

Philosophy and Politics – the Experience of the Publication review «Praxis» (1964-1974)

Summary:

This contribution investigates the role and significance of the “Praxis” philosophical review in its national and international sphere. “Praxis” marked the post-war Yugoslav philosophical debate and its outcomes; but more than that, it becomes the only living voice of Yugoslav “philosophical practice”. The “Praxis” idea of philosophy is suggested in its title: “the activity of thought” that the Yugoslav philosophers adopted had to change the fate of the world and was intended to be a real revolution. “Praxis” became, therefo-

re, the journal of anti-dogmatic, humanist and revolutionary Marxism and developed from a new way of reading Marx. The Yugoslav example thus proposed a new stage in Marxist history, an antidogmatic one, centered on the creation of a humanistic and revolutionary Marxism. After forty-four since its suppression (1974), and inspired by the bicentenary celebrations of Karl Marx birthday, this essay reflects on what remains of the “Praxis phenomenon” nowadays.

Keywords: Anti-dogmatism, humanistic Marxism, Yugoslav philosophical debate, “Praxis” philosophical review, reading Marx and revolution.

1. Introduction

On April 25, 2008 one of Croatia’s major contemporary philosophers, Milan Kangrga, passed away in Zagreb. Not only was he one of the founders of the philosophical review “Praxis” and the Korčula Summer School, but he was also known as one of the most critical and contentious writers, marking the philosophical-cul-

tural debate of the previous forty years. The loss of Kangrga made us reconsider his intellectual commitment -a prolific output of approximately fifteen books, a manual and about sixty essays and articles. In his fifty-seven years of continuous publications, one also ought to include his pedagogical activity at the Faculty of Zagreb, as Professor of Ethics. Together with Gajo Petrović, Predrag Vranicki,

Danko Grlić, Rudi Supek, Branko Bošnjak¹ and others, he conveyed the message of the Yugoslav philosophical debate to the whole world. The death of the last editor of “Praxis” has inevitably brought to mind those idealistically orientated years, when the review was known on a worldwide level and was to become a distinguished medium of philosophical, cultural and political debate. The founding of the review did not transpire fortuitously; indeed, it came as a logical sequel to the cultural atmosphere then prevailing in Yugoslavia. In particular, back in the ‘60s, a group of philosophers from Zagreb, in collaboration with intellectuals from Belgrade, decided to animate the philosophical debate by establishing an actual school, namely the Korčula Summer School. The latter would, indeed, become one of the most important meeting points worldwide. Based on this initiative, the review “Praxis” was founded in 1964 as a result of the philosophical debate of post-war Yugoslavia. Moreover, it would become the only dynamic forum of the *philosophical praxis* in the country. Through “Praxis”, this group of learned men would propose a new and different method of grasping Marxist philosophy. This *diversity* was expressed by the concept of praxis, which would become the focus of a philosophical theory in the Yugoslav line of thought. Furthermore, it became even more influential as it was embedded in the historical framework of the self-management system of Socialism in Yugoslavia. The philosophical idea proposed by “Praxis” may be traced to the name itself, as one contemplates the thinking behind the idea of changing the destiny of the world: in order to do so, it has to be perceived as an out-and-out revolution. Correspondingly, the review adopted an anti-dogmatic, humanistic and revolutionary approach. The agenda of the group from Zagreb sparked unusual interest both inside and outside the philosophical world, while it simultaneously became the subject of criticism by Soviet philosophers and by

the same Yugoslav ruling class. As it happened, during the decade 1964-1974, “Praxis” represented the only voice of dissent, opposing even the Yugoslav state apparatus. “Praxis” advocated a type of philosophy that was both militant and revolutionary, with the aim of fighting Stalinism and bureaucracy. In addition, it proposed revolutionary and humanistic Socialism as the only possible solution to the problems faced by society at that time. For this reason, and in order to understand the origins and path followed by the review, it is appropriate to refer to a part of history of Yugoslav philosophy.

2. The philosophical life in Yugoslavia

Until 1948, the year that marked the expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist Party from Cominform², one could not speak of real Yugoslav Marxism; indeed, the only form which was known, was provided by the version of Marxism given by Cominform and Comintern³. The development of independent Marxist thought began only after the exclusion from Comintern. The controversy with the USSR, therefore, quickly turned to actual criticism of Soviet society and the social and economic model that even Yugoslavia had accepted. The break-up with the USSR was inevitable. The event gave fresh impetus to new schools of thought; one of which was the discovery of a “new Marx” practice that the Party initially supported. But who were the philosophers promoting this new interpretation of Marx and, above all, what did it consist of? The philosophers who expounded it were those same persons who would later establish the Praxis group. In this way, the Yugoslav example paved the way for a new stage in Marxist history; moreover, it was to become anti-dogmatic and it would revolve around the creation of a humanistic and revolutionary Marxism. According to the description

¹ All of them were editors of the review «Praxis», as well as philosophers and supporters of an anti-dogmatic Marxism.

² Cominform was the common name for what was officially referred to as the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties. It was established in 1947 by the Communist Parties of the USSR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, France, Italy and Yugoslavia, which would be expelled in 1948. Cominform was dissolved in 1956.

³ Comintern was also known as The Third International.

of one of the review's editors, Mihajlo Marković, even if the concept of praxis and its significance do not speak for the entire Praxis school, they could both be indicative of the Yugoslav approach to anthropological problems - to the extent that they share common characteristics in comparison with other Western frameworks of thought. To begin with, Marković distinguishes the normative concept of praxis, defined as self-fulfillment of the epistemological concept of practice (the activity aimed at changing an object) from the concepts of work and material production (conditions that are necessary for human survival). The concept of praxis as a necessary condition for human survival is particularly important, as it becomes a mixture of expressive action and normative action. As a normative concept of human nature, it is perceived as *a universal and creative activity, through which the human being creates himself and his world, namely consciousness, freedom, society, history and the future*⁴. Even if they had a different way of understanding praxis back in the '50s, all the Yugoslav philosophers who attempted to transcend the limits of Stalin's anti-dogmatism, agreed in their conception of humans as creative beings of praxis. The critique of Dogmatism reached its peak in 1960 at the Bled Conference, which sanctioned the ultimate break with all dogmatic positions. The consequences of this event were mostly felt by those Stalinists who advocated a reflexive theory as the only theory of knowledge. For the creative philosophers, among whom were the editors of the review, the Reflexive Theory could however not identify itself as the only solution to the question of knowledge. It was a mistake to consider reflex as the starting point of every theory of knowledge. The Bled Convention ushered in Creative Marxism, a term commonly used to mark the Yugoslav philosophical movement of the '60s and '70s. After Bled (1960), there were essentially three major results: the origin of a new way of perceiving Marxism; the Korčula Summer School (1963), which became

one of the most important conventions worldwide and finally, the creation of "Praxis", which would introduce an anthropological and anti-dogmatic orientation within to philosophy.

3. "Praxis"

The first issue *Why Praxis*⁵ proposed a program of non-dogmatic and creative Marxism and a revolutionary and humanistic Socialism, which was somehow deemed to improve the social condition of humanity. Here, the concept of philosophy which remained even after the review's flag would begin to take shape. By criticising the *omission* of Stalin's thinking which ended in rejecting the human element, the importance of philosophy as *a free and spiritual set of ideas*, deprived of external and political influences, began to become accepted. In all of the review's phases, it is possible to observe a program of action, i.e. *the implacable criticism of all that exists*. And it is precisely because of this criticism that philosophy should have turned to the needs of the human being and the world, to problems, or better still yet, to everyday life. In the first phase, the emphasis was on general philosophical matters. In the '60s, the Yugoslav Marxist philosophy began to look at the idea of revolution; it was constantly critical of the prevailing *modus vivendi* and the name itself, "Praxis", conveyed its ultimate concept. The idea of philosophy had been connected to revolutionary praxis, in which philosophy was truly perceived as *the proletariat's spiritual weapon*. And what of the human being? Within this concept of philosophy, he was a praxis oriented human being, as praxis represented not only one way of being, but constituted a real method. Until the early '70s, the group had experienced intense theoretical and publishing activities. Together with the Korčula Summer School, the review achieved worldwide success, as the original edition was followed by an international one. The Yugoslav philosophical activities became the focal point for meetings,

⁴ Cfr. Golubović V., *S Marksom protiv Staljina – Jugoslavenska filozofijska kritika staljinizma 1950 - 1960* (With Marx against Stalin – a Yugoslav philosophical critique of Stalinism 1950 – 1960) , Globus, Zagreb, 1985, p. 31.

⁵ Čemu *Praxis (Why Praxis)*, in «Praxis», Num. 1, September – October 1964, pp. 3-6.

debates and conferences, which witnessed the presence of famous names such as Ernst Bloch, Eugen Fink, Erich Fromm, Lucien Goldmann, György Lukács, Ágnes Heller, Karel Kosík, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Enzo Paci and many others. The liveliest debates within the Yugoslav cultural scene and particularly those which were more closely related to philosophy, were initiated by the Praxis group (the same group that later founded the Executive Committee of the Korčula Summer School). From criticising Stalinism, they soon moved to an independent accounting of their own philosophical positions. A critique of Stalin's conception of philosophy and culture was the main reason behind the growing clashes between two groups. The first group was essentially represented by supporters of a traditional conception while the second one was represented by those who, more or less, strongly rejected the Stalinist conception of Dialectical materialism and his understanding of philosophy. Notwithstanding the fact that profound discrepancies were still present among these pioneers, they still shared some essential views. Those were: a vision of humans as practical beings and consequently, the need to understand both human beings and history on the basis of praxis; the need to have an historical reading of dialectics; the need to understand present events in the light of Marx's theory of alienation and to have a primary interest in the humanistic issues of Socialism. Emphasis was given to the historical subject: human beings act and transform the world and it is only through the permanent transformation of a world that is both natural and historical that one can also understand the transformation of the human being himself, his knowledge, his consciousness and culture. The world is, therefore, the world of the human being, it is nature and human relations transformed. Finally, the transformation of natural and historical reality constitutes a whole with the transformation of the human being, his consciousness and his relationships. Generally speaking, the Yugoslav philosophers did not remain bound to *the young Marx*, nor to *the mature Marx*; instead, they clearly saw that

the issue of human alienation and emancipation, represents a train of thought of both Marx's work and his historical commitment. Furthermore, they remained sufficiently opened-minded to experiencing other ways of thought, in particular Western ones. For the group of pioneer philosophers, *Das Capital* represented a global critique of the political economy, i.e. a criticism of the historic social relations which consolidate both the wage earning and fetishism of goods; alienation, therefore, did not represent a specific condition of the human being in Capitalism, but rather it became a crucial issue also for Socialism. Indeed, as a movement and a political system, the task of Socialism was to overcome the main forms of alienation of the contemporary world. Among the characteristics of the theoretical commitment taken by the Yugoslav philosophers, therefore, was strong criticism against of the state and the bureaucracy, whose origins could be traced to the development of Socialism. But in this path inspired by *the implacable criticism of all that exists*, the review had to deal with a series of attacks from the State and the Party, which resulted in its final suppression in 1974.

The Praxis group experienced the first attacks in 1966. The economic crises of the '60s had triggered a division and an open dispute within the League of Communists, resulting in the creation of two factions: one advocating a program based on radical reforms, the other settling for conservative positions. In favour of prime autonomy for the republics, the members of the first faction supported the need to broaden self-management and decentralise both the power of the Party and the government. By contrast, the conservative faction advocated the return to a strict centralisation under the leadership of the Party. Economic reform was launched in 1965 and it was followed by removal of the conservative faction. Initially, this event seemed to mark a triumph for both the reformists within the Party itself, as well as those Party members who did not belong to the executive group, but still advocated a broader democratisation. It was, therefore, in this context of clear diver-

gencies between the two conceptions⁶, that the first campaign against the review took place (May – June 1966). It is with particular precision that Gabriella Fusi traces the path followed by the review; she affirms that there were three major critiques directed against *the humanistic philosophers*. In the first place, they were reprimanded for adopting the position of *formal liberalism*⁷, which did not consider the social self-management model as a real premise for the development of a democratic system within the Stalinist society. Moreover, the Praxis group was initially charged with working both at a political and power level, as the official spokesman of the critical conscience that was present in society. The second charge was basically a consequence of the first one; i.e. by becoming the critical conscience of society, the review was held responsible for attempting to revive the ghosts of the past, such as Stalinism, Dogmatism and Bureaucratism. The third charge was undoubtedly a harsh one, but also the most unjustified: according to the Party, “Praxis” was actually supporting both Stalinism and Bureaucratism by rejecting a market economy. However, as Petrović pointed out, the review had never rejected the need for a market economy at that time; nevertheless, it had emphasised the fact that the aim of Socialism was not optimal development of goods⁸. In order to restrict the influence of “Praxis” to the intelligentsia, two other philosophical initiatives were promoted; two reviews, “Dijalektika” and “Enciclopedia moderna”, would launch their publications in 1966. Despite the difficulties which resulted from this first campaign, “Praxis” did not renounce its program of critique. In issues 1-2 of the 1967 editorial⁹, Petrović restated that

philosophy is still necessary as a living thought that penetrates the fundamental issues of the contemporary world; it does not remain a pure thought, but becomes a

human revolutionary work [...] The primary task of Yugoslav Marxists is, therefore, to make a serious study of Yugoslav Socialism as it is through this study that Yugoslav Marxists will contribute not only to Socialism at home, but also to international Socialism.¹⁰

The same editorial reaffirmed the will to develop a type of philosophy that would be *a criticism of all that exists*. The object of such criticism remained Bureaucratism, Statalism and Dogmatism, taking into consideration the fact that the whole contemporary Socialist world tended towards the transformation of a political bureaucratism into a techno-bureaucratism. In her chronicle, Gabriella Fusi also underlines the fact that the second campaign against “Praxis”, began with the allegation of sparking and orchestrating the student demonstrations of 1968. It could be said that the Yugoslav student movement adopted various forms, but it was moved by a common spirit of rebellion against the legacies of the older generations; it represented a critical reaction to the difficult economic situation in Yugoslavia, to the financial difficulties and to the authoritarian system that was present within the universities and within the country itself. It was in the June 1968 program of the Belgrade student movement that all this criticism reached a point of higher discrimination and awareness of the existing social problems; indeed, it was then that the students demanded the abolition of all social distinctions and privileges, democratisation of the League of Communists, trade unions, cultural organisations and social life in general. Both the “Praxis” movement and its group were the victims of repression. In most cases, their members were expelled from the League; as a matter of fact, by the time the review began to be published, four members of the editorial committee had already been excluded from the

⁶ Cfr. Fusi G., *L'opposizione filosofica e politica in Jugoslavia: la rivista "Praxis" (The philosophical and political opposition in Yugoslavia: the review Praxis)*, in “aut aut”, Num. 148, July-August, 1975, p. 22.

⁷ Ivi, p. 23.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Na početku novog godišta (At the beginning of a new year)*, in “Praxis”, Num. 1-2, January – April, 1967, p. 3.

¹⁰ Ivi, p. 5.

League. The others were expelled after the 1968 demonstrations. The fundamental importance given to the Yugoslav student movement can be understood if one looks at the reaction to the social and political laws that were in force back then in Yugoslavia. The students challenged the establishment of a hybrid system based on self-management and a strong presence of Stalinism at its vertex. Concerned about a possible reaction by the workers, the state and the Party made an attempt to isolate the students from the rest of the population. They also tried to mystify the demands of the students, spreading the idea that all they were asking for was an improvement of their material status, while those who were actually carrying the burden of the political economy were the working class. In the last months of 1971 and throughout 1972, all Croatian organisations, beginning with the Central Committee of the Croatian Party, were rocked by an extensive purge. They were charged with nationalism, separatism and anti-socialism. Four thousand students of the University of Zagreb came out into the streets in order to demonstrate against the federal bureaucracy and, of course, there were accidents and detentions. The reaction of the Federal Party was severe. Not only were some of the measures used in Yugoslavia during Stalinism re-implemented, but the main target of these attacks became the *critical intellectuals*; among them, even "Praxis". As a matter of fact, in June 1971, the review dedicated its entire edition to *the crises of Yugoslav Socialism*, with numerous essays on the Party's reactionary policy and its social basis. This edition was initially banned but after a long judicial procedure it was finally published. The same happened to a special edition that dealt with documents regarding the 1968 student movement; finally, it was published in condensed form. In 1971, the review was banned for the first time with a judicial act of the Federal Executive Council. In December 1971, during a meeting of the Presidency of the Yugoslav League of Communists, president Tito strongly attacked the leadership of the Croatian Party, blaming them for activities called *anti-revoluti-*

*onary, anti-socialist and directed against home rule*¹¹ The Party even charged "Praxis" with not having participated in the campaign against the nationalists. The charge was entirely ludicrous, since the review had always opposed any type of nationalism. In the first months of 1974, eight professors of the University of Belgrade were charged; Marković, Tadić, Stojanović, Pešić-Golubović, Životić, Mićunović, Popov and Indijić. All of them were members of the philosophical review "Filozofija", published in Belgrade from 1959 onwards and cooperated with the Zagreb group. The reason why this campaign against the eight Belgrade professors is important, is that it marks only the beginning of a major assault which would, in turn, involve the entire Praxis group and jeopardise the survival of this review. There were two levels of criticism directed both against the Belgrade group and against the review: in the first one, they attacked the philosophical positions. In the second one, they attacked the ensuing political evaluations. By recognising the existence of the bureaucratisation of society and the League, by stating that the power of the working class in Yugoslavia and social self-management had become a myth, "Praxis" was opposing democratic centralism. Expelling eight professors of Belgrade university was only one of the first measures taken in order to eliminate the review. Among the measures that followed were: suspension of funds, expulsion of four co-workers of "Praxis" – four sociologists from the University of Ljubljana and, finally, the refusal of the self-management typographical plant to keep printing the review. Once more, the myth of self-government had mystified reality; but the decision taken by the League to silence the most relevant and, politically, the most significant voice of the Yugoslav philosophical opposition, can only be considered an episode of ideological restraint. "Praxis" not only represented a philosophical and historical experience, it also ushered in the possibility for Yugoslav culture to open up to the rest of the world. Thanks to "Praxis", Yugoslav culture became enriched; it became known outside its own territorial borders and adopted a mul-

¹¹ Fusi G., *Ibid.*, p. 27.

tidisciplinary and multicultural vision. The idea behind “Praxis”, is to be found in the editors’ strong belief that the fate of the contemporary world is closely tied to the fate of philosophy. It was only through philosophy, therefore, that one could understand the issues of the contemporary world. The first years of publication of the review, more or less between 1964 and 1971, were marked by a significant commitment on the philosophical level. Further discussions were held relating to the categories of praxis, alienation, reification, revolution, the human being, and freedom inside a Socialist society. For the “Praxis” philosophers, re-discussing the cornerstones of Marx’s thinking did not at all imply departing from his precepts. On the contrary, in order to understand the real fate of human beings – still trapped in an alienated world – it was necessary to begin with Marx’s thinking and apply the criticism of all that exists.

4. The idea of Praxis for the Yugoslav philosophers

As Karel Kosík states,

A philosophy which does not explore reality in its innermost relations and which follows the most superficial banalities and calls this “the union of philosophy with politics”, a philosophy which abandons its critical-revolutionary character in the name of apologetics and which foolishly imagines itself as the guardian of socialism serving the Party, [...] – a similar philosophy will not only be forced to lag behind life [...] but it completely ceases to be a philosophy.¹²

The following analysis is focused on the idea of praxis and man and as far as praxis is concerned, it is necessary to apply Marx and, more precisely, *Thesis on Feuerbach* and *Economic-philosophical manuscripts from 1844*¹³. But in order to deal with the problems exposed by “Praxis”, it is not enough just to cite Marx; it is necessary to sift

through the positions of Yugoslav philosophers, either through Marx or through the thinking of the so-called *new generation of Eastern-European philosophers*, dedicating particular attention to the line of thought of Karel Kosík. In *The German ideology*, the topic of praxis affirms that

men distinguish themselves from animals by their conscience, their religion, and whatever else; but they started to distinguish themselves from animals when they started to develop their own means of survival, progress being conditioned by their physical organization. Developing means of survival, man indirectly creates his own material life [...]: what individuals really are depends on the material conditions of their production.¹⁴

One of the fundamental problems of Marx’s philosophy is created by global reality that is a social reality and it is within this framework of history that the world becomes the product of man. The term history does not only mean the past; it means historicity, or rather the world of human activities in the world of beings. Man without any contribution of history would risk remaining empty and lacking in any meaning. To assert himself as man, he has, of necessity, to be fulfilled and he can do this only by virtue of praxis, of activity. Marx discusses explicitly the topic of praxis in his *Thesis on Feuerbach* from 1845 and what he discusses in *Thesis* is the significant part of a theory related to practice and praxis related to theory. In this way, he keeps an equal distance both from materialism and from idealism, thus showing the categorical character and emphasizing the theoretical-practical field on which it is only possible to discuss dialectics and science. The *Thesis* is imbued with potent and real meaning and it can contribute progressively only if the analysis contained in it is read within the bounds of a complex observation: in fact, the theme of praxis implies a theme of critiques of alienation. Without an exemplary draft of the meaning of political eco-

¹² Cfr. Karel Kosík, in G.D. Neri, *Aporie della realizzazione. Filosofia e ideologia nel socialismo reale* (Apories in the realization. Philosophy and ideology in realistic socialism), Feltrinelli, Milano 1980, p. 131.

¹³ Cfr. K. Marx, *I manoscritti economico-filosofici del 1844*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1977.

¹⁴ Cfr. K. Marx – F. Engels, *L’ideologia tedesca* (German ideology), Editori Riuniti, Roma 1977, p. 8.

nomy critiques, an understanding of the relation between appearance and reality, criticism of an alienated job, discovery of a repudiated but served pre-categorical field, and the idea of praxis results appear empty, tautological and open to the risk of ontological assumption.¹⁵ Although this conception of praxis is very similar to the one of Yugoslav philosophers, the subject is not so simple or linear. The anthropological interpretations included reconstructions of the Marxist concept of human nature based, primarily, on the *Economic-philosophical manuscripts from 1844*, which supported arguments favourable to the complete conception of human individuality and its relation to society and to history. The main task was composed of a general theme on relations between man and his world. This field was partly initiated as a reaction to the philosophy of hyperobjective and deterministic history with which Marxism was identified and, jointly, against corresponding impoverishment of the concepts that treated the *subjective factor*. For the philosophers of "Praxis", the concept of praxis was a

universal, creative and auto-creative activity of liberty with which a man creates (carries out, produces) and modifies (forms) himself and his historical world; an activity that is literally human and for which he (man) is pre-eminent from all living beings.¹⁶

Gajo Petrović insists on affirming that for Marx the concept of praxis represented a strong point in his philosophy which «wishes not only to be a philosophy but aspires to transcend, to achieve a metaphilosophical and interdisciplinary realm and become a revolutionary force capable of changing the world»¹⁷ Yugoslav philosophers placed their objective of reliving the authentic ideas of Marx because they reflected man's dilemmas in the best way. That kind of thinking or philosophy did not become fashionable, simply by re-proposing Marxist

philosophy; it served as a basis for the evolution of another idea of man – a critical idea of man within a political system called socialism. The Marxist concept of praxis was, for creative philosophers, closely connected to the idea of revolution: i.e. always according to Petrović *the revolution; if it happens at a reasonable level, it not only represents its highest form but also the essence of praxis and, simultaneously, of being/existence*¹⁸ For Yugoslav philosophers the praxis in Marx was the union of Aristotle's concepts of *praxis*, *poiesis* and *theoria*, but not only that: the idea of praxis in Marx did not refer to any «*praxis*», *poiesis* or *theoria*, but only to *eu-praxis* i.e. to good praxis present in each three areas. In this way, praxis becomes opposed to the *dyspraxis* which represents bad praxis, the real auto-alienated form of the same idea of praxis. Following the teaching of Kosík and sharing of opinions, the philosophers of "Praxis" tended from the beginning to avoid identification of praxis – which establishes the same dimension of the human existence – with work. If there is truth in the statement that in work something essential happens in human reality, it is also true that this cannot be interpreted only as work and objectivity. Gajo Petrović intervened in the problem in connection with praxis underlying the direct relation between praxis and being. The position of Petrović, and particularly his approach to Heidegger's philosophy, demonstrates in that way, something innovative within the Yugoslav philosophical discussion. Petrović glimpses the continuity between Marx's and Heidegger's work. The sense of being, the central question in *Sein und Zeit*¹⁹, cannot be distinguished from the sense of being a man, which portrays the theoretical interest of Marx. In spite of some affinity between the two authors, says Petrović, provided are not the same. If Heidegger could give a plausible answer to the question of what being really is, he does so introducing the idea of tempora-

¹⁵ Cfr. P.A. Rovatti, *Critica e scientificità in Marx* (Criticism and science in Marx), Feltrinelli, Milano 1975, pp. 87-88.

¹⁶ G. Petrović, *Praksa* (Praxis), in "Theoria", n. 1/2, Beograd 1985, p. 175.

¹⁷ *Ivi*, p. 181.

¹⁸ *Ivi*, p. 191.

¹⁹ Cfr. M. Heidegger, *Essere e tempo*, UTET, Torino 1978.

lity - for Heidegger, the sense of being a man is inherent in the idea of temporality.²⁰ For Marx, on the by contrast, the sense of being a man is inherent in the idea of praxis. During those years, approaching Heidegger and Marx meant breaking with philosophical tradition present up until then; it also meant breaking, above all, with Lukács and with the orthodox tradition of rationalistic interaction. After 1957, the relation between anthropology and ontology became the basic philosophical conception according to which Petrović elaborated (developed) his philosophy of praxis. The idea of praxis started from the Marxist philosophy, but it made use of a further concept – namely that of revolution. The concept of revolution, states Petrović, represents the deepest essence of being. In his works in the '60s and '70s, the philosopher from Zagreb then questioned what the essence of revolution was. The idea of revolution cannot be correlated to any type of change within one social class: only socialistic revolution is understood as real revolution.²¹

Why can only socialistic revolution be conceived as revolution? Petrović asserts that the *thesis* on the socialist revolution is possible only when it is not considered in a sociological horizon. The socialistic revolution is indeed such only when it eliminates any form of exploitation. A unique way to follow and understand the meaning of the concept of revolution is, according to Petrović, philosophy. In that way, a task is assigned to thought and, in fact, we are talking here about a mission. After all, the concept of praxis determines the course of man's being/existence. Praxis cannot be understood as simple addition of all human activities since it has a specific character. In this context, there were innumerable concepts of alienation, auto-alienation and reification extensively discussed by Petrović and by editors inside the review. Alienation within the socialist system represents for a great number of Marxists, not only

of "Praxis, the point where it will be discussed in theory and in practice. From the words of Gajo Petrović, it is obvious that alienation within the socialist system existed and it existed as a necessary condition of man's existence. Man as man, is necessarily alienated, and using Heidegger's language, besides an authentic existence, man has an inauthentic existence and, therefore, thus underscores Petrović, it is completely illusory to hope that in any future system (which for Marx meant the arrival of communism, as negation of alienation), man can lead only an authentic existence; at least that kind of condition is not achievable on the social level. It is necessary, continues Petrović, to wonder who the alienated man is. The philosophers of "Praxis" insisted on the auto-alienation conception, asserting that

for Hegel and Marx, every kind of alienation represents one particular case of auto-alienation. In fact, there is no alienation where there is no "self" [...], whether the singular things or nature as a whole can be alienated from man, but these are special cases of human 'auto-alienation, forms of man's alienation from his all? being.²²

And also:

When we talk about alienation, then we talk about each case of man's alienation. In other words, without man there is no alienation, or there is alienation, it exists and it can exist only where man is present²³

The philosophers of "Praxis" dedicated one special edition of their review to the question of alienation and reification. The works, published in 1967, are the result of discussions held during a summer meeting in Korčula the previous year. Martin Heidegger is universally recognized as one of the most significant and original thinkers of the contemporary world, and precisely because of this, the philosophers of "Praxis" could not *escape from* his way of thin-

²⁰ G. Petrović, *Praksa i bivstvovanje* (Praxis and being), in "Praxis", number 1, Septembre-October 1964, p. 32.

²¹ Cfr. V. Golubović, *Mogućnost novoga – vidokrug jugoslavenske filozofije* [New possibilities – The vision of Yugoslav philosophy], Biblioteka filozofska misao, Zagreb 1990, p. 31.

²² A. Schaff, *L'alienazione come fenomeno sociale* (The alienation as social phenomenon), cit., p. 132.

²³ *Ivi*, p. 133.

king. It is not possible to discuss real dialogue between Yugoslav philosophers and Heidegger, even if Heidegger had shown at that time a great interest for the philosophical scene inside the review and at the Summer School of Korčula. It seems that Heidegger had even accepted an invitation by Eugen Fink to participate at the conference between German and Yugoslav philosophers entitled *Die Handlung* and this should have taken place in Freiburg in 1968.²⁴ This conference was not held as the Yugoslav representatives (Petrović, Kangrga and Grlić) were forced to repudiate it because they had to defend the review from the Party's attacks. (The second slanderous campaign against "Praxis" began in 1968). In spite of this information on presumed reciprocal interest between Heidegger and the philosophers of "Praxis", it is only possible to discuss an encounter with the thinking of Heidegger, due above all to the curiosity of Petrović; the meeting could probably have led to interesting philosophical discussions. But nothing happened except that Petrović published a work on Heidegger.²⁵ It seems even impossible that so famous a thinker as Heidegger had provoked so little interest. But maybe an explanation could be found: the first translation in the Croatian language of *Sein und Zeit* was published in Yugoslavia in 1985.²⁶ The philosophy of Martin Heidegger was not completely unknown up until then but it could be affirmed that his way of thinking was little known. The appearance of Heidegger's name in Yugoslav publishing is due to the philosophers of «Praxis», and particularly to Gajo Petrović. In the previous chapters, mention was made of that fact that he was a curious and particular thinker, gifted by remarkable intellectual curiosity which had found some kind of stimulus in Heidegger's philosophy. Petrović noticed in Heidegger continuity with Marx's thinking. He had been following avidly the studies of Ko-

stas Axelos regarding a similar line of approach between Marx and Heidegger.²⁷ These are clues to following the line of thinking with Gajo Petrović, who questioned himself on the manner in which he could find confirmation with the thinking of Heidegger to begin a dialogue. Petrović was convinced that studying the relationship between Marx and Heidegger simplified the understanding of the idea of revolution.

5. Conclusion

"Praxis" was founded by a group of university teachers of philosophy and sociology who, during the '50s and '60s, were involved in the battle with Stalinist dogmatism and Stalinism, which had dominated the Yugoslav philosophical scene. Their answer to that dogmatism was placed in the background of the philosophy involving man and his activity. The orientation undertaken was the philosophy of praxis, which became the central nucleus of the philosophical problematic debate. To understand man's existence and his problems in the contemporary world, it was necessary to use philosophy. Only through philosophical discussion could these problems be solved. The thinking of the young Marx was deeply studied, and above all, that in the *Economic-philosophical manuscripts from 1844* more than anything else, answered the needs of Yugoslav philosophers. Reexamining the basis of his thinking, such as praxis, alienation, dis-alienation, reification, revolution, art, etc., became the main topics of the review. The deep conviction of creative-philosophers, as they like to call themselves – where the adjective *creative* represents the opposite of *dogmatic* that had marked the philosophical orientation since the first appearance of the review – was that man is conceived as a being of praxis, and only in virtue could his essence eliminate the condition of alienation where he

²⁴ Cfr. G. Petrović, *U potrazi za slobodom* [Searching for freedom], Biblioteka Filozofska istraživanja, Zagreb 1990, p. 159.

²⁵ Cfr. G. Petrović, *Odabrana djela IV – Prolegomena za kritiku Heideggera* [Selected works, vol. IV – Prolegomens for the criticism to Heidegger], Naprijed-Nolit, Zagreb-Beograd 1986.

²⁶ M. Heidegger, *Bitak i vrijeme*, (Being and time) Naprijed, Zagreb 1985, 1988

²⁷ E. Mазzarella, "Introduction" to K. Axelos, *Marx e Heidegger* (Marx and Heidegger), Guida, Napoli 1977, pp. 7-8.

found himself on his way towards the universe of freedom. This liberation became possible only through the philosophical idea of revolution which made use of multiple significances – *transphilosophical* – using the terminology of Gajo Petrović, the editor of the review. With the term revolution, only change on the political and social level was understood, but there was also the qualitative change of being man. Within the review, philosophy became a critical evaluation of politics. It was, during all those years of publishing, a continuous variation between philosophical and political, which in the last years was emphasized: in fact, the philosophy, from *criticism of politics*, became *the element of politics*. It is interesting to observe

how, over the years, that critical spirit faded, or started to weaken *the implacable criticism of all that exists* which was the order of review and where the philosophical orientation of the beginnings was condensed. That criticism was born as a necessary answer to the dogmatic attitude; the same criticism served to analyze in a theoretical way the problems of man in the contemporary world and, above all, within socialist society. The same criticism would later reveal itself when “Praxis” would be coopted by the political sphere. As in a vicious cycle, and in a more or less conscious way, the movement that started as an authentic anti-dogmatic protagonist would fall again, in the mid-1970s, into political dogmatism.

Bibliography

AA. VV., *Storia del marxismo — Il marxismo oggi*, vol. IV, Einaudi, Torino 1982.

Axelos, Kostas, *Marx e Heidegger*, Guida Editori, Napoli 1978.

Čemu Praxis, in «Praxis», Num. 1, rujan – listopad 1964.

Fusi, Gabriella, *L'opposizione filosofica e politica in Jugoslavia: la rivista "Praxis"*, in “aut aut”, n. 148, giugno-agosto 1975.

Golubović, Veselin, *Mogućnost novoga — vidokrug jugoslavenske filozofije*, Biblioteka Filozofska misao, Zagreb 1990.

Golubović, Veselin, *S Marxom protiv Staljina — jugoslovenska filozofska kritika staljinizma*, Globus, Zagreb 1985.

Heidegger, Martin, *Bitak i vrijeme, (Being and time)*, Naprijed, Zagreb 1985, 1988.

Heidegger, Martin, *Essere e tempo*, UTET, Torino 1978.

Kosík, Karel, in G.D. Neri, *Aporie della realizzazione. Filosofia e ideologia nel socialismo reale*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1980.

La sinistra hegeliana / testi scelti da Karl Löwith. – Bari, Laterza, 1960, Carlo Cesa (trad.di).

Marx, Karl, *I manoscritti economico-filosofici del 1844*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1977.

Marx, Karl — Engels, Friedrich, *L'ideologia tedesca*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1977.

Na početku novog godišta, in “Praxis”, Num. 1-2, siječanj – travanj, 1967.

Petrović, Gajo, *Praksa (Praxis)*, in “Theoria”, n. 1/2, Beograd 1985.

Petrović, Gajo, *Odabrana djela I, II, III, IV (Selected works I, II, III, IV)*, Naprijed-Nolit, Zagreb-Beograd 1986.

Petrović, Gajo, *U potrazi za slobodom (Searching for freedom)*, Biblioteka Filozofska istraživanja, Zagreb 1990.

Rovatti, Pier Aldo, *Critica e scientificità in Marx*, Feltrinelli, Milano 1975.

Schaff, Adam, *L'alienazione come fenomeno sociale*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1979.

Vranicki, Predrag, *Storia del marxismo I, II*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1972.

Complete publication of the philosophical Yugoslav review «Praxis» (1964-1974) in the original language, Filozofski Časopis Jugoslavensko Izdanje, Hrvatsko Filozofsko Društvo

Corinna Gerbaz Giuliano

Filozofski fakultet, Sveučilište u Rijeci,
Rijeka

Filozofija i politika – iskustvo časopisa «Praxis» (1964.-1974.)

Sažetak:

U ovom će se radu prikazati uloga i značenje koje je filozofski časopis „Praxis“ imao na nacionalnom i međunarodnom planu. „Praxis“ je nastao kao rezultat jugoslavenskoga filozofskog diskursa u poslijeratnome razdoblju, a istovremeno je predstavljao jedini pravi glas „filozofske prakse“ u Jugoslaviji. Ideja filozofije na kojoj se časopis temeljio nazire se i u samom naslovu: „aktivnost misli“, smatrali su jugoslavenski filozofi, trebala je promijeniti svjetsku sudbinu, ali je u tu svrhu trebala biti koncipirana kao prava revolucija. „Praxis“ je stoga postao časopis an-

tidogmatskoga, humanističkog i revolucionarnog marksizma, nastao na temelju novoga čitanja Marxa. Na taj je način ova jugoslavenska aktivnost pridonijela stvaranju jednoga novog stadija marksističke povijesti, antidogmatskoga stadija usmjerenog stvaranju humanističkoga i revolucionarnoga marksizma. Nakon četrdeset i četiri godine od ukidanja časopisa (1974.), a povodom dvjestote obljetnice rođenja Karla Marxa, ovim se radom želi promisliti o onome što je od „fenomena Praxis“ ostalo u današnjici.

Ključne riječi: antidogmatizam, humanistički marksizam, jugoslavenski filozofski diskurs, filozofski časopis „Praxis“, čitanje Marxa, revolucija.
