

grasped precisely in full this unity upheld by the philosophy of praxis.⁵ [...]

* (Q10,II\$41.i)

5 [Ethico-Political History]

Definition of the concept of ethico-political history. Note that ethico-political history is an arbitrary and mechanical hypostasis of the moment of hegemony, of political leadership, of consent in the life and activities of the state and civil society. [...]

The most important problem to discuss in this paragraph is this: whether the philosophy of praxis excludes ethico-political history, whether it fails to recognize the reality of a moment of hegemony, treats moral and cultural leadership as unimportant and really judges superstructural facts as 'appearances'. One can say that not only does the philosophy of praxis not exclude ethico-political history but that, indeed, in its most recent stage of development, it consists precisely in asserting the moment of hegemony as essential to its conception of the state and to the 'accrediting' of the cultural fact, of cultural activity, of a cultural front as necessary alongside the merely economic and political ones. Croce commits the serious error of not applying to his criticism of the philosophy of praxis the methodological criteria that he applies to his study of much less important and significant philosophical currents. If he were to employ these criteria, he would be able to discover that the judgement contained in his attribution of the term 'appearance' to superstructures is none other than a judgement of their 'historicity' expressed in opposition to popular dogmatic conceptions and therefore couched in a 'metaphorical' language adapted to the public to whom it is destined. The philosophy of praxis thus judges the reduction of history to ethico-political history alone as improper and arbitrary, but does not exclude the latter. The opposition between Croceism and the philosophy of praxis is to be sought in the speculative character of Croceism.

SCW, 104-7 (Q10,I\$7)

6 [Ethico-Political History and Hegemony]

From everything that has been said previously it emerges that Croce's historiographical conception of history as ethico-political history must not be judged as futile, as something to be rejected out of hand. On the contrary, it needs to be forcefully established that Croce's historical thought, even in its most recent phase, must be studied and reflected upon with the greatest attention. Essentially it represents a reaction against 'economism' and fatalistic mechanicism, even though it is put forward as the destructive supersession of the philosophy of praxis. The criterion that a philosophical current must be criticized and evaluated not for what it professes to be but for what it really is and shows itself to be in concrete historical works applies to Croce's thought too. For the philosophy of praxis the speculative method itself is not futile, but has generated 'instrumental' values of thought in the development of culture, instrumental values which the philosophy of praxis has incorporated (the dialectic, for example). Credit must therefore, at the very least, be given to Croce's thought as an instrumental value, and in this respect it may be said that it has forcefully drawn attention to the importance of facts of culture and thought in the development of history, to the function of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society and the state, to the moment of hegemony and consent as the necessary form of the concrete historical bloc. That this is not futile is demonstrated by the fact that, in the same period as Croce, the greatest modern theorist of the philosophy of praxis [Lenin] has – on the terrain of political struggle and organization, and with political terminology – in opposition to the various tendencies of 'economism', revalued the front of cultural struggle and constructed the doctrine of hegemony as a complement to the theory of the state-as-force and as a contemporary form of the 1848 doctrine of 'permanent revolution'.⁶ For the philosophy of praxis the conception of ethico-political history, in that it is independent of any realist conception, may be adopted as an 'empirical tool' of historical research, one which needs constantly to be borne in mind in examining and understanding historical development, if the aim is that of producing integral history and not partial and extrinsic history (history of economic forces as such etc.).

* (Q10,I\$12)