CHAPTER 6

The Relationship between Philosophy and Praxis in History

In his investigation of the development of the concept of praxis in the history of thought, which he presents through an analysis of some of its ‘fundamental milestones’, Sánchez Vázquez turns his gaze toward the philosophical traditions that Karl Marx also had before him: namely, those predominant in the West. He sets out, then, from ancient Greek sources (Plato and Aristotle), advances onward to the Renaissance (for example, Leonardo da Vinci and his opinions with regard to the theory of art, Leon Battista Alberti, Giordano Bruno, Niccolò Machiavelli, as well as two utopians of renaissance humanism, Tomasso Campanella and Thomas More); he then moves on to bourgeois ‘consciousness of productive praxis’ (Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and the Encyclopedists) and touches upon Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s negative consciousness of praxis, to finally arrive – through a triple path that passes through classical English political economy to Adam Smith and David Ricardo; on the philosophical terrain by German Idealism (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and, in passing, also Johann Gottlieb Fichte) and anthropological materialism (Ludwig Feuerbach), as well as briefly referring to the influences of early French sociology (Claude Henri Saint-Simon) – to the classics of the ‘philosophy of praxis’, Marx and Engels.

As for Marxism, Sánchez Vázquez’s historical sketch covers Nikolai Bukharin, Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, Adam Schaff, Karel Kosík, Mikhail N. Rutkevisch, Gaidukov, G. A. Davydova, and F. Eles, as well as the Yugoslavian ‘Praxis’ group.

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97 Sánchez Vázquez 1980b, p. 30 [this phrase does not appear in the English translation – translator].
98 Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, p. 11.
100 Sánchez Vázquez 1977a pp. 17–21.
101 Sánchez Vázquez 1977a pp. 22ff.
102 Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, pp. 23–30.
103 Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, pp. 30–3, above all p. 30, notes 42–4. The following people belonged to this ‘Praxis’ group: Gajo Petrović, Mihailo Marcović, Predrag Vranicki, Rudi Supek, Danko Grljić, and Milan Kangrga. Sánchez Vázquez, whose work has been translated several times in Yugoslavia and who participated in a wide range of theoretical debates there, mentions, on this topic, Karel Kosík’s Dialéctica de lo concreto, prologue by Adolfo Sánchez Vázquez.
He discusses Lenin,\textsuperscript{104} Antonio Gramsci, and Louis Althusser in more detail.\textsuperscript{105} After completing this brief introductory tour of the history of the theory, Sánchez Vázquez enters into more detail in the first part of his book – entitled ‘Fundamental philosophical sources for the study of praxis’ – into analysis of the concept of praxis in Hegel,\textsuperscript{106} Feuerbach,\textsuperscript{107} Marx,\textsuperscript{108} and Lenin.\textsuperscript{109}

In our study, we will follow Sánchez Vázquez’s introductory sketch of the history of the philosophical concept of praxis, taking only as examples his explanations concerning Greek antiquity in order then to turn in more depth to his analysis of the Marxian concept of praxis through the relationship between praxis and knowledge, especially in the \textit{Theses on Feuerbach}.

\textbf{a \hspace{1cm} Antiquity}

Sánchez Vázquez traces the following sketch of the philosophical concept of praxis in Antiquity: in ancient Greece, prevailing philosophy ‘ignored … the practical world’\textsuperscript{110} or avoided a more detailed discussion as well as the contact with praxis, precisely because it did not perceive in it anything more than the everyday consciousness that we just subjected to critique, but rather only

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\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{104} Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, pp. 28–9.
\textsuperscript{105} On Sánchez Vázquez’s discussion of Gramsci and Althusser, see in this book the chapter: ‘Critique of Some Marxist Conceptions of Knowledge’ (pp. 153ff).
\textsuperscript{106} Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, pp. 40–69.
\textsuperscript{107} Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, pp. 70–91.
\textsuperscript{108} Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, pp. 92–147.
\textsuperscript{10} Note to the edition in English: Sánchez Vázquez’s chapter on ‘The concept of praxis in Lenin’ is not included in the English-language edition of \textit{The Philosophy of Praxis}, as this translation is based on the first edition of \textit{Filosofía de la praxis}, in which the Lenin chapter is not included.]
\textsuperscript{110} Sánchez Vázquez 1977a, p. 11. It is not entirely correct to say that the practical world was ‘ignored’ in ancient Greek philosophy. Despite later clarifications made by Sánchez Vázquez (see p. 119n116 in this book), it is worth recalling, for example, Plato’s manifestations in the \textit{Politeia} regarding administration and life in a large city. See Plato, \textit{Politeia}, 372c–373d.
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