitional or socialist demands to promote the continuity of the mobilisation of the workers towards the revolution and the seizure of power. It is integrated with other slogans that Trotsky defined as "socialist solutions", such as workers' control, the distribution of working hours, expropriations, factory committees, workers' self-defence, the soviets, the public works plan, and others that allow us to advance against the bases of the bourgeois regime, based on the current consciousness of the masses and that, at the same time, develop the power of the workers in the struggle for world socialism.

Trotsky and the Fourth International called for launching a political revolution to drive the bureaucracy from power in the USSR and re-establish the initial revolutionary path begun in 1917. He also predicted that, unless the Soviet working class crushed the bureaucracy and opened the way to socialism, the latter would increasingly become the organ of the world bourgeoisie within the workers' state, thus restoring capitalism. Which, indeed, happened.

Trotsky was assassinated in 1940. The Fourth International was greatly weakened. After the Second World War, the Trotskyists began to reorganise, but since the late 1940s most of their leadership, headed by Pablo and Mandel, was falling into opportunistic positions of capitulation to Stalinism and the nationalist bourgeois leaderships. And other sectors fell into sectarianism. Since 1951, there was a division, between the International Secretariat (IS), of Pabloism/Mandelism, and the International Committee (IC), self-styled "orthodox", headed by the SWP of the United States, to which Moreno joined. In 1963 the leadership of the SWP put the IC before the fait accompli of reunification with the IS (from which Pablo had already left).

The Argentine party and others that were grouped in the SLATO (Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism) joined the Fourth International (Unified Secretariat) in December 1964 but in a critical way. Moreno held that the SWP leadership had capitulated to Mandelism, abandoning the fight against opportunism. That the reunification was positive because it was done based on the vindication of the socialist character of the triumphant revolution in Cuba, and its definition as a workers' state.

But more importantly, this reunification was based on a deep capitulation to the Castro leadership and the abandonment of the construction of Trotskyist revolutionary parties throughout the world. The Trotskyist movement today continues to exist in many countries but is divided and dispersed. To learn more, read *The Transitional Program* (1938) by Trotsky, and *The Transitional Program Today* (1978) by Moreno.

The Socialist Workers Party of the United States

The SWP (Socialist Workers Party) was founded in 1938. Previously, it was the Communist League of America. Its leader James Cannon had been part of the Trotskyist opposition since 1928 and accompanied Trotsky in the formation of the international opposition and the founding of the Fourth International. The SWP for decades was one of the largest Trotskyist parties in the world. In the 1930s, it managed to insert itself into working-class sectors. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was an important part of the mobilisations against the invasion of Vietnam by American troops. It also acted in the struggles of blacks and women. In 1976, its presidential candidate got almost one hundred thousand votes. Since the 1970s, it has been entering a path of no return of abandonment of internationalism and complete capitulation to Castroism and moved away from all revolutionary politics.

The Morenoist current, the PST and MAS in Argentina

The current founded by Nahuel Moreno began in the 1940s in Argentina as the Marxist Workers Group (GOM), seeking the insertion of Trotskyism in the worker's movement, which was turning massively to Peronism, fighting for class independence and rejecting support for the government of General Peron. In the 1950s, it was built in other Latin American countries, confronted, within the international Trotskyist movement, with the opportunist current of the leaders Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, which led the Fourth International to capitulate to the Stalinist communist parties and the nationalist bourgeois leaderships.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Morenoist current supported the Cuban revolution but, at the same time, argued against Guevarism and the Castroist leadership that advocated guerrilla warfare as the only revolutionary strategy. When Peronism returned to power in the 1970s, as the Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores (Socialist Workers Party, PST) it faced the policy implemented by Peron of subordination of the working class to the bourgeoisie. In the September 1973 elections, the PST presented its presidential formula, Coral-Paez, against the winner Peron-Peron. From 1974 to 1984 it had over a hundred militants assassinated and disappeared.

From clandestinity, it took part in the resistance to the genocidal dictatorship established in 1976, which outlawed it and promoted the construction of the Morenoist current in other countries with its exiled militants and leaders. It gave great support to the Simon Bolivar Brigade that fought in Nicaragua against Somoza.

After the revolutionary fall of the military junta in June 1982, it emerged as the Movement for Socialism (MAS). Always participating in union and political struggles, it became the most important Trotskyist party in the Americas. After Moreno died in 1987, both his international current and the MAS entered into a crisis and split. Currently, the sector of Trotskyism that defends and promotes the trajectory and conceptions of Morenoism is the IWU–FI, which publishes the magazine *International Correspondence* and the digital site www.nahuelmoreno.org. In Argentina, Izquierda Socialista (Socialist Left).

The bourgeois counter-revolution in the imperialist epoch: the birth of fascism

To confront and crush the revolutions and the mobilisations of the workers and the oppressed, the imperialist bourgeoisie began to appeal to methods of civil war, of physical violence against the working class, the masses and its vanguard. A new political regime emerges, fascism. In its development, it promotes a broad counter-revolutionary popular movement, based on broad sectors of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie, the modern middle class and the underclass, whose adherents it mobilises and arms against the workers. When it comes to power, the fascist regime eliminates the political freedoms and institutions of bourgeois democracy. Its central objective is to annihilate workers' democracy and its organisations: unions, and mass workers' parties. But to achieve this, it also has to put an end to all the rights and institutions of bourgeois democracy: parliament, political parties, elections, freedom of the press, and other democratic conquests of the masses.

Those are the characteristics of the fascist political regimes, as they were imposed in Europe: Hungary (Horthy), Italy (Mussolini), Spain (Franco) and Portugal (Salazar), and its maximum expression, Hitler's Nazism. And also, of many dictatorships in colonial and semi-colonial countries. In their profoundly totalitarian and repressive traits, and in their handling of lying propaganda to manipulate the masses, fascism and Nazism resemble Stalin's totalitarian regime and one-party bureaucratic dictatorships. Although they are opposite and totally different in their class character since the Stalinist bureaucracy prevailed in the countries where the bourgeoisie was expropriated.

The Soviet bureaucracy and the Stalinist counter-revolution

When they seized power in Russia in 1917, Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik leaders hoped that their victory would be combined with successful socialist revolutions in other European countries, particularly in Germany. In this way, the organised and experienced German working class would be key from a revolutionary government to supporting the USSR and promoting the world revolution. This did not happen.

The revolution in Germany and other countries was defeated. The nascent Soviet republic was internationally isolated, ravaged by the civil war that had destroyed its productive apparatus and decimated the working class that had made the revolution. Amid scarcity and hardship, a layer of officials from the young revolutionary workers' state took over gradually the leadership of the CPSU and the management of the state apparatus, consolidating a repressive bureaucracy in the soviets, the state apparatus, and the party.

This is how the privileged and counter-revolutionary bureaucratic caste prevailed, abandoning revolutionary politics, usurping the banners of Marx, Lenin and the victory of October 1917, and crushing workers' democracy to establish a totalitarian regime that would perpetuate it in power. Stalin became the maximum and all-powerful leader, and proclaimed in 1924 that in the USSR they would build "socialism in one country". Stalinism formed the most powerful international apparatus for the control of the workers' movement, to curb its struggles and imprison it in conciliation and subordination to the bourgeoisie, saving the capitalist-imperialist domination of the world.

To learn more read *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) and *Stalin* (published in 1946), by Trotsky

Second World War

On 1 September 1939, Hitler's troops invaded Poland. England and France declared war on Germany, which ended in 1945 with the surrender of the Axis powers: Germany on 8 May, and Japan on 25 August. The third member of the Axis, Fascist Italy, had already capitulated, on 8 September 1943.

The Second World War was different from the first since it combined inter-imperialist disputes with the confrontation of different bourgeois political regimes: fascism on the one hand and bourgeois democracies on the other.

Nazism occupied almost all of continental Europe and imposed iron repression, genocide, and total political and military control over its populations. Since 1939, there was a counter-revolutionary side, the Nazis; a categorical and clear definition, which only our current raises within Trotskyism and which was confirmed in June 1941 with the start of the invasion of the USSR. Since August 1939, Stalin had maintained a pact with Hitler, furiously denounced by Trotsky (who was assassinated in August 1940 in Mexico by an agent of Stalin). The communist parties did not intervene in the struggle and resistance to Nazism in Czechoslovakia, Poland, France and the Netherlands. Only in 1941 did they join. The Trotskyists, after the assassination of their leader, were in great confusion, although a large part of them gradually joined the resistance, as in France.

Thanks to the heroism of the Soviet people and the participation of the Red Army, on 2 February 1943 the 6th Nazi Army, which had arrived in Stalingrad, surrendered after five months of bloody battles in which it lost 800,000 soldiers. It began the retreat of Nazism and a revolutionary rise throughout Europe. The combination of the advance from the east of the Red Army, the internal resistance of the partisans in the occupied countries and the allied invasion in France, led to the final defeat of Nazism. When, finally, in May 1945, the Soviet troops took Berlin, the USSR had had 20 million dead. In Japan-occupied Asia, it was the internal resistance from guerrilla movements in China and all of Southeast Asia and the Allied invasion in the Pacific that cornered the Japanese empire. It formally surrendered after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the atomic bombs dropped by the Yankees.

To learn more about the character of the bourgeois counter-revolution in the imperialist era and the Second World War, see *Revolutions of the 20th Century* (1984) and *Party Cadres' School: Argentina, 1984* (1984), at www.nahuelmoreno.org.

Yalta and Potsdam conferences and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in the post-war period

The Yalta and Potsdam conferences brought together the leaders of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union (Roosevelt and Truman, Churchill, and Stalin), the three main allies who carried out the war against Nazi fascism. In them, the division of the world into areas of influence was agreed upon. The first of these took place in Yalta, within the USSR, in February 1945 and the second in Potsdam, Germany in July 1945, after the Nazi surrender.

These pacts consummated Stalin's surrender of the revolution in Western Europe, especially in France, Italy, and the civil war in Greece, among others. In these countries, the communist parties had become of masses leading the armed resistance against the Nazis. Oriented by Stalinism, instead of leading the masses towards the socialist revolution and the seizure of power, they supported the reconstruction of European imperialist capitalism.

The countries of Eastern Europe, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and East Germany occupied by the Red Army came under Soviet influence and progress was made in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie, becoming workers' states but bureaucratic. From their birth, they were dominated by the military occupation of the Red Army and the totalitarianism of the communist parties in each country. They adopted the name "popular democracies".

The Balkans and China were also handed over by Stalin to the imperialist bourgeoisie, but because of the pressure from the masses this handover could not materialize. In the first case, the anti-fascist guerrillas and the Communist Party, both led by Josep Broz, commonly known as Tito, disobeyed Stalin, seized power, expropriated the bourgeoisie and, uniting the Balkan countries of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia Herzegovina and Macedonia formed Yugoslavia, leaving Albania outside. In China, the waves of land occupations led by the agrarian revolution of the peasant masses and the advance of the People's Liberation Army and the Communist Party, both led by Mao Ze Dong, completely crushed Chiang Kai-shek's troops. Mao seized power in October 1949 and then began the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. In all these countries, unlike in the early years of the Russian revolution, no democratic organs of workers' power develop; iron one-

party dictatorships were installed, similar to the Stalinist regime of the USSR. Because of these processes, in the post-war period, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie extended then to a third of humanity.

To learn more about the world situation after the war, read *The Transitional Program Today* (1980), *The Chinese and Indochinese Revolutions* (1967) and *Revolutions of the 20th Century* (1984), by Nahuel Moreno and available at www.nahuelmoreno.org.

Works by Nahuel Moreno

About 100 works are available in Spanish and English at www.nahuelmoreno.org, ordered by the year in which they were written. We highlight some of them:

- The Party (1943)
- Feudalism and Capitalism in the Colonisation of the Americas (1948, 1957, 1971)
- Argentina's Economic Structure (1948–1950)
- Who knew how to fight against the “Liberating Revolution”? (1954–1955)
- The Permanent Revolution in the Post-war Period (1958)
- Peru: Two Strategies (1961–1963)
- On Bengochea's Split with Palabra Obrera (1964)
- Two Methods for the Latin American Revolution (1964)
- The Chinese and Indochinese Revolutions (1967)
- Argentina and Bolivia: The Balance Sheet (1969–1972) (Co-author)
- Marxist Logic and Modern Sciences (1973)
- The Party and the Revolution (Theory, Program and Policy — A Polemic with Mandel), (1973)
- Method of Interpretation of Argentine History (1975)
- Our differences over Key Issues (1975)
- Revolution and Counter-revolution in Portugal (1975)
- Angola: The Black Revolution Underway (1977)
- The Revolutionary Dictatorship of the Proletariat (1978)
- Why does Fidel negotiate in secret with Reagan? (1979)
- The Transitional Program Today (1980)
- The Mitterrand Government, its Perspectives and our Policy (1981)
- Central America: Six Countries, One Nationality, One Revolution
- Our Experience with Lambertism (1986)
- Revolutions of the 20th Century (1984)
- 1982: The Revolution Begins (1984)
- Organisational Issues (1984)
- On the historical subjects (1984)
- The Tiger of Pobladora (1984) — Interviews with Raul Veiga
- Conversations (1986)