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THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE FREE INDIVIDUAL:
CHIAROMONTE'S REMARKS ON THE NATURE
OF CONTEMPORARY TYRANNY

1. *The name of death is Fascism*

In 1935, in the Italian journal *Quaderni di Giustizia e Libertà* – the periodical of the homonymous anti-fascist movement –, Chiaromonte publishes the article 'La morte si chiama fascismo'. For a year now, forced to take refuge as an exile in Paris together with many other anti-fascist intellectuals (see Bianco 1999; Panizza 2017; La Porta 2019; Manica 2021), Chiaromonte makes a sharp criticism of what led to the loss of freedom in the Italian peninsula. In his criticism of fascism, Chiaromonte emphasises many fundamental characteristics of freedom that go far beyond criticism of dictatorial regimes. Fascism is the central element from which deep reflections on mass society, democracy and freedom arise (see Bianco 2006; Sacco 1976; Bresciani 2014; Bordes 2021). Chiaromonte already glimpsed in fascism a characteristic that also pervades contemporary societies. He realised that in mass societies the measure of the qualities of a person, a political party, an ideology or any other category is 'success' (Chiaromonte 1945: 21; Cfr. Fedele 2009; Panizza 2004). No matter how vile the people who pursue it or what means they use to achieve it. Masses are always fascinated by those who achieve success and somehow distinguish themselves from others. Success is the unit of measurement by which the common man assesses qualities. Mussolini and the new ruling class fully represented this principle. They were little men who were successful through a series of historical events. Everything that happened afterwards was a concatenation of events linked to success such as power and with it the

transformation of the state, the replacement of politics with administration and law with command.

By 1935, Italian democracy had long since died. However, there is one useful thing dead bodies can be used for. Dead bodies can be analysed to find the evil that led to their death. In this case, it was Italian democracy and the analysis of the evil that led to its death, namely fascism, is a useful means to see how a state fails. A state fails, according to Chiaromonte, when it does not grasp the deeper meaning of the term freedom. According to him, freedom is what is guaranteed so that further freedom can be gained (Chiaromonte 1945: 26). This is what the state must do to be truly democratic. The state must gradually grant freedoms that are truly such, i.e., progressively allowing the state's transformation into the interest of all. The mistake made by liberal democracies that allowed fascism to take power was precisely that of bestowing freedoms to manipulate the masses. This attitude was already indicative of an absolute or at least paternalistic state. Fascism found a breeding ground in the souls of democracies. What it did was nothing more than change the political order. As Chiaromonte states: «Il fascismo non sostituiva uno Stato liberale, ma uno già totalitario suo malgrado. I motivi in base ai quali si fa funzionare lo stato dittatoriale sono gli stessi che vegliavano in sostanza al funzionamento dello Stato cosiddetto liberale: la proprietà, il «bene della Nazione», il totemismo patriottico, la caserma, la morale borghese» (Ivi: 36). Thus, Fascism was nothing more than the visible outgrowth of evil present in the textures of society. Tyrannies are the political form of oppression embedded in facts and things (Ivi: 41) that already exist before tyrannies become real. Italian and German dictatorships were typical forms of the phenomenon that arose when the contradictions in a people's life had no solution other than using force. These forces emerged when the diverse motives of the masses were no longer mediated through the appropriate instruments of democratic life. Thus, instead of shaping the state according to the reason of the many, the many were subjected to a single force.

But, as Chiaromonte points out, modern tyrannies can not rely solely on force. According to him, dictatorships could not be exercised in any other way than by enslaving all in the name

of all. To do this, they need more than just force. They need to refer to abstract concepts so vague that everyone can identify with them. In this way, differences are reduced, and all mass-producing mechanisms are accelerated. So when democratic societies are in crisis because a multitude of reasons can not find an appropriate voice and representation in its institutions, the only possible lifeline is the myth. Myth is what fuels hope; it is what appeals to the most irrational character of the masses. Tyrants are aware of this and create myths all the time. The myth *par excellence* of fascism is that of the salvation of the nation, because in every myth – when there is something or someone to be saved – there is a need for a hero. This is a perfect justification for the presence of a leader, a guide, or a dictator. The deification of the leader, as Chiaromonte states, «è una necessità meccanica» (Ivi: 44).

However, tyrants do not realise they have given birth to a dead dictatorship. They do not understand the irreducibility of a fundamental human need, i.e. freedom. Chiaromonte makes a very insightful observation about freedom and its suppression in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. He states that: «Il male non è che il fascismo tolga le “libertà democratiche”: il male è che elimina fatti vitali: l’associazione, l’opinione, il modo di rappresentare e far valere gl’interessi concreti degl’individui e dei gruppi, mentre non elimina dei *veleni*: la potenza del danaro, l’oppressione dei costumi, l’ipocrisia, la sciocchezza e lo sfruttamento sistemati al riparo delle tradizioni» (Ivi: 47). Democratic freedoms stem from man’s innate need for freedom. Freedoms of thought, expression, press, association, etc. are tools that in a democratic society allow the individual to give shape to his energy, his will to think and give meaning to his life. This distinction between freedom in the fullest sense and democratic freedoms is a very important difference. In Chiaromonte’s mind, human freedom and all its dimensions must find its fulfilment in the institutions of the state. Indeed, in the democratic state, it is necessary to create appropriate structures so that human energies can find a means for realisation in society. For this reason, dictatorships arise already dead. Instead of increasing the means for the growth of human energies, they eliminate vital facts.

However, there is one element able to balance the need to express this vital energy. This element is passivity. The problem with passivity is that it masks the need to express certain individual energies. One of the most problematic characteristics of passivity is that it is not a product of dictatorships. It is not an invention of dictatorships but an element, as Chiaromonte emphasises, inherent with the rise of the modern state and industrialism (*Ibidem*), which is only later exploited by fascism. Modern industrialisation and all the social and political changes that contributed to the creation of the modern state are the cause of this passivity. They produced functional and passive masses. These masses are what distinguish modern states from ancient autocratic states. Functional masses are passive organisms that no longer recognise themselves with any defined interest. Functional mass is a shapeless body where everything is mixed and may be used for any purpose (Ivi: 48). The passivity of the undefined masses, as a product of modernity, is a characteristic element of both totalitarian and democratic regimes. The passivity of the masses and thus their functionality has some common characteristics. They are the absence of an identity, an ideal and the necessary resources to put into practice an effective change towards an improvement of one's condition. One of the possible outcomes of passivity is a reverberation of religious and irrational instincts. Chiaromonte expresses this feeling well with the term «fattaccio provvidenziale» (Chiaromonte 1932: 32). The expectation of an act of Providence is one of the distinguishing features of the passive mass. It represents the people's abdication to change their condition. An act of Providence is a desired and unexpected change that occurs when there is no solution and all possibilities are exhausted. Not just the masses but also intellectuals of all political orientations are victims of this blunder of reason. Indeed, as Chiaromonte rightly points out in his review of Vita-Finzi's interesting book *Le delusioni della libertà* (1961) many pre-fascist intellectuals looked to fascism as a solution to their dissatisfaction with the liberal state and all the values that represented it. The most striking case is that of Croce¹.

¹ Many studies have been devoted to the relationship between Croce and fascism. A small but significant number are listed here: Spirito – Volpicelli – Volpi-

Croce, who certainly can not be listed as a proponent of dictatorships, was nevertheless part of that whole circle of intellectuals who were disillusioned with freedom. Their disillusionment was not related to the abstract concept of freedom, but to how it had been put into practice through the only institution that stood for it at that historical moment, namely the liberal state. To some extent, the liberals of the time were also architects or at least instruments that contributed to the rise of fascism. Croce's criticism of Masonic Europe and his exaltation of violence (Chiaromonte 1961: 622) are evidence of a disappointed liberal. Chiaromonte's criticism of Croce and the other intellectuals aimed at highlighting the superficiality with which they considered the weight their words could have in a passive mass waiting for providential change². However, reliance on providential intervention is also dangerous for those hoping for a dictatorship's fall. The case of Italy is once again illustrative. Chiaromonte criticises all those anti-fascist movements that see the fall of fascism as the first and most important objective to be achieved without having clear prospects in mind for the future. As he states:

Di fronte a tanta menzogna, tanta ignominia e tanta meschinità si difonde facilmente, anche se non sempre esplicito, lo stato d'animo che conduce a dirsi: «ben venga qualsiasi altro sistema, qualsiasi altro regime! Tutto è preferibile al fascismo!». Stato d'animo altrettanto legittimo, inoppugnabile come grido al cuore, quanto – a mio parere – letale alla causa di un antifascismo efficiente. Oserei anzi dire che tale stato d'animo costituisce, di fatto, una delle forze d'inerzia che sostengono il regime (Chiaromonte 1932: 31).

Even those who were dissatisfied with the liberal states and the abominations of the world war must have shared such impatience for change. If the future can be worse than the present – as it was for all those who wished for a change in the liberal state –, this does not exclude the possibility of it happening again. This is not a defence of the totalitarian regimes that preceded the reconstruction of European democracies. It is rather

celli (1929); Bobbio (1955); Benedetti (1967); De Frede (1982); Cingari (2003).

² For more details about the role of the intellectual in history see Siciliano (1972); Abel (1986); Bettiza (1997); De Michelis (2021).

an important lesson on the meaning of history and the exercise of freedom that Chiaromonte tries to communicate to future generations. History is not always progressing. People living in liberal societies before the rise of dictatorships enjoyed freedoms conquered during the progress of Western civilisation. The expansion of freedoms moved along with progress related to the population's well-being and scientific and technological advancement. Whereas the achievements of science and technology hardly ever take a step backwards, the same is not true for those related to politics. This is why freedom is never a final victory and it is always necessary to keep an eye on its safety. Freedom is not an abstraction, but is the practical application of principles. People can not be passive elements in the life of a society because some freedoms may be gained while others may be lost. The establishment of dictatorships is incontrovertible proof of this truth.

In Chiaromonte's view, freedom forms and articulates within the weave of social relations (Chiaromonte 1947: 90), a lesson learnt from his friend and mentor Andrea Caffi³. The construction of ever wider social relations is what gives ever richer meanings to the concept of freedom. The dynamism and change of society require a continuous redefinition of the concept of freedom. It is a natural instance coming from the bottom, from individuals modifying and implementing the organisation of their social relations. To some extent, Chiaromonte is very close to Proudhon's thesis. Indeed, by evoking Proudhon's valuable contribution to the idea of freedom, Chiaromonte claims «Multiply your associations and be free» (Chiaromonte 1945: 26). Since true freedom is an expression of an individual's vital energies and the task of politics is to harmonise freedoms and allow them to grow, freedom can never be imposed from above. Freedom is generated by the dynamism of the population and thus by their continuous relationships which in turn require continuous codifications of freedom. What emerges from Chiaromonte's brief article 'Appunto sulla libertà' is a very im-

³ «The human individual – the conscious person – is not conceivable except as a “social being” integrated into a community, cultivated, provided with modes of thought and articulated expression by this society in which he is born, grows and dies, [...]». (Caffi 1970: 6).

portant fact concerning the relationship between population dynamism and freedom. According to him, freedom is something that goes far beyond its theorisation (Chiaromonte 1935: 3). This implies the spontaneous nature of freedom which goes beyond the theorisation of even those political parties that advocate freedom. Politics, and therefore political parties, should not stand for particular freedoms but represent freedom in general. This freedom is that which implies the achievement of further freedoms and thus the inclusion of the entire population. It is a need for freedom that comes from the bottom and is only later codified by politics. An active and dynamic population can not obtain true freedom in any other way because the theorisation of freedom and its imposition from above can never exhaust the ever-changing need for freedom. Taking up Arendt's reflections on authority⁴, Chiaromonte interprets freedom as an area whose issues can only be solved practically and by the agreement of the many (Chiaromonte 1958: 812-814).

2. Threats to freedom: from the East to the West

Chiaromonte is a critical spectator⁵ who recognises the permanent threats to freedom in every age and society. His ongo-

⁴ Chiaromonte refers to Arendt's article 'Che cos'è l'autorità' (1957). Arendt's reflections are then taken up and deepened in Arendt (1961).

⁵ The reference to Chiaromonte as a 'critical spectator' is borrowed from the title of the last and already mentioned work dedicated to him *Chiaromonte. Lo spettatore critico. Politica, filosofia, letteratura* (2021). Chiaromonte's role as a critical spectator is important not only in the national but also in the international context. His character, both human and intellectual, fascinated everyone who knew him and his ideas. During his numerous travels to France, North Africa and United States – often due to historical contingencies –, he came into contact with many of the personalities who would influence European and international political thought such as Albert Camus, Hannah Arendt, George Orwell and many of the members of the *New York Intellectuals* group. His interests, which ranged from politics to theatre and literature (he was also close friend of Alberto Moravia and Ignazio Silone), enabled him to cast an all-round critical look at the problems that afflicted Western culture. The sharpness of his criticism and his intellectual impartiality never undermined the close bond of friendship and admiration that other intellectuals felt for him. This was the case, for instance, with Dwight Macdonald, with whom he founded the journal *Politics*, but whose Trotskyist line he criticised while maintaining a fruitful exchange of ideas and close intellectual contact with him. Despite being a little-

ing concern for freedom also led him to critically observe the creation of new societies after the Second World War. The defeat of Nazism and fascism and the subsequent division of the world into Western and Eastern blocs brought with it the idea that the populations of liberal democratic orders enjoyed greater freedoms than the Soviet communist ones. This idea is only partly shared by Chiaromonte who glimpses very subtle dangers in the same Western democracies. One of these dangers relates to a misconception of the relationship between economics and politics typical of many socialist and communist intellectuals of the time⁶. According to Chiaromonte, during the period of repression in Czechoslovakia and Poland by the Soviet Union, newspaper articles in the Western press used to state that:

The protest of intellectuals and students in Eastern Europe is based on merely partial demands – greater freedom of expression, a less intransigent political regime, a more efficient economic policy – demands that have become obsolete here in the West. The *system*, in other words, the socialist regime, is not challenged, whereas here the New Left totally rejects the *system*, that is, neocapitalism, or the consumer society. So the revolt brewing in the West is more *advanced* than the basically romantic and nineteenth-century rebellion breaking out in Eastern Europe (Chiaromonte 1976: 208)⁷.

A rather confused consideration of the relationship between the political and economic systems emerges from these statements. According to left-wing intellectuals, Eastern European populations are fighting for freedoms now considered obsolete in the West. They do not contest the socialist system but only ask for the extension of those necessary freedoms that Western Euro-

studied author in the academic community of his native country, his critical thought towards the past and modernity is regarded alongside that of the great intellectuals of the 20th century. It is no coincidence, in fact, that Joseph Frank, in his work *Responses to Modernity* (2012), analyses Chiaromonte's thought together with that of thinkers such as Paul Valéry, Jacques Maritain, Yves Bonnefoy and Jean-Paul Sartre. Chiaromonte's ideas are therefore fundamental to understanding the complex political and social dynamics of the 20th century.

⁶ For more details about Chiaromonte's criticism of communist intellectuals see Panizza (2011).

⁷ For the original Italian text see Chiaromonte (1968).

peans fought for during the 19th century. Those who live in liberal democracies experience worse slavery because they are still subject to a capitalist and consumerist system of production. Western revolts are therefore more advanced as they are revolts against a system that most oppresses the population. The model they adopt to interpret reality seems to be fully in line with the Marxist structure and superstructure⁸. Chiaromonte points out that what most Western European intellectuals and populations hope for is an introduction of the socialist system to get rid of an even greater evil, that of the consumer society and the alienation of contemporary man (Chiaromonte 1976: 212)⁹. Political freedom seems an obsolete fact; an established achievement that can only benefit from the substitution of the economic system. However, this way of considering freedom threatens its very existence in the future. «The question raised by this “comedy of errors”», as Chiaromonte claims, «is whether the real crisis of Western society does not reside in the fact that the intellectual class wants to guide us to a new order without knowing what genuine freedom is, what socialism can be, or even what the word “society” means» (*Ibidem*).

The main problem, according to Chiaromonte, is again related to the concept of freedom. The need for freedom is an intrinsic part of human nature (Ivi: 215). The problem arises when human nature is exclusively associated with economic logic that turns the human being into a *homo oeconomicus*¹⁰. This transformation is related to the growth of industrialisation and is a common feature of both Eastern and Western European societies. However, there is a difference between them. This is linked to the political-institutional order that allows the realisation of the human will. In those countries where an authoritarian form of state is still dominant, political freedoms are restricted and, in some cases, completely abolished to avoid a complete realisation of human nature conceived in an exclu-

⁸ This idea would later be criticised by Engels. See ‘Letter to Joseph Bloch, 21[–22] September 1890’, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 49 (2010).

⁹ See also Gaeta, ‘La scelta delle «cose migliori». Intellettuali e società di massa secondo Nicola Chiaromonte’, in Fofi – Giacomini – Nonno (2000).

¹⁰ This expression was first used by the Italian economist Pareto in *Manuale di Economia Politica* (1906).

sively economic manner. Since capitalism – with all its related social structure – is considered the worst evil and the profit-maximising logic an innate element of human nature, the solution of authoritarian regimes is to prohibit individual expressions of will. Without a glimpse of will, the spectre of man's economic nature can not even materialise. Hence, freedom struggles against authoritarian regimes are first and foremost oriented towards an assertion of the will. The transformation of man into an economic man is still a distant illusion. Without a will, human nature can not reveal itself. Chiaromonte, in this regard, quotes the words of Romanian writer and political dissident P. Dumitriu about the revisionist movement in Eastern Europe. «As revisionism has revealed», Dumitriu claims, «the progressives in the East want to introduce into the operation of the socialist state open and legal conflicts of opinion and interests. They want to introduce the unforeseeable element of the will – in a word, human nature» (*Ibidem*; Cfr. Dumitriu (1961). «Human nature», as stated by a character of one of Dumitriu's most famous novels, «is a historical phenomenon, the superstructure of the economy» (Dumitriu 1964: 24).

Authoritarian systems are a limitation to the realisation of human nature. But the fear that the human being can fully realise himself as an economic being leads to the preventive limiting of his entire will. Western democratic societies also suffered from the same condition. However, they were affected by the same problem but in the opposite way. While the population living under authoritarian regimes struggles for the recognition of their political freedom, the Western intellectuals, as Chiaromonte states, «make the more rigid forms of socialization and centralized power an ideal to oppose to the so-called “consumer society” as a remedy for the “alienation” of contemporary man» (Chiaromonte 1976: 212). Many Western intellectuals are rather confused about the relationship between freedom and human nature. They are dissatisfied with human freedom because they do not see beyond the realisation of the economic man. To free themselves from the constraints of human nature tied to the economic view of man they believe the solution is to limit his political freedom. Chiaromonte clearly describes the situation of the European intellectual. As he states:

Here in the West, on the other hand, we have an “obsolete” freedom accompanied by the somewhat crude idealization of such exotic forms of government as Maoism. What do such a phenomenon and such an intellectual misunderstanding mean? In the first place, they mean that we in the West no longer know and no longer want to know what freedom is and are more or less of the opinion that political freedom (together with moral freedom and the dignity of man in itself and of itself) is a sort of commodity. It is one of many commodities that our highly advanced society lavishes on us, and we use it because it is there, as we might use a car or a washing machine. But even if it were not there, no great harm would be done (Ivi: 213).

Westerners, after the experience of the dictatorships of the Second World War, live in one of the freest forms of society that has never existed. The dissatisfaction of the many with the freedom they enjoy must not, however, turn against the democratic institutions that granted these freedoms. The situation is much similar to the one described by Chiaromonte regarding the rise of fascism. The dictatorship took away individuals' democratic freedoms that guaranteed vital facts, such as freedom of association, expression, speech, etc. These vital facts are political freedoms that allow the individual to express their will. The substitution of a democracy for a dictatorship has never led to the removal of those evils of society such as power and with it all that follows. Only democracy can guarantee freedom. The problem of liberal-democratic societies is not the lack of freedoms – which of course can always be improved – but how to use them. This is the reason why Chiaromonte describes freedom as obsolete or freedom as a commodity. The threat to freedom does not lie in the democratic order. The democratic order is what allows freedom to express itself in all its forms. The real threat to democracy – as already glimpsed by Chiaromonte – arises when the passive population considers democracy as an act of providence that finally bestows freedoms so longed for. If this is a democracy, people who do not obtain the desired freedom will likely lose faith in democracy and seek freedom elsewhere. As long as democracy exists, one can express one's will. The freedoms guaranteed by a democrat-

ic society are vital facts and it is from these facts that one questions the nature of freedom.

3. *Threats to freedom in contemporary democracies*

Chiaromonte's reflections on the state of freedom and the threats to which it is continually exposed do not, however, offer a positive image of the situation of freedom in democratic countries. He does not question the democratic system which is the only one capable of guaranteeing freedom and limiting the use of force (Chiaromonte 1962: 738-739). Freedom in democratic societies is threatened by the very nature of man, or at least by the manipulation of what man believes to be his nature. In a dictatorial regime, the will of individuals and their freedom are annihilated. The use of force is essential to preserve order and control. But democracy is a political order in which power is divided, balanced and distributed to everyone to avoid the use of force. Democracy is the creation of a public space in which everyone must be allowed to express their reason by the maxim of the Enlightenment «Dare to be wise» (Nisbet 2009: 1). Kant's words are indeed very explicit on this point. He states that: «*Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. [...] For enlightenment of this kind, all that is needed is freedom. And the freedom in question is the most innocuous form of all – freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters*» (Ivi: 1-3).

However, man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity is a two-faced Janus. As Chiaromonte rightly points out:

[...] every individual, as such, can henceforth consider himself emancipated from any theology or any superior intellectual order and can be sure that he is equipped with an independent conscience subject to no authority but the desires of his own nature. Naturally, this puts the aforesaid free and autonomous individual directly at the mercy of the "hidden persuaders" and all the mechanisms capable of influencing such desires as well as the decisions resulting from them. This "persuasion" is not just the work of technicians of publicity; for every appeal to the individual, to his egocentric impulses and "received ideas" (whose author he deludes himself into believing he is because it is *he* who has received them), is bound to convince him only too easily (Chiaromonte 1976: 226-227).

In a democracy, force is not necessary to suppress the freedom of the individual. It is only necessary to guarantee freedom and autonomy and then manipulate them. This is the danger that freedom runs into in a democratic society. The individual must not only defend the democratic order and the political freedoms it represents, but also protect its autonomy from any form of manipulation. Of course, the manipulation of individuals is not a characteristic of democratic societies alone. It was and continues to be used by autocratic regimes. But the problem is that manipulation is independent of the political system. It is an inherent element of modern mass societies. It can often lead to tyranny without people being aware of it. Tyranny «is a danger coeval with political life» (Strauss 1963: 21)¹¹. As Chiaromonte states:

[...] when we people of today, and especially we intellectuals of today, were face to face with the implacable and absolutely authoritarian application of power, we took what we traditionally would have regarded as the worst of regimes for a new and progressive form of government, or at least for a historically necessary, and therefore basically good, phase in the development of our society. This applies to Bolshevism, Fascism, and National Socialism just as much as it does to the tyrannical aspects of capitalist or democratic regimes (Chiaromonte 1976: 225).

It is therefore also in the name of freedom that the individual can be made into a slave. According to Chiaromonte, this is exactly what happened in contemporary democracies (Ivi: 227). People living in liberal democracies have lost their freedom. There is a difference between democratic and authoritarian regimes, and it would be wrong and superficial to claim that in democratic societies individuals are deprived of their freedom. Indeed, Chiaromonte emphasises that «a special conception of freedom» has been lost (*Ibidem*). This conception of freedom refers to human beings' nature and not political freedom (although the latter can be threatened by the former). The progres-

¹¹ Chiaromonte explicitly refers to Strauss' theories in *The Worm of Consciousness and Other Essays*.

sive loss of natural freedom occurs in a somewhat paradoxical way. It relates to how human beings experience their relationship with nature and how they slowly freed themselves from it. The emancipation of man from nature is a process that originated with the scientific and technological evolution of human civilisation. Human liberation from nature is a way of affirming men's natural freedom, i.e. a full-natural freedom no longer determined by the world of nature. However, the problem arose when the natural freedom of human beings related only to that from which humans gradually freed themselves from nature, i.e. the needs. In this sense, the loss of human natural freedom took on a paradoxical aspect. The more individuals freed themselves from the needs of nature, the more they were enslaved to it. This time, however, in an autonomous and free way. In this regard, Chiaramonte emphasises the actuality of Rousseau's statement: «Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains» (*Ibidem*; Cfr. Rousseau 1913: 3). Here, it is rather the freedom from the needs of nature and thus the natural freedom of man that makes him a slave to his own natural needs.

Thus, a twofold dimension of freedom emerges from this analysis. On the one hand, there is political freedom that finds a breeding ground to grow and develop within democratic orders. This freedom is what the political system guarantees so that the individual can express the inherent potential of its nature. On the other hand, natural freedom is an expression of human potential and grows as man gradually frees himself from the most natural needs. This exists independently of the political system. So even in democratic societies freedom can be lost. This loss can often occur unconsciously because the democratic system does not disappear. It does not disappear because it is not in a democracy that the danger lies. The danger is to confuse these two dimensions of freedom. It is, therefore, necessary to prevent people disillusioned with freedom from turning their disappointment against the only political system capable of guaranteeing it and to recognise exactly which freedoms they have been deprived of. The freedom that most citizens in contemporary democratic societies have been deprived of is related to human nature. They were deprived of it when any spiritual element was taken off from human nature. Man's

full natural freedom in the satisfaction of his needs – which is a conquest of civilisation achieved through the progress of science – turned almost exclusively into material satisfaction. For this reason, most of the time the interests of the citizen do not correspond with what the citizen identifies as needs of human nature. In fact, according to the father of the sociology of law G. Gurvitch:

The human being is not merely a “political animal” – “zoōn politikon” – in the phrase of Aristotle. In the concrete plenitude of his qualities, several particular aspects among the various manifestation of the human being can be distinguished. The human being becomes *worker* in the largest sense of the term; he participates through his labor in the production of goods of different kinds; he is always *consumer* and very often *user* (customer, client); he is also *citizen* of a State, and so on. [...] Everybody is, or has the tendency spontaneously to become, citizen, worker, and consumer; but this does not preclude the fact that the interests of workers, of consumers, and of citizen are far from being identical. [...] the indestructible antinomy of workers and consumers, and of the latter two and citizens will appear in the forefront of social life (Gurvitch 1946: 58-59).

Hence, as Chiaromonte states following Gurvitch's conclusions: «The interests of the same man as a citizen, as a producer and as a consumer do not coincide» (Chiaromonte 1945: 27). These interests do not coincide because man's nature lost its spiritual element. The spiritual element is vital for the survival of democracy while it is not necessary for the satisfaction of purely material needs. However, it is important to emphasise that it is not the fulfilment of an individual's natural needs that limits his freedom, but the identification of his nature with purely material elements. In the process of emancipation from nature, the individual lost the most important part of it and enslaved himself to his own needs. Freedom is therefore not only threatened by the risk that democracy may disappear. A democratic system is the precondition of freedom. The danger is that the individual endowed with freedom may not know what to do with it and one day decide to abdicate even political freedom.

4. Conclusions

There is a deep concern in Chiaromonte's analysis for the situation of the individual in contemporary societies. The emerging scenario is rather pessimistic. Man's emancipation from political and religious authority led individuals to ever greater freedom. This freedom increases as more political and social freedoms are conquered by populations in democratic societies. But the emancipation of man from political authority, which means the possibility of finally being able to realise one's own innermost needs by following the autonomy of one's reason, demands a sense of responsibility from the individual that he never experienced before. The evolution of human civilisation is marked by the liberation of man from his most basic needs. The emancipation of man from his basic needs frees man from nature and offers the possibility of pursuing something beyond his initial conditions of existence. Nowhere and under no other circumstances has man ever had so much responsibility, because he has never had so much freedom. Responsibility is an inherent element of freedom. Without responsibility, man does not truly enjoy freedom.

Man is thus subjected to a duty. This obligation is an intrinsic part of his need for freedom, autonomy, and a sense of responsibility. It is an obligation to fully realise oneself. However, there is only one thing a man cannot be free of. That is the choice to be free. This choice can not be linked to free will because it is its primary condition. Every individual faces a choice that is out of his control. This choice is dictated by a sense of responsibility for freedom. But freedom is at the same time what enables man to be faced with a choice and thus to find the power for being responsible. On this basis, it is possible to understand Chiaromonte's statement according to which: «[...] non c'è norma più tirannica di quella che impone a ognuno di obbedire al proprio arbitrio» (Chiaromonte 1967: 74).

But, paradoxically, in contemporary societies – where freedom from basic needs led to the development of a sense of freedom far beyond the immanence of matter – there is a progressive return of freedom understood as the satisfaction of basic

needs. Some explanations have been formulated to describe this phenomenon such as that of the German writer H. M. Enzensberger, who describes contemporary capitalist society as *the consciousness industry* (Enzensberger 1974; Cfr. Chiaromonte 1965). According to him, there are at least four necessary conditions for the functioning of this industry. These are (1) rationalism, i.e. the free and autonomous consciousness of emancipated man; (2) the proclamation of human rights such as freedom and equality; (3) mass production of goods and (4) technology (Chiaromonte 1965: 6). These, for Enzensberger, are the reasons that led to the contemporary consciousness industry. However, Chiaromonte only partially shares Enzensberger's analysis. Indeed, according to him, Enzensberger's perspective is still too closely related to Marxism and that conception of society formed solely by classes, forces and numbers (Miccoli 1993). To think of society this way means taking space away from the individual (Chiaromonte 1976: 242; see Adamo 2002). As Chiaromonte states: «[...] se si tratta [...] di asservimento delle coscienze, è difficile immaginare che ciò avvenga senza complicità delle coscienze medesime. Questo tanto più quando è in nome degli ideali liberali, egualitari e *individualistici* [...]» (Chiaromonte 1965: 7). To think of man solely as a product of history is to justify his irresponsibility towards himself, society and freedom.

For this reason, the problem of freedom is not only a collective matter, which can be solved through liberal policies or improvements in the democratic order. It is also awareness and responsibility; it is escape from passivity and mass; it is the development of freedom that is the realisation of ideals that go beyond the logic of the consumption of goods and satisfaction of material desires.

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Abstract

THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE FREE INDIVIDUAL: CHIAROMONTE'S REMARKS ON THE NATURE OF CONTEMPORARY TYRANNY

Keywords: Chiaromonte, Politics, Freedom, Tyranny, Democracy

From exile in Paris until emigration to the United States, Chiaromonte took on those distinctive characteristics that would later define him as a citizen of the world. He developed his thought following those socialist-liberal principles according to which the individual and society are mutually united in an organic whole. These ideas led him to sharply criticise not only fascism and all totalitarianism but also the structure of post-war Western societies. What he sees in modern Western mass societies is an obsolete form of freedom. This freedom is what modern man is satisfied with in a society now dominated by consumerism, mechanisation of existence and calculation. His insights anticipate many of the evils that afflict contemporary societies.

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