

The freedom of scientific hypothesis

Prospettiva Marxista n. 1
“Sulla libertà di ipotesi scientifica”

Before dealing with the matter of the “freedom” of scientific hypothesis, it is necessary to talk about the concept of scientific hypothesis. With Marx and Engels, the working class party becomes the scientific hypothesis one. For all the other social classes the party has always been an instrument for the conquest of the power finalized to the management of the existing social situation. Also for the bourgeoisie, during its revolutionary phase, the problem of the conquest of the power has been essentially placed as adaptation of the institutions to the already existing relationships of production, to the relationships of class already emerged in the base of feudal society during centuries. Thanks to its revolutions, the bourgeoisie gets the recognition also in the political sphere of that dominant role that it already had in the economic and social ground, putting therefore itself in the conditions to impress definitively the sign of the capitalistic relationships on the entire social organism.

The conditions that have taken place in a secular process have made possible for part of the bourgeoisie to gain the political power without the presence of a revolutionary party, which was totally aware of the class' nature of its own action. The bourgeois revolutions have finished the process of affirmation of a class without reaching the scientific understanding of those dynamics that have made possible this affirmation. The bourgeois revolutionaries have been able to win without the instruments of a social science because their revolution did not demand them, because the impact of their revolution was resolved substantially in the political endorsement of the existing.

For the proletariat it cannot be the same. For the working class the political party is the instrument for the conquest of the power, but this is finalized to the subversion of the existing. The conditions for this subversion must be already present in the capitalistic society, but historically the working class can be aware of the problem of a conquest of the political power in order to revolutionize the existing production relationships. The proletarian revolution can have this nature just thanks to the possibility, historically acquired by the class, to reach a party based on a scientific method. This party, therefore, faces the reality in motion with the formulation, the comparison, the selection of hypothesis.

The subversion of the existing is not something that can be made anytime, but combinations of particular situations and factors, political and economic conditions must happen. The subversion of the existing demands much more than the appraisal of a specific force ratio between classes and fractions of class. This can be sometimes enough for a reformist battle in a bourgeois society. A contingent historical situation that sees the working class in force conditions in comparison with the antagonist class, in a phase of “attack” on the ground of the economic and political fight, does not represent for himself “a revolutionary” moment, in which the subversion of the existing may be effectively possible.

The definition of this moment requires a spatial and temporal vision that is infinitely superior in comparison with the vision of a simple and directed force ratio. The capitalistic development, being based on the internationalization of the

capital, has as a consequence also the internationalization of the politics, determining therefore an extension and a complication of the force ratios that need a continuous and deep study of the evolution of the Capitalism itself. For these reasons, we need to increase the level of the party, that must dominate scientifically the capitalistic reality in evolution, otherwise it cannot be a political party.

After Marx, every working class party must face this necessity and must, thus, take the movements from the scientific hypothesis. Therefore the scientific hypothesis in our field means to assume times and ways of the capitalistic evolution, of the total relationship between the classes and the fractions of classes. Without this, every party will be simply son of an event and it will perish when that event will get exhausted. The symbiosis between party and scientific hypothesis is total. The revolutionaries lacking in scientific hypothesis cannot be defined a political party, but only the revolutionaries can formulate a scientific hypothesis as a tool of understanding and subversion of the existing, as an element constituting of the party.

The correctness of the scientific hypothesis can be measured in terms of coherent explanation of the reality and progressive confirmations deriving from the same reality. Every revolutionary party projects its action in the future, it does not want to manage the existing, it is being equipped in order to take part in a historical dynamic that is not unfolded yet. It is unavoidable, therefore, that a part, more or less important according to the historical periods, of its analysis or elaborations is based on such scientific hypotheses that are subjected to verification, and they are susceptible of abandonment or review. This determines the possibility of the contemporary presence of more scientific hypothesis. It would be foolish to see in this a danger of dispersion and of ruinous internal dispute.

The possibility of the co-existence of more scientific hypothesis is not in any way in contrast with the propositional essence of the Marxism and with its being guides for the action. The eclecticism of the academic disputes, with their paralysing verbosity, if not even an intimate opportunism, should not be confused with a serious verification process of the application of the methods of the Marxism, of the data gained from the experience of the previous generations of Marxists. Only the comparison with the development of the real processes can test this verification.

Most of those ones which the same Marxist school numbers among the truths, have been shown first as hypothesis insofar as this definition escapes from the metaphysical contrast between truth and false. The Marxism, and cannot be otherwise, recognizes the possibility to reach the truth just in a process of continuous approximation, in which hypothesis follow each other, of attempts of applying those methods, those conceptual abstractions that had shown themselves suitable to the understanding of the truth.

The possibility of the presence of more scientific hypothesis derives from the same scientific essence of the Marxism, that is first of all a method and not an essence of truth, and it can also allow a correction of the appraisals before these are proved by facts definitively, when it could be too late also for the times of the political fight.

This process of verification can assume the features of a political dispute, even also hard, being a matter itself of hypotheses that refer to a huge process of

intervention on the social environment. From this point of view, where we cannot recognize the characters in the other one's hypotheses of a serious elaboration lead into the ground of the Marxist school, if it may have a sense to contemplate the fight and the separation, it will not have any sense claiming to deny or to limit the freedom of scientific hypothesis inside an organization, to deny openly its full execution.

The scientific hypothesis is not an eliminable characteristic of the modern revolutionary party, but it is free or not.

The revolutionaries can only defend this concept and hope for it makes possible to develop effective scientific hypotheses.

According to what we said up to now, it would seem that the freedom of scientific hypothesis is something to defend always and however, practically a principle. Is it possible to assume moments in which the manifestation of the freedom of scientific hypothesis can be harmful to the party and, therefore, to the class? We do not think that there can be moments in which the manifestation of a scientific hypothesis may become a weakening of the party and of the class.

By itself, the thing is clear when the hypothesis' diversities concern fundamental aspects of the political fight and when the crux on which the hypotheses defer has a centrality such as to make impossible to put the comparison on the quiet. As an example, let's think to the different appraisals on the historical moment and on the tasks assigned to the revolutionary party on the eve of the October, when Lenin formulates the April Theses. The doubt could rise in reference to "smaller" issues, when a dismissal of the comparison of more hypotheses could be useful, in reason of a priority tasks, i.e., a "less public" characterization of it, but also in this case it would not have sense to hide this comparison because it would regard smaller aspects.

Each condition, placed on the freedom of scientific hypothesis and dictated by some values superior in comparison with the same scientific hypothesis, from a too much often unscrupulous use of the concepts of "unit" or of "discipline" of party, it will obtain the only result to weaken the true and the only principle that is that one of having a revolutionary party firmly anchored to the genuinely scientific essence of the Marxism, to the "scientific hypothesis" as method and not to "a" scientific hypothesis, to a interpretative key that is expected to be true because subtract from the verification with other hypotheses. To see an element of disturbance for the corrected "practical" conduction of the political activity in the comparison among more hypotheses inside of the same school, in a common effort of employment of the methods of the Marxism to a complex truth, means to have already removed this political activity from the scientific spirit of the Marxism. To do one's best, then, to replace the sequence of hypothesis and to make possible that the Marxism can progress through the proclamation of a truth, defended for party spirit, means to become champions of a religious conception of the truth, declined, for ferocious irony of the history, with the formulas of an empty scientism. The adhesion to a group that refers to the Marxism is an effective adhesion to the Marxism and, so doing, to the political party in Marxist sense if there is an adhesion to a scientific hypothesis, formulated in harmony with the method of the scientific hypothesis. The process of formulation, comparison, verification and selection of the hypotheses is the vital dynamics of the party, the dynamics that can guarantee the existence of the party,

with its errors and its delays, in force of its errors and its delays, comprised and faced in a collective meditation. Only this process, finally, can preserve the unity of the party. Unity in the only meaning that a modern revolutionary party can recognize: not fidelity to an organization and to its dogmas, but a critic and reasoned adhesion to a method that has proved to be effectively scientific and that it only can allow today the exhausted class to articulate its own emancipator action.