

Notes from Amfissa

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Self-management

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It is time for new meanings to emerge from the word 'self-management'. Those of forty years ago are no longer valid, time is always happy to be bad counsel for anyone putting their curiosity on hold. Let's proceed brutally, without awakening the sporadic interest of enthusiastic readers of economics. The fact is that even for capital this charlatan's art has no strong points, its so-called laws being no more than rhetorical empirical justification of what capital has already accomplished in terms of massacres and destruction. No economic theories can be recruited into the revolutionary field. Anyone who started off from this so-called science to build a 'better world', anarchists included, ended up with a disturbing abomination. The reader will not find any spluttering of economic theorems with all the air of speaking the truth solidified in practice in this old book, and even less in these new notes.

But given that a great burden of economic theory weighs upon our shoulders, let's carry on. It does not take much talent to have an interest in economy, it suffices to read the business practises of capital who, yes, must have talent; economists don't need it. It is the entrepreneur that paves the way, knife between the teeth, snapping and biting, winning and losing; economists often sit on the bandwagon, but as its slaves.

An economic theory is based on productive practice. If the latter is modified due to the needs of the market and the exploitation that capital imposes everywhere, the theory falls and another takes its place. Even self-management - but which? - has been absorbed by capital and completely emptied of meaning. Of course, that is not the self-management we are talking about, and we shall see why. So to call things by their name, it was more a question of co-management than self-management, but as confusion adds grist to the mill, better to remain ambiguous. The German and Swedish comrades did it thirty years ago. The Italian theoretical experiences, this book and a modesty that is not congenial to me aside, are of unique squalor. Enough chatter, there's a good method. Fobbing off recuperative or repressive instruments as new-fangled revolutionary ones is annoying chatter.

Anyone suffering exploitation is in a painful state of slavery. The worker is the modern slave no different from the slave of antiquity. Providing him with a beautiful theory to comfort and encourage him means to spit in his face.

No indulgence for the propagators of other people's misery who, in helping those who wield the bludgeons with which to keep the work of the slaves moving, foster their privileged condition. They are the real wretches, even worse than the exploiters who at least erect the factory sign at the entrance to the slaughterhouse.

If it were a science, the economy would have to conform to the world of production and follow the general progression of science, with all its about turns and disequilibrium, approximations and straw puppets. Instead it still thinks to measure the world with its formulae, now no more than ridiculous exercitations of manuals.

I have painstakingly followed the comical vicissitudes of this flimsy science over the past ten years and found no theory worth of the name in it. The Modigliani-Tarantelli theorem is a perfect example. Give yourself a long-term government that is capable of making reforms and you can renew exploitation through flexibility. Don't worry, the rest - globalisation in the first place - will follow. So long as there are no brusque movements, otherwise those under the lash might resent the blows they are receiving.

The permanent miseria of the economy could be summed up in the concept of crisis, which does not even deserve an actual theory. The various physiological dysfunctions of capital have always been seen as 'crises' and for this purpose cures perhaps worse than the disease have been suggested. The great thing is that some authoritarian revolutionaries, especially those coming from marxism, still support this absurdity, and with them more than a few anarchists who, from the goodness of their heart, are precisely devoid of serious studies of economy. Not that these studies could ever make any difference, but they certainly allow reflection that a quick glance does not allow. There seems to be a hindrance in approaching the main science of capital, not realising that once the outer coating - nearly always mathematical - has been peeled off the rest is absolute nudity.

Perhaps I have sinned of excessive caution when speaking of economy in the past, and looking at the organisational problems of self-management with the eye of today, we can trace this caution, but now you can tell it like it is. Let's throw caution to the winds.

Self-management should not be confused with self-determination. This superposition has caused unnecessary damage. Self-determination is that which the will continually imposes on the individual, tirelessly, like an unstoppable

pneumatic hammer. You must want, this is the order of the will, this will and yourself. A closed circle. Blindness. In this circle the values, the essence of life and the positivity of any project that gives meaning to life are concentrated. But the circle remains closed. On what can I base my self-determination in fact? Obviously myself, with all my limitations. So these become the unit of measure for judging the world that surrounds me and I believe I am the centre of and the concentration of this world. In general, whoever thinks like this is – and wants to be – always right. Sad destiny of any closed circle. That reaches automatic perfection in the idiot who, not being able to do anything else, self-determines their own idiocy.

Self-determining oneself is therefore almost the antithesis of self-managing oneself. We will see in the course of these pages, for the moment its necessary to point out that the first concept closes itself in the will while the second opens itself to affinity. The will idolizes itself and steams forward like a train, it wants to want to the end. Giving it free access to our life means building ourselves a doing machine. Affinity seeks the other and is disposed to accept it into their most intimate circle, insofar as this aspect of self-management has only ever been dealt with in passing with preference for productive self-management and of the struggle.

Self-determination is a strong magnifying glass turned inward, it digs and sections, but only what is there, it cannot take inside what is outside. That produces a narrow vision of the world because it is precise and centralised, moreover based on the possession of truth. The other, and its eventual chatter, are remote from me, I don't even get the pleasure of considering him stupid, so not in affinity with me. I put, determining myself alone, another milestone that I cannot move away from, I am the one that holds the game and the evidence and the seething of the occurrences do not disturb me. My self-determined cornice closes me up and consoles me, makes me feel safe. Who determines himself is prisoner of himself, moves in a territory sown and ploughed only by his own will. There is nothing else.

Affinity with the other is not the collectivity, the world dominated by capital, but is a point of reference that I am prepared to take into consideration. I don't keep my feet in politics and my head in self-management, I make an experiment that wants to be different.

But what do I want this diversity to be? That is the point. The self-management of production is only a pale reflex of generalised self-management. When the first was realised it was an experiment of self-exploitation, certainly not liberation. The self-management of the struggle, for its part, is the construction of the instrument of attack, the distancing of hairy fictitious collaboration, revolutionary project, etc. But diversity?

Well, diversity is further beyond, still more. Diversity is chaos, the refusal of rules, anarchy. But how can I bring chaos into production and the struggle if on the one hand I need means of production and markets, and on the other a project of attack? I can't. That is why any discourse on self-management is destined to distance itself from diversity, a coming to terms with chaos, to organise and produce models of behaviour.

But the important aspect of chaos, as far as we are concerned, is bearing in mind that in the course of self-management not everything can be taken back to the productive models that capital has accustomed us to or to the traditional trade union forms of struggle.. In self-management there is a swarming of formal and substantial novelty, of forces and projects, of intertwining between production and destruction, being doing and acting, between giving life to new products and attacking the class enemy and destroying old products, accumulated wealth and unshakable capitalist habits. So, we need to open the door to the different, also the differently monstrous, that which the codified normality of capital made us consider monstrous. And that can come about producing differently different objects and struggling differently. Between the old models and the new, the old theories and the new, there must be a radical not a benevolent delimitation, reciprocal condescendence. This is a new concept of affinity in the struggle and self-managed collaboration in production, all based on the gap between the struggle that one distinguishes but does not contradict production, in fact in this it mirrors itself and finds elements of development and vice versa. It happens then that self-management reflects a new and potent transformation of natural reality, a reality that now cannot be even more seriously distinguished from the blind productivism of capital.

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