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SEDE DELLA REDAZIONE  
Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche, Università di Pisa, Via C. Ridolfi 10, I 56124 Pisa,  
tel. +39 050 2216206, fax +39 050 2216384

Corrispondenza e materiali vanno inviati a MASSIMO M. AUGELLO,  
Dipartimento di Scienze Economiche, Università di Pisa, Via C. Ridolfi 10, I 56124 Pisa,  
tel. +39 050 2216296, fax +39 050 2216384

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## 2. A METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

From a methodological point of view, it may be useful to point out a difference between the Spanish and the Italian interpretations of the reception of Marx provided so far. The former (see, e.g. Fuentes Quintana 2001, vol. 5) usually apply a pluralist approach, analysing both 'scientific' sources (economists or academics) and 'militant' ones (intellectuals or party leaders), as well as the historical background in order to determine if the analytical and scientific quality of the debate on Marx can be related to the historical-institutional context within which it took place.

On the contrary, the Italian works generally tend to focus either on the *strictu sensu* scientific reception (BECCHIO, MARCHIONATTI 2001) or on the militant one, limiting the study of the historical background and the political contingencies exclusively to this latter case (BRAVO 1992).

In my opinion, the most convincing method seems to be that followed by the Spanish scholars, consisting of an analysis of the contribution of both scientific and militant influences, as well as the historical and economic background, in the period 1870-1923, i.e., period of the early spread of Marxism. Rather than being two distinct and unrelated events, both the scientific and the militant reception constituted the two sides of the same coin, influencing each other and mutually determining the destinies of Marx's works. Thus, analysing only particular elements of them could risk making partial and contradictory conclusions: for instance, even the duration of Italian Marxism changes with different methods of investigation, resulting also in a divergence of the conclusions drawn from such disparate methods.

In other words, it seems that only by applying a pluralist approach it is possible to understand the sequence of events which led to the birth, the evolution, the decline and the disappearance of early Italian Marxism. This means that we should consider the Italian debate on Marx as a *whole*.

## 3. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### 3.1. The economic 'structure'

In adopting a Marxian point of view, the starting point of our compared investigation is necessarily the *economic structure*. From this perspective, we suppose that the most favourable *material* conditions to the reception and dissemination of Marx's works should occur in countries with a higher development of the productive forces (in contemporary language, a higher industrial development), as in such situations Marx's criticism of *Capital* would be more evident and understandable.

Observing Italian and Spanish economic development during the period of the publication of the three books of *Capital*, we notice however that it was homothetic until 1896 (MILWARD, SAUL 1977, pp. 302-382). In both countries, the leading sector was agriculture, a sector characterised by backward technologies and inefficient institutions such as *latifundium*, so that agriculture was scarcely productive and unrelated to industrialization. Industrial development artificially (and problematically) resulted from public investment – especially concentrated in the iron and steel industry – protectionist policies and massive foreign investments, as in the case of railways. A further similarity lay in the uneven geographical distribution of growth in each of these countries: in Italy, a deep difference existed between

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the North and the South of the country; while in Spain such a «dual economy» (SÁNCHEZ ALBORNOZ 1968) came as a consequence of different levels of development in Catalonia, the Basque Country and other areas.

Even after 1896 (when Italian industry started developing at a higher rate than Spain), the situation remained substantially similar: in 1914, 38 per cent of the Italian national income still came from agriculture, while only 26 per cent came from mining and metals plus industrial production, although within this group the allocation was imbalanced towards the mining and metal branch (*ibidem*).

In short, in the whole period examined, Italy and Spain were two backward and agricultural countries, for the most part strangers to industrialization, which had spread throughout Europe since the late eighteenth century. They were on the 'periphery' of Continental Europe and entered the industrial process only later as «second-comers» (GERSCHENKRON 1965). Therefore, they should scarcely have been receptive settings for Marxian theory.

### 3.2. The 'superstructure'

#### 3.2.1. The institutional context

During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century (when *Capital* was published and disseminated) the institutional contexts of Italy and Spain seem to be quite similar. In both countries, periods of strong instability came to an end: the Kingdom of Italy rose and its Parliament was divided into two bourgeois Parties, the *Historical Right* and the *Historical Left*, which led the government, respectively from 1861 to 1876 and from 1876 to 1896. In 1882, suffrage was expanded, making it possible for the first Socialist deputy (Andrea Costa) to be elected. However, at the same time the two main Parties adopted a collusive strategy – known as *trasformismo* – in order to isolate the 'extreme' wings in Parliament. As a result, the political system turned into a corrupt, elitist and nepotistic institution, and was strongly denounced by many intellectuals (such as Gaetano Mosca).

In Spain, the 1870s also marked a transition from a period of deep political instability to an elitist government: from 1868 to 1876 the situation evolved from a series of *pronunciamientos* to the restoration of the royal dynasty. After this, a new political order was shaped, based on a new Constitution created by two elitist parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. The system worked according to an agreement between the two Parties (called *Pacto del Pardo*) aimed at establishing, *before* elections, which party would lead the government. In order to guarantee the expected result, the leading parties employed any means necessary – including corruption and violence – at least until 1912. Needless to say, this had serious consequences for the Spanish political system.

Although they existed to different degrees, elite hegemony, parliamentary degeneration and social repression were common both to the Italian and Spanish political systems, thus determining a difficult *humus* for the spread of Marxism.

#### 3.2.2. The influence of Italian economists on Spain

In the eighteenth century, Italy played an important role in the Spanish economic debate, especially through Genovesi's and Filangieri's works, which were translated into Castilian (ASTIGARRAGA 2001). However, as a consequence of the liberal reforms, this interest disappeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century in favour of the liberal French economists.

Nevertheless, after 1870 the situation changed again: as a result of the 1868 Revolution, there was a critical revision of *laissez-faire* tenets by a group of intellectuals called *krausistas* (followers of Karl C. F. Krause, a German post-Kantian philosopher), although the process was also inspired by the eclectic approach of the Italian economists called *vincolisti* (from 'vincolo', constraint, on account of their interventionist ideas).

The *Krausismo* movement was critical of classical political economy: though acknowledging the free-trade dogma, it anchored political economy to ethics and supported State intervention, in order to avoid the rise of a 'social question' in Spain. Without a doubt, *krausistas* sponsored a moderate criticism: they not only refuted socialism, they also mistrusted German historicism as well as the positivist philosophy, both considered potentially dangerous for State 'harmony'. Hence, from the outset they addressed their attention to the Italian *vincolisti*, who were considered representatives of a 'mild' version of German *Kathedersozialismus*. Lampertico's distinction between *social* and *socialist* laws was known and appreciated by the founder of the Krausist movement Gumersindo de Azcárate.

On the other hand, *krausismo* was well known in Italy, as revealed by Luigi Cossa, who affirmed: «Le dottrine dei socialisti della cattedra [...] hanno [in Spagna] un notevole e temperato sostenitore in G. de Azcarate».<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, Boccardo's «Biblioteca dell'economista» was widely diffused throughout Spain, facilitating a direct knowledge of the main German historicist texts.

These streams of economic contributions from Italy to Spain and *vice versa* offer further proof of the remarkable similarity between the two countries.

### 3. 2. 3. Anarchism, pre-Marxist currents and the birth of the Socialist Parties

Generally speaking, anarchism and pre-Marxist socialism were competitive, mutually exclusive, and often explicitly opposed to Marxism, so that we can establish, as a tendency, an inverse relation between their presence and prosperity and the reception of Marx. From another perspective, a direct relation seems to exist between the birth and strength of Socialist Parties and the emphasis given to scientific studies on Marx.

Even if the initial conditions seem similar, the role played in both countries by anarchism and pre-Marxist currents on the one hand, and Socialist Parties on the other, was radically dissimilar.

In Spain, neither of these settings was favourable to the reception of Marx. Various creeds of pre-Marxist socialism had a late albeit intense reception in the country, starting in the 1830s and lasting until the 1868 Revolution, *i.e.*, one year after the publication of volume one of *Das Kapital* (MALUQUER DE MOTES 1977; see also ELORZA 1970). In particular, cooperative socialism played a primary role (especially in Andalucía and Madrid), inspired by Charles Fourier's doctrines and revised by Fernando Garrido in a Republican direction favourable to the workers' association.<sup>2</sup> Besides this, the socialist-libertarian movement inspired by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's ideas also penetrated Spain (particularly in Catalunya), enjoying widespread dissemination thanks to recognized intellectuals such as Ramón de la Sagra or Francisco Py y Margall, and a close association with the Republican Party.

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «The doctrines of the socialists of the chair [...] find [in Spain] a notable and tempered supporter in G. de Azcarate». See MALO GUILLÉN forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> Already in 1851, Garrido was in contact with Giuseppe Mazzini, who wrote the preface to his book *El socialismo y la democracia ante sus adversarios* in 1862; see PASCUAL SASTRE 2002, pp.295-309. See also EIRAS ROEL 1961 and RIBAS 1981.

These undercurrents constituted an obstacle to the reception of Marx from two perspectives. On the one hand, their time delay postponed their influence on the Spanish debate till the publication of volume one of *Das Kapital*, thus constituting a 'living' alternative to Marxism. On the other hand, rather than creating the conditions for the birth of a Socialist Party, they prepared the ground for the anarchist movement. As early as 1870, Bakunin commissioned the Italian anarchist Giuseppe Fanelli to create a revolutionary organization in Spain, and, during his journey throughout the country, Fanelli was accompanied solely by the republican and Fourierist leader Fernando Garrido.

The final result was the creation, in Barcelona, of the Federación Regional Española of the International Workingmen's Association in 1870: its membership was already 30,000 in 1872 and it doubled in the next nine years. This remarkable achievement was the consequence of three factors: firstly, anarchism was more compatible than socialism with the individualistic traits of the Spanish people deriving from the traditional agricultural structure of the country. Secondly, the degenerated electoral system, based on *caciquismo*, made it impossible for the Workingmen's Association to obtain institutional representation, thus pushing workers into a head-on clash with the ruling power. Thirdly, due to its close association with the pre-existing and well-established Republican Party, anarchism was able to spread rapidly, preventing, from the very beginning, the spread of Socialist ideas among the working classes.<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, this had deep and negative consequences on the rising Socialist movement: even though the Partido Socialista Obrero Español was created in 1879, it was a marginal political force. PSOE could only create a labour union, the UGT, essentially identifying the union activity with that of the Party. The Party itself had limited exposure to the industrial cities of Spain where a proletariat existed: the first Socialist city councilman was only elected in 1895 in Bilbao (Facundo Perezagua). Fifteen years later, thanks mainly to a strategic alliance with the Republicans, the first Socialist deputy entered the *Cortes*. It took another eight years for a second representative to join him in 1918. Finally, in 1920 the Socialists were able to claim six deputies, a significant growth of its membership (amounting to 42,000), and the affiliation of many intellectuals: in other words, only in the 1920s did the PSOE become a modern mass-Party.

Pre-Marxist and anarchist currents were equally hegemonic in Italy between 1860 and 1880. With regard to the first group, the followers of Giuseppe Mazzini were the dominant component. The Mazzinian movement was widespread in the country and structured through the Workingmen's Association. At the beginning of 1871 the latter counted more than one thousand provident societies all over Italy, including over 230,000 Mazzinians. Each society had a multi-class membership and its dominant ideology firmly condemned strikes as an *ill-omened* form of protest. In spite of this, the Mazzinian movement's stance towards Marxism was ambivalent. As other scholars (FAVILLI 1996, BRAVO 1992) have documented extensively, the majority of Mazzinian militants nourished a positive albeit superficial opinion about Karl Marx, who was fictionally described by their newspapers as the astute «commander-in-chief of the International Association».<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, after the Paris *Commune* – which was harshly condemned by Mazzini – there was a 'revolt' among the militants, whose majority abandoned the democratic movement

<sup>1</sup> From this point of view, both Marx and Engels probably underestimated the role of such an unusual connection in terms of the subsequent spread of anarchism. See RIBAS 1981, pp. 13-28.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Carlo Marx *capo supremo dell'Internazionale*, «Il Proletario italiano», 27 July 1871, quoted in FAVILLI 1996, p. 44.

to join the rising First International, spawning a massive anarchist militancy. Nonetheless, even the Italian anarchist movement played an ambivalent role towards Marxism as the Mazzinians had done before. In fact, because of the failure of many insurrections (especially in southern Italy), several Bakunian leaders launched a process of self-criticism, which led to clamorous shifts towards Socialism. One of them was Andrea Costa, who in 1881 founded the Partito Socialista Rivoluzionario di Romagna and entered Parliament a year later as the first elected Socialist deputy.

The favourable new context determined the birth of a Socialist Party: in 1882, the class-conscious Partito Operaio Italiano was founded by several Workingmen's Societies. Subsequently, thanks to the efforts of many intellectuals (such as the positivist lawyer Filippo Turati and the philosopher Antonio Labriola), the Italian Socialist Party was founded in 1892. Despite the anti-Socialist laws of 1894, the Party's mass-structure allowed it to take part in the 1895 elections in alliance with the Republicans and the Radicals. The result was remarkable: twelve Socialist deputies were elected, turning it into an important national force to be joined by celebrated intellectuals such as the novelist Edmondo De Amicis, the poet Giovanni Pascoli, the anthropologist Cesare Lombroso and the sociologist Guglielmo Ferrero.

In short, even though the initial conditions were similar, anarchism and pre-Marxist currents played an opposite role in Italy and Spain: in the former, they unintentionally created the *humus* for the rise of Marxism, whereas in the latter they constituted a harmful and long-lasting obstacle.

#### 4. MARX'S RECEPTION IN ITALY

The earliest traces of *Capital* in Italy are contained in the paper *Libertà e Giustizia*<sup>1</sup> published in 1867, a few weeks after the publication of volume one of Marx's *opus*; references to it occupied almost the whole introduction to this paper. The article was sufficient to initiate a debate on Marx and to stimulate the first attempts of translation within the Workingmen's Associations. In 1872, the anarchist militant Carlo Cafiero asked Engels for a French copy of the book, in order to translate it more readily. However, an unbelievable sequence of incidents and delays postponed the publication of a compendium in Italian (published by the «Biblioteca Socialista Italiana») until 1879. The quality of the work was relatively high and Marx himself judged it a good translation, deeming it superior to the existing American and Serbian compendiums,<sup>2</sup> thus encouraging Cafiero to keep on translating it.

In 1882 volume one of *Capital* was finally translated. However, contrary to what one might expect, it was not an internationalist militant who carried it out but a bourgeois academic, Gerolamo Boccardo. The reason lay in the fact that from 1874 on a sort of expectant national *Methodenstreit* took place within the Italian academic community, leading to the victory of the *vincolisti* (that is, the Italian counterpart of *Kathedersozialisten*). As a consequence of their eclectic methodological approach, these economists were able to appreciate the scientific content of Marx's theory (rather than its political implications), and they therefore started to analyse it. Hence, when the *vincolista* Gerolamo Boccardo replaced Ferrara as editor of the third series of the «Biblioteca dell'economista», this academic interest in Marx could make the final quality leap. In the late 1870s Boccardo started his translation on the basis of the French edition: in 1882 the work was finally completed and published.

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Curiously, both Marx and Engels ignored the existence of this translation. Only in 1893, the latter received a copy of the book from the Socialist leader Filippo Turati and judged it «quite faithful».<sup>1</sup> Thanks to this unusual *bourgeois* attention, a reliable edition of *Capital* was available in Italy.

Furthermore, a process of melding between positivism and Marxism took place in this period. Some scholars argued that just like any other human theory, socialism could prove its rightness only according to scientific laws, that is to say only if it were considered a *science*.<sup>2</sup>

##### 4.1. *The early debate: Loria vs Labriola*

A singular product of such fusion between Marxism and positivist academic thinking was Achille Loria's contribution. In 1882 he travelled to London where he was offered a cup of tea at Marx's house, and met Engels: by this point, he already believed that he had been able to show the fallacy of Marx's theory.

Such criticism became explicit one year later, when he published the Marx's obituary: here he asserted that the Marxian theory of value was evidently erroneous and defined it a «deliberate sophistry»:

lunghe anni di studio, fervidamente dedicato all'opere del grande socialista alemanno, mi addussero ad un [...] risultato: [la] sempre più salda e profonda convinzione della fallacia delle dottrine di Marx, la persuasione che un consaputo sofisma le domina tutte.

(LORIA 1902, pp. 2-3)<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, he openly declared that he suspected the non-existence of volume two, caused by a 'writer's block' suffered by Marx after the publication of volume one:

io non credo che il Marx abbia pensato un istante di dare un fratello secondogenito al suo Capitale. Egli sentiva che a quel primo volume [...] non potea darsi un compagno degno ed uguale; come Rossini e Manzoni, ei comprendeva la grandezza di un glorioso silenzio.

(*Ibidem*, pp. 23-24)<sup>4</sup>

These statements irritated Engel, who labelled Loria a «dwarf's soul».<sup>5</sup>

Despite this, Loria's revisionism continued until 1889, when he published *Analisi della proprietà capitalista*. He pointed his finger at the incompatibility between Marx's labour theory of value and the hypothesis of competitive market (*i.e.*, of profit rate uniformity), due to the different organic capital composition of each branch:

i teorici del socialismo [...] affermano che [...] il valore si determina senza alcun intervento dell'elemento capitale, e soggiungono che, malgrado ciò, il saggio de' profitti rimane uniforme per tutti i

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Letter of Friedrich Engels to Filippo Turati*, 12th July 1893, quoted in BRAVO 1992, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Papa 1985. See also the workingmen's newspaper *La plebe*: «[Socialism is] The mathematical corollary of all modern scientific axioms [...] discovered by Galileo, Darwin and Marx» Cf. *La nostra battaglia e il nostro ideale*, «La Plebe», 18 July 1882, quoted in FAVILLI 1996, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Translation: «Many years spent in the study of the works of the 'great German Socialist' drove me to the following [...] conclusion: the firm belief in Marx's theory fallacy, the persuasion that a deliberate sophistry inspires it all».

<sup>4</sup> Translation: «I do not believe that Marx has ever thought to give a second-born brother to his Capital. He felt that no worthy or equivalent sequel may have been given to such a first volume [...] just like Rossini or Manzoni, he was aware of the greatness that a glory silence can have».

<sup>5</sup> *Letter of Friedrich Engels to Achille Loria*, 20 May 1883, quoted in FAVILLI 1996, p. 110.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. paper of the Bakunian Workingmen's Society *Libertà e Giustizia* of Naples, quoted in BRAVO 1992, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Letter of Karl Marx to Carlo Cafiero*, 29th July 1879, quoted in FAVILLI 1996, p. 249.

produttori, per quanto le diverse produzioni esigano un diverso rapporto tra capitale e lavoro. [...] La teoria socialista del valore è dunque suicida.

(LORIA 1957, pp. 132 and 139)<sup>1</sup>

In addition, he proposed a solution to this error: in the presence of different organic capital composition, it suffices to suppose that the higher profit of the low organic composition branch would be drawn in by *unproductive capital*, until the rates of profit are equalized:

poiché la concorrenza fra i vari capitali produttivi è illimitata [...] la condizione del capitalista colpito dal capitale improduttivo dovrà essere eguagliata [...] mediante una depressione speciale del valore dei prodotti ottenuti dai capitali, che non si trovano in rapporto col capitale improduttivo, o mediante una elevazione speciale del valore dei prodotti ottenuti dai capitali, che si trovano in rapporto con quello.

(*Ibidem*, pp. 411-412)<sup>2</sup>

However, the hypothesis of *unproductive capital* was unjustified and vaguely axiomatic. Thus, when the work was published in German, in 1890, in the «Conrads Jahrbücher», it was easy for Engels to take revenge, arguing that:

in *Conrads Jahrbücher*, neue Folge, Buch xx, S. 272 and following [...] l'illustre Loria solves by sleight of hand the question which he had declared insoluble ten years previously. Unfortunately, he did not let us into the secret wherefrom the "unproductive capital" obtained the power to squeeze out of the industrialists their extra profit in excess of the average rate of profit, and to retain it in its own pocket, just as the landowner pockets the tenant's surplus-profit as ground-rent.

(ENGELS 1967, pp. 30-31)

Engels's attack against Loria was also motivated by the latter's rising popularity among the Italian Socialists, which worried the 'General' for its potential negative effects:

[Loria] has happily convinced his countrymen of this, and, after his book appeared in French, also some Frenchmen, and can now pose in Italy as the author of a new epoch-making theory of history until the Italian Socialists find time to strip the illustrious Loria of his stolen peacock feathers.

(*Ibidem*, pp. 28-29)

As a consequence, Engels intensified his efforts in order to discredit Loria's dangerous and deterministic deviation within the Italian Marxists, charging the Socialist philosopher Antonio Labriola to bring them back to the orthodoxy. Ultimately Labriola's counter to Loria was based on philosophical rather than economic arguments and focused on Loria's misunderstanding of historical materialism.<sup>3</sup>

Labriola stressed that Loria's positivist prejudices led him to a deterministic and strictly mechanistic interpretation of Marx. Instead, he defined historical materialism as the objective explanation of history, through the concept of class-struggle. On the basis of such a definition, the structure-superstructure relationship is a dialectical one, which implies

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «The theoreticians of Socialism [...] state that [...] value is determined independently from capital, despite this, they add that the rate of profit is uniform for all the producers, albeit different productions imply different combinations of capital and labour. [...] Therefore, the socialist theory of value is a suicidal one».

<sup>2</sup> Translation: «As competition between the several productive capitals is unlimited [...] the effect which unproductive capital plays on capitalists have to be expressed [...] whether through a specific decrease of the value of the output produced with capitals unrelated to the unproductive one, or through an increase of the value of the output produced with capitals related to that one».

<sup>3</sup> Loria had described the structure-superstructure dialectics as a *vicious circle*. Hence, historical materialism would be an erroneous theory which ought to be modified in a scientific (*i.e.*, positivist) direction. See OTTAVIANO in Papa 1985.

mutual dependence and, therefore, it doesn't mean that it is possible to mechanically deduce the products of the entire history of human activity from the economic structure (even if this latter is the *inescapable foundation of history*). That is why a correct interpretation of historical materialism should include a voluntary and subjective dimension as well as a deterministic and objective one: any deterministic fatalism, such as Loria's, had to be refuted.

Afterwards, Engels also made a series of explicit criticisms against Loria. Firstly, through a private letter to the Socialist leader Filippo Turati, he announced the *Third book's* publication as being «for the pleasure of the notorious charlatan Loria».<sup>1</sup> Secondly, in the 1894 *Third book's* introduction he viscerally attacked Loria, dedicating a good six pages to him, accusing the Italian of historical materialism and erroneous plagiarism, and comparing him not to Italy's classicism represented by Dante and Garibaldi, but rather to its worst tradition symbolized by the carnival masks of Sgaranello and Dulcamara, its heritage of foreign dominance.

The introduction was also sent to «Critica sociale», a Socialist journal directed by Turati, and even though it wasn't published, it deeply impressed the Socialist leaders, helping to gradually put Loria in perspective.

#### 4.2. The 90s debate: Marx vs economics

Despite the lack of any translation, the majority of Italian economists were able to cope with the original German edition (or, alternatively, with the French one) of the 1894 *Third book*. Its publication immediately started an intense *querelle* within Italian academic circles due to the concurrent birth of a marginalist school in Italy.

The 'fire starter' was Pareto, who wrote a long (77-page) and critical introduction to La-fargue's *Capital* compendium, published in Italy in 1894 by Sandron. Pareto's criticism clearly derived from his adherence to marginalism and *pure economics*: from the outset, he stressed the futility of substantive analysis of the book because of the innovations introduced by the subjective theory of value, which made classical objective theory unscientific and obsolete:

Nous jugeons, pour notre part, absolument oisive, dans l'état actuel de la science, toute discussion qui n'a pour but que de savoir ce que l'on doit entendre pour le mot: valeur, capital, ou autres semblables expressions. C'est une question qui appartient à la philologie et non à la science économique.

(PARETO 1966, pp. 33-34)

Therefore, for instance, the idea of a constant capital was completely wrong because capital is both an economic good and a productive factor. Hence it has to be remunerated, just like labour, and its propriety must not be compromised:

De quelque part qu'elle vienne, toute atteinte à la liberté économique est un mal. [...] l'effet est [...] une destruction de richesse, qui, en définitive, retombe sur la partie la plus pauvre [...] de la population [...] et en aggrave les souffrances.

(*Ibidem*, p. 70)

Also the distinction between use-value and exchange-value was surpassed by Jevons' exchange ratio, which indicated the effective market exchange rather than the metaphysical characteristics of goods. Consequently, the cost of production depends on the exchange ratio and thus the level of final utility and not from simple labour, as in Marx.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Engels's letter to Turati, 12 April 1894, quoted in BRAVO, 1992, p. 215.

Such a critical introduction drew the polemical intervention of Lafargue himself, who responded by adding a counter-introduction to his book.

Moreover, it started a debate between marginalists and Marxists which took place in the review «La Riforma sociale».<sup>1</sup>

The first significant essay was by a namesake and disciple of Antonio Labriola named Arturo ('snubbed'), who in 1897 wrote *La teoria marxistica del valore*.

The article was seemingly a reply to the Lorian criticism, as it contained a defence of the Ricardian theory of value, through which Marx's *value* was interpreted as a *social form* redressing use value. This latter definition was used to draw radical conclusions: since *value* is a *social form* of use-value, the Marxian theory of value provides only a *qualitative* explanation of profit formation. As a result, it was necessary to look at the marginalist *toolbox* in order to analyse the *quantitative* side of economics, such as price formation.

Two years later, another fundamental article entitled *Recenti interpretazioni della teoria marxistica del valore e polemiche intorno ad esse* was published. Its author was Benedetto Croce, favourite disciple of Antonio Labriola, who saw him as his successor. In his article, Croce condemned Marx's theory, displaying an explicit preference for marginalism.

This line of thinking continued with the publication of the book *Materialismo storico ed economia marxistica*, in which Croce stressed that Marxian theory belonged to the *sociological economy* rather than to the *general economy*, and that it improperly subsumed from the latter the transformation process of value into prices, and the profit formation process from surplus value.

Marxian economics is not general economic science [...] labour-value is not a general concept of value [...] Marx's research [...] might better be called research into sociological economics.

(CROCE 1914, ch. III)

Thus, both these processes had to be considered incorrect. Instead, the *general economy* was the only analytical category which permitted an explanation of economic evolution, as it was based on marginalist-hedonistic principles, which were the only valid universal principles:

pure economics [...] starts from the hedonistic postulate [...] and deduces from it [...] all the other special laws, [It] is the true and essential general science of economic facts.

(*Ibidem*)

Therefore, it was impossible to accept Marxian economic theory, and Marxism should rather be considered an *interpretative canon* of the labour function in a capitalist economy or, more generally, of history itself. Only such an approach could restore Marxism to its authenticity, purifying it of the dogmatism inherent in Loria's positivism.

The final result of this debate was a diminished interest in Marx and in the classical economy, in favour of the new 'polar star' of marginalism.

Within academic circles, the Lorian economists were gradually substituted by the marginalists: this change implied a quantitative reduction in works on Marx.

This trend also invested the Socialist circle due to the mutated political context, as demonstrated by «La Riforma sociale»: the Socialist Party had a progressive process of institution-

<sup>1</sup> The journal was founded in 1894 by F. S. Nitti, and aimed to describe a *new* socialism, purified of catastrophic and revolutionary bias: naturally, it was fundamental to include a discussion of Marxian theory in order to achieve such a result. See NITTI 1894.

alisation and, consequently, changed its perspective. Rather than adopt Marx's catastrophic previsions, many socialists reflected on a future of potential reform.

#### 4.3. The late debate: the marginalist-socialists

In consequence of the aforementioned trend, socialist economists were faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, the involvement of the vast majority in the Socialist Party meant that they couldn't accept an explicit refutation of Marxism. On the other hand, their academic aspirations meant that they couldn't ignore the new marginalist preponderance within the Italian universities.

The final result was an unusual Marxian revisionism, based on a mixture of marginalist tools and Marxian categories.

The peculiarity of this debate was that it involved both reformist and revolutionary-syndicalist Socialists, so that it is possible to distinguish among «*right wing revisionists*» (Montemartini and Graziadei) and «*left wing revisionists*» (Arturo Labriola and Enrico Leone) (FAVILLI 1996, chs. 5 and 6): from this point of view, the debate was vaguely similar to a minor *Bernstein debate* referring to the future of Italian Socialism.

Montemartini was a typical Socialist reformist, and was directly engaged in the civil service in the position of Labour Office director. In his work *Il Risparmio nell'economia pura* he developed a theory on savings, based on both Marxian-classical and marginalist elements. His starting point was not Marxian, but rather *hedonistic principles*:

lo scopo del presente lavoro [...] si tratta in una parola di presentare [...] un saggio di economia pura.

(MONTEMARTINI 1896, p. XVII)<sup>1</sup>

Which were considered the only guarantee to succeed in the formulation of the «*Exact laws* [of saving]»:

le leggi esatte che governano questa funzione, leggi che non possono più variare e che saranno uniformi in tutti i tempi e luoghi.

(*Ibidem*, p. XVIII)<sup>2</sup>

According to this theory, savings resulted from a comparison between present utility foregone due to reduced consumption, and expected future utility due to the higher available revenue. Additionally, Montemartini presupposed a cardinal measurability of utility, based on Menger's tables.

The resulting theory was instead Marxian-classical, for:

i socialisti, invece di polemizzare contro i cultori della economia pura dovrebbero applicare i criteri della ricerca esatta ai principi fondamentali da essi formulati. Il grande assioma, la proposizione principale del ragionamento di Marx, il principio della lotta di classe, verrebbe ad essere illustrato efficacemente e messo in altra luce.

(*Ibidem*, p. XXVIII)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «In one word, the present work is conceived as an essay in pure economics».

<sup>2</sup> Translation: «The exact laws which determine such a function, those which cannot vary and will remain uniform in any place or time».

<sup>3</sup> Translation: «Socialists, instead of entering into a debate with the pure economists, should apply such an exact method of research to their basic principles. The main axiom of Marx's reasoning, i.e. the class struggle, would then become clearer and more convincing».

Like Loria, he maintained the existence of an *unproductive capital*, while at the same time accepting Marx's theory of the Falling Rate of Profit. In fact, an increase in savings causes an increase in investment and also in the supply of funds, so that the rate of interest will gradually decrease: consequently, the most recent capital invested will pay only minimal interest, the rate of profit being equal: such a situation would stimulate a dramatic increase in investment and intense economic growth. Subsequently, one of two scenarios could develop, depending on which sector experienced greater investment: if it is industry, then the *evident* limits of demand – the why and how of this vaguely Malthusian concept were left unexplained – will lead to a Falling Rate of Profit similar to that of Marx. Instead, if the higher investments mainly involve agriculture, the Ricardian law of agricultural diminishing returns will determine the same result, that is a falling rate of profit.

Montemartini's conclusion is that, in the presence of a high propensity to save, an increase in productive *capital* investments will necessarily lead to a Falling Rate of Profit.

Therefore, capitalists will try to contrast this deleterious trend through investments in *socially unproductive capital*.

Such osmosis between Marxism and marginalism was even more evident in Antonio Graziadei's work. In those days,<sup>1</sup> Graziadei was an important reformist party leader and a fellow at Cagliari and Parma Universities; his graduate training took place in the Laboratorio di Economia Politica «Cognetti de Martiis» (at Turin University), whose methodology of investigation was strictly positivist and strongly influenced by Loria's work. These elements were both present in Graziadei's revisionist Marxism since his early submissions to «Critica sociale» review, and later in his 1899 *La produzione capitalistica*. His fundamental idea is a criticism of the logical Marxian sequence *labour force-surplus value-general rate of profit*: in his view, the Marxian theory of value has no scientific foundation, since the effective value of commodities doesn't coincide with their labour content:

La teoria classico-socialista del profitto, imperniandosi intorno alla legge essenziale del sopravalore [...] ha messo a nudo le realtà concrete e materiali del meccanismo produttivo. Ma è, d'altra parte, indubitato che molti fenomeni [...] sembrano non trovar[vi] [...] una spiegazione adeguata. [...] noi crediamo che la relativa insufficienza dei criteri della economia classico-socialista derivi da[lla...] confusione tra analisi del profitto e analisi del valore.<sup>2</sup>

(GRAZIADEI 1899, pp. VI-VII)

Hence, the theory of value can at best preserve the function of the hypothesis and not the causal factor within the production sphere. The latter has to be examined independently of the theory of value using marginalist tools, as the two phenomena are concomitant but not interrelated, as Marx stated. Instead the theory of value plays the role of profit's historical explanation: as profit originates from distribution and not from production, it is possible to explain its existence not as a direct consequence of value added but only as a *historical and social fact*<sup>3</sup> due to surplus labour, which precedes added value:

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in 1921, Graziadei was among the founders of the Italian Communist Party. See MAURANDI 1999, pp. 9-12, 17-35.

<sup>2</sup> See also FAUCCI, PERRI 1995 and PERRI 2001. Translation: «As a consequence of the fundamental law of surplus-labour [...], the classical-socialist theory of profit was able to show the real and material functioning of the productive mechanism. Anyway, it is self-evident how many economic facts cannot be correctly explained through the aforementioned law. [...] we believe that such a fallacy of the classical-socialist political economy comes from a confusion between profit analysis and value analysis».

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Graziadei's letter to Loria, 14 February 1899, quoted in FAVILLI 1996, p. 322.

l'unico processo [...] corretto [...] sarà quello di scindere la loro analisi, considerando il meccanismo con cui si origina il profitto all'infuori della forma valore, ed il valore all'infuori di ogni preoccupazione del fenomeno produttivo.

(Ibidem, p. VIII)<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Marx's analytical mistakes, evidenced by the marginalists, don't concern his historical analysis of existing class relationships, which remain valid: thus, the theory of exploitation can be considered correct, notwithstanding refutation of the theory of value. Graziadei could therefore refute the marginalist theory of profit – which depends on capital's marginal productivity – and its drastic political implications, that is, to justify his political militancy in the Socialist Party, which was officially still in favour of the *class struggle*, despite its gradual institutionalization.

However, such marginalist contamination united these economic reformists with the revolutionary syndicalists, i.e., the Socialist Party's left-wing. While there was an apparent contradiction between the revolutionary political perspective and the use of marginalist economic tools, in reality these economists were deeply influenced by Sorel's interpretation of Marx rather than by Marx himself. Moreover, most opted for an academic career, so that studying 'economics' was firstly a necessity, due to the growing ostracism of the non-marginalist scholars.

While Arturo Labriola<sup>2</sup> had participated in the 1900s debate through a series of articles published by «La Riforma sociale», his position evolved in subsequent years, becoming more favourable to a clean separation between Marxism and marginalism.

Inspired by Pareto's work, Labriola maintained that Marxism and marginalism had the same purpose: to maximize production and its distribution among the population, in order to maximize social welfare. Nevertheless, there is a crucial difference: while the classical economists studied the distribution of a net social product among social aggregates, marginalist economics investigated the exchanges between single economic agents, or to put it differently, *homines aeconomici*. Consequently, Marxism and marginalism exist in different and clearly differentiable spheres of economic analysis, even though they have some reciprocal relationship. While the latter was the only appropriate tool to investigate the effective functioning of the market, Marxian analysis of social relationships performed the role of providing a foundation for the market phenomenon. The study of the market phenomenon in turn provided practical evidence and explanation of the Marxian categories.

More radical conclusions were drawn by Enrico Leone, who defined two separate and unrelated spheres of investigation for Marxism and marginalism:

Il marxismo si presenta nel suo contenuto economico come la critica della scuola classica. [...] Il marxismo rimane così come il prodotto dell'analisi scientifica di una fase superata.

(LEONE 1909, p. 51)<sup>3</sup>

In his view, Marxism belongs to the field of *economic sociology*, explaining *how* historical and social conditions produce the class relationships within the capitalist economy. The economy should rather be investigated through the conceptual hedonistic categories, as they de-

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «The only correct method is to separate their analysis so as to investigate, on the one hand, the origin of profit independently from the form of value and, on the other hand, value independently from the production».

<sup>2</sup> See FAUCCI, PERRI 1995 and PERRI 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Translation: «In economic terms, Marxism is nothing but a critique to classical political economy. [...] Therefore, Marxism is the product of an outdated epoch».

scribe how *natural laws* would spontaneously emerge if they weren't obstructed by the social and historical context:

L'economia [pura] ora prevalente invece, attingendo a fonti filosofiche diverse, e ad ogni modo partendo dall'attività dell'uomo nel suo stesso contenuto pratico, risale a delle leggi di fenomenica realtà.

(*Ibidem*, p. 77)<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in such *natural* conditions (thanks to the perfect competition effect) every rational economic agent would attain his *optimum* state, compatible with every other agent's. In such a situation, defined by Leone as the *Equilibrium of utility's absolute maximization*, profit would be equal for every agent, i.e., profit would no longer exist. However, economic reality is very different: the capitalist monopoly of productive factors, due to extra-economic causes, constitutes the most serious distortion of *natural laws*. As a consequence of this monopoly, capitalists have a higher utility/sacrifice ratio than they would in *natural* conditions, while workers have a lower ratio, which permanently prevents them from reaching their *optimum* state. Since extra-economic factors cause this situation, it is necessary to change the *social* background: as the *equilibrium* can only be reached through equal starting conditions for all economic agents, Marx's class struggle constitutes the solution. Through a *voluntary* revolutionary process, the means of production will revert to its *natural* distribution, thus enabling the *effective conditions* necessary for the *maximization of utility*. Therefore, it is possible to affirm the existence of a *natural* tendency within socialism, conceived as a means to restore the *natural* conditions of perfect competition.

Despite its wealth of contributions, the revisionist debate was short-lived, lasting until approximately 1910, partly as a consequence of the residual positivist origins of some protagonists, partly due to the excessive influence of their own academic contingencies. In both cases, the result was a Marxian interpretation that, although founded on valid intuition, sacrificed its potential richness, reducing Marx's complexity to a forced simplification, often excessively so. Paradoxically, this stance associated the marginalist-socialists with the 'much reviled' professor Loria.

The historical context also had a negative effect on the debate, since it coincided with a deep crisis in the Socialist Party. The 1912 Socialist Congress was the setting for a severe clash between *reformists* and *revolutionary-syndicalists*, which culminated in the expulsion of the moderate wing's leaders Bonomi and Bissolati. Conversely, three years later, it was Party's official position in favour of Italian *neutrality* in the First World War which led to the departure of many syndicalist leaders, including Enrico Leone himself.

#### 4. 4. Back to Marx: the young Gramsci

Despite its weakening, the Marxian debate continued into the late teens of the twentieth century. This was due in large part to the 'young' Antonio Gramsci: despite being somewhat removed from the field of economics, his contribution was a crucial turning-point in the subsequent Italian reception to Marx, especially from an epistemological perspective.

In a series of articles published in the socialist newspapers «L'Avanti» and «Il Grido del popolo», Gramsci took stock of the previous Marxist debate and presented his own interpretation. On the first point, he harshly criticized the schematic reading of Marx by the pre-

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «Instead, mainstream pure economics goes back to laws of phenomenal reality as it originates from different philosophical assumptions and it departs from practical contents resulting from man's activity».

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vious Italian *scientific* interpretation. In most cases, their common theme was the disappearance of any subjective or voluntary dimension from Marx's work, as a consequence of a 'scientific obsession' resulting from *positivist encrustations*. The end result reduced Marxism to a «vulgar» determinist vision of reality, which perceived historical developments in a simple mechanistic way, thus moving away from Marx's theory. This criticism was directly particularly towards the contemporary Socialist intellectuals Treves and Mondolfo, who were considered the perpetrators of this damaging and long-lasting interpretation of Marx. In the 12 January 1918 article *La critica critica* he accused the first of having «ridotto la dottrina di Marx a [...] una legge naturale, fatalmente verificantesi all'infuori della volontà degli uomini» (GRAMSCI 1978, p. 145),<sup>1</sup> and associated him with the philosopher Bruno Bauer, who Marx attacked in the *Holy Family*. Later on, in the 15 May 1919 article *Leninismo e marxismo di Rodolfo Mondolfo*, he criticised the humanist reading of Marx made by Mondolfo, pointing the finger at his purely «amore per la rivoluzione [...] grammaticale» (*ibidem*, p. 241).<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of such criticism, Gramsci proposed another Marxian interpretation, which was particularly evident in the renowned 24 November 1917 article *La rivoluzione contro il Capitale*, in which he goes beyond simple journalistic comment of the Russian revolution to express his general reading of Marx:

I Bolscevichi, [...] non] hanno compilato sulle opere del Maestro una dottrina esteriore, di affermazioni dogmatiche e indiscutibili. Vivono il pensiero marxista, quello che non muore mai, che è la continuazione del pensiero idealistico italiano e tedesco, e che in Marx si era contaminato di incrostazioni positivistiche e naturalistiche. E questo pensiero pone sempre come massimo fattore di storia non i fatti economici, bruti, ma l'uomo, ma la società degli uomini, degli uomini che si accostano tra di loro [...], sviluppano [...] una volontà sociale, collettiva e comprendono i fatti economici [...] e li adeguano alla loro volontà, finché questa diventa la motrice dell'economia, la plasmatrice della realtà oggettiva.<sup>3</sup>

(*Ibidem*, p. 131)

Despite some residual idealistic influences, Gramsci was considered the most factually correct interpreter of the Marxian work as well as the most true to its spirit.

In particular, his efforts were aimed at bringing historical materialism back to its most authentic significance, derived from the *Theses on Feuerbach* or the *German Ideology*: the idea of a subject-object dialectical process that allows us to trace both a determinist and a voluntary sphere of historical development, even though the first of these remains a logical (as well as an historical) *prius*.<sup>4</sup>

From this point of view, Gramsci was effectively continuing what Antonio Labriola asserted with persistence twenty years before, inasmuch as Labriola's definition of Marxism as a *praxis philosophy* is explicitly mentioned in his latter *Quaderni*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «reduced Marx's theory to a [...] natural law, inevitably occurring in spite of the human will».

<sup>2</sup> Translation: «grammatical love for the revolution».

<sup>3</sup> Translation: «The Bolsheviks [...] did not compile a superficial doctrine of dogmatic and unquestionable affirmations based on the Master's work. They live the Marxist thought, that which never dies, which is the continuation of German and Italian Idealistic thought, which had been corrupted by positivistic and naturalistic encrustations. And this thought always presents as its primary historical factor not ugly economic facts but Man, the societies of men [...] which approach each other, develop [...] a collective social will and understand the economic facts [...] and adjust them to their-own will, until it becomes the economy's motor and the moulder of objective reality [...]».

<sup>4</sup> For similar interpretations of historical materialism, see LABICA 1987. For a detailed analysis of Gramsci's approach to Marxism see also BADALONI 1975.

<sup>5</sup> The importance of Gramsci's works referred to the reception of Marx is stressed, on the Spanish side, by LLUCH 2001.

In conclusion, despite its distance from the sphere of economics, Gramsci's interpretation of Marx shows that even in the late teens of the twentieth century a scientific debate on the *Old Moore* persisted in Italy, albeit with subdued intensity and shifted to philosophical grounds.

From this perspective, the birth of the Fascist Regime, which both repressed the workers' movement and introduced scientific censorship of publications, seems the decisive moment led to its ultimate and involuntary demise.

##### 5. MARX'S RECEPTION IN SPAIN

The 'First Great Depression' of 1875 and the increasing impoverishment of the population led to a change of perspective in the Spanish economic debate: the birth of the first *workmen's association* prompted the ruling classes to change their opinion in favour of State interventionism.

Therefore, the criticism against *laissez-faire* took two dichotomous paths: on the one hand, within the ruling class, it induced a moderate revisionism of the classical economy; on the other hand it assumed the form of a radical attack on capitalism as a consequence of Marx's early diffusion. With regard to the first group, it included the *viraje intervencionista* (interventionist shift) sustained by the conservative political leader Cánovas del Castillo, the Krausist movement which instead linked economy to ethics, and the conservative-liberal Catholic press. In addition to these movements, there was also a particular case of social reformism which had widespread support, *i.e.*, Georgism. It was a gradualist social claim movement, inspired by H. George's *Progress and Poverty*, which led to numerous campaigns in favour of a fairer agricultural system based on a just distribution of the land, though it also condemned socialism. Its peculiarity was to resurrect Loria's economic theory, thanks to the 1904 Spanish translation of the compilation *Problemi sociali contemporanei* and, above all, of *Le basi economiche della costituzione sociale* (3rd edn.). Curiously, even the political implications of Loria's work were considered too radical, so that the reception was largely limited to the *terra libera* (free land) theory, which constituted the movement's theoretical foundation.

Initial academic reaction to the new trends of moderate reformism was rigidly closed, as evidenced by the purge of many Krausist professors in 1875 for their resistance to the Orovio decree (which introduced strict censorship for textbooks).

However, the 1881 change of government ushered in a new intellectual climate, which led to the appointment of Krausist exponents to a number of important academic and political institutions, such as Madrid University and, in particular, the *Comisión de reformas sociales*. The latter was a government committee created on December 1883 in order to investigate Spanish working conditions and, through this, to develop a plan of reform explicitly aimed at avoiding the rise of class-consciousness due to the propaganda of *various social trouble-makers*. Its composition included both Krausist and conservative-interventionist members. The advisory body, which lasted till 1900, was the means through which the 'new trends' were gradually assimilated by the Spanish establishment. Finally, at the end of the nineteenth century interventionist economic theory steadily breached Spanish academics, a remarkable delay when compared to the rest of Europe. The path to this result took spurious and contradictory forms, a far cry from the Italian 1875 'national methodological struggle', which created the environment necessary for the academic reception of Marx.

Moreover, the hegemony with which the *Comisión* ruled for twenty years had the indirect and deleterious effect of preventing academics having any contact with Socialist and Marxist theory, which had in the interim arrived in Spain.

Consequently, the initial diffusion of Marx was due largely to the efforts of Socialist militants, with the result that scientific quality suffered.

##### 5.1. The early militant reception

Due to the aforementioned causes, the first hints of Marx can be traced to the workers' association, and to the growing membership of the First International.

It is customary to accredit the first article about Marx to the Barcelonan workers review «La Federación» (ANONYMOUS 1869). In 1869 it contained a translation of the *Inaugural Address of the Workingmen's International*, in addition to an explanation of what the *International* was, along with a brief portrait of Karl Marx. The same review also published a translation of *The civil war in France* in 1871.

As in the Italian case, even though the initial references to the *Master* were partial and confused, they spawned great popularity, often making mystical and fictional references. This perspective was evident in another article published by the Republican review «La Ilustración republicana y federal» in 1872, which spoke deferentially about *El doctor Carlos Marx, jefe de la Internacional* (ANONYMOUS 1872), while completely misunderstanding even the most basic analytical categories of his work (*e.g.*, labour power, surplus-labour, value, surplus-value...).<sup>1</sup>

Subsequently, when the repercussions of the clash between Marx and Bakunin were felt in Spain, a debate within the *International* was conducted through the columns of two opposing publications: the aforementioned «La Federación» of Barcelona (representing the anarchist wing) and Madrid's «La Emancipación» (representing the Lafarguan-Socialist wing).

It is important to underline this latter element: in Spain, the traditional Marx vs Bakunin schematism turned into a Lafargue vs Bakunin debate. In fact, in 1868 Lafargue was appointed secretary responsible for Spain, by the General Council of the First International. Lafargue was, in those days, a controversial figure from two perspectives: on the one hand, he retained residual traces of his earlier Proudhonian education, while on the other, as a French Socialist, he was influenced by the spurious Marxist works of Guesde and Deville, which were widely diffused in Spain, in large part thanks to him.

Despite this, in 1872 a French copy of the *First book* appeared in Spain, sent by Engels to his correspondent Mesa through the communard Wilmart, who passed through Madrid during his flight to Argentina: Mesa gradually started to translate the book, a few instalments of which (*Introduction* and ch. iv) would be published in «La Emancipación» in the two-year period 1872-1873. Unfortunately, such was the level of repression in Spain that he was forced to abandon the translation and flee abroad: unbelievably, not even one among Mesa's comrades was able to master French, so the work had to be abandoned.

In place of *Capital*, the Spanish Marxists chose to translate into Castilian the *Communist Manifesto* and ENGELS's *True Socialism*, which did not require a superior level of knowledge of the language: both works were published in the Madrid review in 1872.

The activism of the «La Emancipación» group increased during the following ten years and culminated in 1879 with the formation of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. Nevertheless, the lack of intellectual resources within the Party resulted in a weak connection between socialism and Marxism, based primarily on a formal adherence rather than a deep assimilation.

<sup>1</sup> Curiously, the same thing which had happened in Italy, see *Carlo Marx, capo supremo dell'Internazionale*, quoted in FAVILLI 1996, p. 44.

Consequently there was a dearth of works on Marx until 1884, when the *Comisión de Reformas Sociales* sent a questionnaire to the Madrid Socialist section. The Socialist answer was entitled *Informe presentado a la Comisión de Reformas Sociales por la Agrupación Socialista Madrileña* and it was written by Jaime Vera, a doctor and founder of the PSOE whose Socialist inclinations reflected positivist influences.<sup>1</sup> Well aware of the Party's intellectual deficiencies, he transformed the formal opinion requested by the *Comisión* into a Spanish Socialist manifesto, which contained explicit references to Marxian theory. In particular, the first part of the *Informe* contained allusions to *Manifiesto*, *True Socialism*, *Capital's first book*, and also to GUESDE's *Wage law and its consequences*. Vera's work started with accurate definitions of the principal Marxian analytical categories, such as *value*, *surplus value* and *capital*. After that, the author underlined the main contradiction of the capitalist system, that is an increasing *social* production corresponding with a growing individual appropriation: from this contrast both the class struggle and the anarchy of production derive. However, when Vera proceeded to explain these latter concepts, he drifted significantly away from Marx. With regards to the class-struggle – or, to put it better, wage formation – he accepted Guesde's thesis, which was influenced by the Malthusian *iron law of wages*: according to this rule, wages can only fluctuate around the subsistence level, as it depends on the equalization of the demand and supply of labour. Moreover, the anarchy of production, *i.e.*, the dynamics of the capitalist crisis, was also misunderstood by Vera: he capably described its effects but was completely wrong about the causes. Indeed, he accepted the Lassalle and Dühring theory of under-consumption as the triggering event of the crisis. Vera's acknowledgement of the aforementioned authors was an unforeseen consequence of his Guesdian and French readings, which were in turn influenced by the contemporary German debate that had already culminated in ENGELS'S *Anti Dühring* (1877).

The *Informe* came to an end with an intense criticism of the hegemonic classes, which were accused of being in favour of State economic intervention only when their own interests were threatened.

### 5.2. The birth of «El Socialista»

In 1886, Vera's economic and intellectual efforts led to the creation of a new publication, «El Socialista», in order to facilitate the cultural growth of the Socialist militants. To this end, the review started a series of Marx and Engels translations: in 1886-1887 they re-translated ENGELS'S *True Socialism* together with MARX'S *Manifiesto*, *Civil War in France* and the *Inaugural Address of the Workingmen's International*. In addition, they also published Engels' *The Condition of England*.

However, when Socialist Party leaders were faced with the decision of an editorial policy, Vera's proposal – favourable to a strategic alliance with the Republicans – was firmly condemned by the secretary P. Iglesias, who supported an intransigent line.

Seeing that he was defeated, Vera opted for a voluntary separation<sup>2</sup> from the Socialist Party, which was particularly deleterious for the subsequent reception of Marx: soon after, the republican paper *La República* published a translation of a substantial part of the *First book*, thanks to the lawyer Correa Zafrilla. But, as a consequence of their intransigent poli-

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cy, the editors of «El Socialista» chose to ignore the translation, due to their forthcoming publication of G. Deville's *Capital* compendium (published in 1887). Such intransigence was also reflected in the 1891 translation of *The poverty of philosophy*, whose introduction was written by the Socialist leader Mesa. The book was preceded by a letter from Engels to Mesa himself, in which he stressed the importance of fighting (particularly in Spain) against Proudhonism, which represented nothing but a *bourgeois pseudo-socialism*. Consequently, Mesa's Introduction dealt with the necessity of overcoming any residual trace of utopian thought within the Spanish working classes, contrasting in particular the Republican Party and his leaders.

Such intransigence was probably a mistake, at least with regard to the reception of Marx. For instance, even though Deville started his compendium in agreement with Marx (in person), the latter died long before the work was concluded. It was therefore sent to Engels (in order to 'referee' it), who was deeply disappointed by the work because of its mistakes, its simplifications and its excessive Guesdist influences. Thus, he prescribed broad revisions before 'authorising' the publication, but his request was only partially satisfied.

Moreover, ten years later the compendium led to another sensational episode of voluntary censorship. In 1898, the Argentinean Socialist leader J. B. Justo was finally able to translate the entire *First book* into Castilian using the original German edition, thanks to the help of many German workers who had immigrated to Argentina. Even though the book contained a number of mistakes, it was significantly better than Deville's compendium. Moreover, it had been published in Spain thanks to the Socialist printer Antonio García Quejido, although it didn't enjoy widespread diffusion: however, the work was completely ignored by the Socialist world, again in favour of Deville's compendium.

To understand this, one must consider the radical turnaround of policy made in the intervening years by the Socialist leaders in order to address the Party's electoral weakness. The '80s intransigence was completely abandoned and substituted with a shift to a more moderate line renouncing its revolutionary path, thus making a strategic alliance with the Republican Party possible, an option that until then had been stoutly refused. From this point of view, the clear political implications of *Capital* were antithetical to the current socialist line; conversely the strong Guesdist influences in the Deville compendium, although ignored ten years before, constituted an appropriate foundation for the reformist changes within the Spanish Socialist Party.

### 5.3. Marx outside the Socialist circle

Notwithstanding the fragmentary nature of the introduction of Marx's works in Spain, the early militant reception fuelled his popularity to such an extent that both the academic and mainstream cultural universes started to deal with his work, albeit in a very superficial way.

In 1881, Marino Carreras y González published abroad (in order to have a wider audience) *Philosophie de la science économique*, an overview of the different approaches to the political economy. In the chapter «Collectivist socialism», he made a reference to Marx's theory, copying a paragraph (ch. IV, 3) written by Vito Cusumano in his *Le nuove scuole economiche della Germania*.

Four years later, the academic Álvarez Buyilla included in his Political Economy and Statistics course at Oviedo University, a lesson entirely dedicated to the contemporary political economy, in which he presented the collectivism essay, including a reference to Marx. In addition, in 1896 he published a detailed article on the Socialist movement in Spain

<sup>1</sup> Vera used to say that his first reading of the *Manifiesto* coincided with his university course in anatomy, and how similar he found Marx's class divisions with the subject of his undergraduate study. See CASADO 2001, p. 799.

<sup>2</sup> Vera only rejoined the Party in 1891, in a shielded position. See CASADO 2001, p. 801.

in the Italian journal «La Riforma sociale», showing a remarkable sympathy to the political movement:

in Ispagna [...] esse idee socialiste [sono giunte] a penetrare con impulso dominatore [...] conseguenza indeclinabile dell'emancipazione politica del popolo, il quale [...] non può non sentire vivamente la mancanza di mezzi materiali per il soddisfacimento delle sue necessità.

(ÁLVAREZ BUYLLA 1896, p. 1)<sup>1</sup>

After that, the liberal-catholic philosopher Cristóbal Botella also dealt with Marx and Engels in a series of articles published by the cultural review «Revista Contemporánea» in the period 1887-1889, as well as in his Moral Science course at Madrid University. His approach was decidedly critical: after brief references to the *anarchy of production* and the *class struggle* based on Deville's *Capital* compendium, he accused Marxism of being against the (liberal) natural laws of the political economy. Marxism was nothing but an attempt to subordinate the economy to *artificial laws*, according to which the State must have control of the whole economic system: from this perspective, Marx had to be considered as merely continuing the work of F. List.

On the contrary, an article by Pedro Dorado Montero (1891) defined socialism as a movement aimed at restoring the *natural laws* of political economy, with particular regard to the distribution of income. In order to justify his assertion, he made explicit reference to Loria's *Karl Marx* necrology, which (according to him) contained the most correct and impartial interpretation of Marx's theory, i.e., the positivist one.

The increased interest in Marx was also evident within catholic elite circles: the III Spanish National Catholic Conference, celebrated in Seville in 1892, included many presentations dealing with his work. Most of them were vulgar and ideological attacks on Marx himself, accusing him of being a Jewish-Mason who represented the culmination of all anti-Christian traditions, i.e., materialism and rationalism.

There was also a rough attempt to present an economic criticism of Marx's theory, made by the Marquis of Valle-Ameno. According to him, Marx's error was to suppose that the commodity was the product of only Labour, that is:

$$P(\text{Commodity}) = T(\text{Labour})$$

In reality, this equation is inaccurate, and must be substituted with the following:

$$P(\text{Commodity}) = N(\text{Nature}) + T(\text{Manual Labour}) + T'(\text{Intellectual Labour}) + T''(\text{Management Labour}) + C(\text{Capital})$$

As a result, Marx's position is a fallacy, due to the elimination of the factors  $N$ ,  $T'$ ,  $T''$ ,  $C$ .

Nonetheless, he concluded, the labourer's condition deserved attention, in particular favouring the activity of the trade unions.

This last sentiment was also articulated by the academic G. de Azcárate, in his 1893 inaugural speech at Madrid University, in which he presented the problem of the working class condition related to the more general 'social question'. In order to explain the origin of the problem, Azcárate drew a parallel between Marx and the Italian jurist E. Cimbali: for Marx he referred to the three phases of the industrial evolution (simple mercantile society-manufacture society-capitalist society), while for Cimbali he described the three phases of Civ-

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «Socialist ideals could penetrate and spread into a dominating diffusion in Spain [...] as an unavoidable consequence of people's political emancipation, as they can no more ignore the lack of material means necessary to achieve their basic needs».

il Law (primitive phase-individualist phase-reconciliation phase). Their views on capitalism, however, were in opposition: Marx considered it a transitory period of the evolution towards socialism, while Cimbali stressed the necessity of a harmonic reconciliation of the capitalist society. According to Azcárate, Cimbali was right; the Marxian mistake derived from its dependence on a teleological theory, due to its Hegelian and positivist bases.

#### 5.4. The academic reception

Despite these initial signs, it was only at the beginning of the xx century that a new trend began to emerge in Spanish universities: German historicism finally established a presence in the country, overcoming the obstacles presented by both the liberal and Krausist academics.

In 1904, economist Flores de Lemus was appointed to the chair of Political Economy and Public Economy at Barcelona University, submitting a *trabajo de firma* entitled *El Problema de la Circulación del Capital en Marx*. A graduate in Law, he undertook his postgraduate training in Germany (at Tübinga and Berlin Universities) where he had classes with many renowned economists such as G. Schmoller, A. H. G. Wagner and, most notably, Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz.

The new academic showed a scientific interest in Marx, similar to the Italian *vincolisti*: though rejecting Socialism (he was member of the Conservative Party), his sojourn in Germany gave him the opportunity to enter the European cultural debate. His experience (unusual for contemporary Spain) allowed him to get in touch with positivism and an eclectic approach to economics, so much so that he defined himself «both a Positivist and a mathematician».

This attitude was reflected in his professorial dissertation, in which he considered Marx's theory of capital circulation lacking generality, for, rewriting the simple reproduction scheme in the following terms:

$$\begin{array}{l} I \quad c + v + m \\ II_a \quad (c-x) + m \\ II_b \quad (c-x) + m \end{array}$$

(where:  $v+m$  is the sum of the productive means;  $c$  is the means of consumption;  $x$  the part of  $c$  attributable to capitalists;  $I$  is the branch of production;  $II_a$  the branch of workers' consumption; and  $II_b$  the branch of capitalists' consumption) it was evident that:

es condición necesaria y suficiente que los terminos del esquema [...] sean simetricos respecto de su diagonal.

(FLORES DE LEMUS 1976, p. 468)<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, according to Flores de Lemus, Marx was not considering the general case of capital circulation, but a special one, based on the assumption that:

$$(II_a) m > (II_b) v$$

Despite this, the academic concluded his dissertation with a tribute to Marx:

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «It is a sufficient and necessary condition for the terms of the scheme to be symmetric with respect to their diagonal».

He preferido [...] yo, el más reaccionario de los economistas españoles, en rendimiento espiritual a Marx, seguir la huella profunda que su genio dejara en este campo de la ciencia económica, rectificando la pequeña desviación.

(*Ibidem*, p. 471)<sup>1</sup>

He consequently asserted the need to study *all* economic theories, including that of Socialism, in order to become a good economist, making this recommendation to his colleague, Vidal y Guardiola.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, his university course treated many *Capital* themes: although Flores suffered a sort of 'stage fright' which made him ineffective in lectures before a large audience, he exposed Marx's theory to an increasing number of students, thus permitting its dispersion after a long period in obscurity. Besides this, Flores set an authoritative example within academic circles so that many other courses began to include Marx, such as that of his correspondent Vidal y Guardiola.

At the same time, the volume of scientific publications grew: economist F. Bernis published a book entitled *Carlos Marx* in 1912, while in 1915 the Murcian academic Ramón Carande translated Tugan-Baranovsky's *Theoretical foundations of Marxism*. Carande's interest in Marx was a consequence of his progressive approach to the Socialist trade union CGT, before his subsequent entry into the Spanish Socialist Party. In the book's preface, he stressed the importance of studying Karl Marx the philosopher and social scientist, whether or not one accepted his political proposals.

This view was typical of most academics that dealt with Marxism: though constituting undoubted progress, it was insufficient to spark an *interpretative* debate on Marx. On the contrary, the interest in Marx was limited to a *descriptive* exposition of his theoretical foundations, and their analytical level was generally low.

There are two primary reasons for this limited discussion: firstly, from a theoretical point of view both Ricardo's theory and marginalism were unknown; a gradual reception of Ricardo's theory only started after the beginning of the twentieth century, while marginalism was only introduced to Spain after the 1938 *coup d'Etat*.

Secondly, from a political point of view, the 1917 Russian Revolution (which was not well received by the Spanish establishment and was considered a direct consequence of Marx's theory) as well as the rise of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in 1923 led to a sudden change in the intellectual climate, and was deeply influenced by the economic Corporativism of the nascent Italian fascist movement.<sup>3</sup>

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Spain and Italy represented a very unique case: although their identical levels of industrialization, as well as their assonant political contexts (except for the role played by anarchism), relegated both countries to the margins of contemporary Europe, their reception of Marx was completely different.

<sup>1</sup> Translation: «Although I am the most reactionary among the Spanish economists, in spiritual honour of Marx, I preferred to follow the deep footprint that his genius has left in this field of economic science, limiting myself to making some small adjustments».

<sup>2</sup> Cf. VIDAL 1908, p. 217, quoted in ROCA ROSELL 2001, p. 835.

<sup>3</sup> See SÁNCHEZ HORMIGO, 2008.

The academic clash between Loria and Antonio Labriola, the 1990s debate, marginalist-socialist revisionism, and young Gramsci's contributions were an indication of the remarkable vitality of Italian Marxism. Even though they were at times excessively critical and eclectic, the Italian works analysed crucial topics of Marx's theory and showed a thorough knowledge of the texts, which, in addition, were often studied in their original language.

On the contrary, an out-and-out Spanish debate on Marx never occurred; it was instead replaced by a series of publications on Marx, characterized by a sub-par analytical level as well as a suffocating connection with the political situation.

Due to its cultural isolation, the Spanish reception was at best limited to a *descriptive* reading of the Marxian work, unlike the *interpretative* Italian disputation.

As a consequence, there were no reciprocal influences among the two Marxisms: despite a few episodic references to Cusumano, the only Italian involved in the debate in Italy who was translated into Castilian and diffused in Spain was Achille Loria, but, paradoxically, he had practically no influence on the Spanish Marxists.

Thus, we are not of the same mind as prof. Gasch, whose opinion was mentioned at the beginning of this paper: the Italian reception of Marx was far more widespread and meaningful when compared to that in Spain, where it was characterized by an ignorance of fundamental foreign economic works, such as Ricardian theory.

However, rather than being an unexpected outcome, such a result can be regarded a predictable consequence of the *material* conditions under which the Spanish analysis of Marx took place.

Conversely, it highlights the substance and the exceptionality of the Italian debate, thus putting in perspective the primary critical conclusions regarding Marx's reception in Italy, quoted in our introduction.

In spite of Italy's economic marginality, the extraordinary richness of its cultural climate (when compared to other un-industrialised European countries)<sup>1</sup> produced the 'miracle' of a flourishing Marxism, which effectively lasted until the fascist regime (though in decreasing intensity after the rise of marginalism).

Even if the Italian debate did not reach the heights of those in contemporary Germany and France, just as it flourished in those countries (the industrial vanguards of the contemporary Europe), Italian Marxism also flourished, and included remarkable interpreters such as Antonio Labriola and Antonio Gramsci.

It is enough to look at the Spanish case to understand that the very existence of such a debate was to be anything but 'taken for granted' in an undeveloped country of those days.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the case of Portugal, referred to which our conclusions perfectly hold: prof. Carlos Bastien described the reception of Marx in such country as weak, deeply contrasted by the diffusion of Proudhonism, scarcely linked to the intellectual elites and based on simplified texts, such as Deville's compendium. In his words, such elements show that «Portugal não teve o seu Labriola» (BASTIEN 1997, pp. 43-44).

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the identical levels of industrialization and the assonant political contexts, Marx's reception in Italy and Spain was completely different and showed no reciprocal influences. The Italian works analysed crucial topics of Marx's theory and highlighted a thorough knowledge of the texts, where-

as an out-and-out Spanish debate on Marx never occurred. However, such a result can be regarded a predictable consequence of the *material* conditions under which the Spanish analysis of Marx took place. Conversely, it highlights the substance and the exceptionality of the Italian debate, thus putting in perspective the primary critical conclusions regarding Marx's reception in Italy. In spite of Italy's economic marginality, the extraordinary richness of its cultural climate produced the 'miracle' of a flourishing Marxism, which effectively lasted until the fascist regime.

KEYWORDS: Karl Marx; *Das Kapital*; works reception; Italy and Spain.

#### DIFFERENTI DESTINI IN CIRCOSTANZE ASSONANTI:

#### LA RICEZIONE DI MARX IN ITALIA E SPAGNA

(1870-1923)

#### SOMMARIO

A dispetto dell'identico livello di sviluppo economico e del contesto politico assonante, la ricezione dell'opera di Marx in Italia e Spagna ha avuto esiti completamente diversi, non mostrando influenze degne di nota. Mentre i lavori italiani hanno ampiamente affrontato tematiche cruciali dell'analisi marxiana (evidenziando una conoscenza significativa dei testi originali), un vero e proprio dibattito su Marx non è mai esistito in Spagna. Del resto, un tale risultato può essere legittimamente letto come una prevedibile conseguenza delle condizioni materiali entro le quali i primi lettori spagnoli dell'opera di Marx si muovevano. Di riflesso, esso sottolinea *a contrari* la rilevanza e per certi versi l'eccezionalità del dibattito italiano su Marx, ridimensionando le principali conclusioni, prevalentemente critiche, che su di esso sono state sin qui tratte. Nonostante la marginalità e l'arretratezza economica del nostro Paese, il suo straordinario contesto culturale produsse il miracolo di un fecondo dibattito marxista, che di fatto durò sino al fascismo.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Karl Marx; *Das Kapital*; ricezione di opere; Italia e Spagna.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: A11, B14, B30