

Historical-Critical

A: tarihi naqdi. – G: historisch-kritisch. – F: historique et critique. – R: istoricesko-kriticeskij. – S: histórico-crítico. – C: lishi-kaozheng de

As attested by the works of **Thucydides** and **Aristotle**, the articulation of history and critique began to develop from the ‘Greek enlightenment’ onwards, receiving impetus from both the story-telling traditions of the popular classes and celebratory poetry in the service of the rulers. Greek and Roman philology and the practice of critical editions of the Renaissance humanists provided formative elements. However, approaching tradition as such in an historical-critical way is an achievement of intellectuals from the early bourgeois period, developed in permanent confrontation with censorship and persecution mainly from the religious apparatuses. This connection appears systematically for the first time in Pierre **Bayle**'s *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1696) which opened the age of Enlightenment as ‘the actual age of critique’ (**Kant**). History was still understood by **Bayle** as histories in the sense of oral or written narratives; critique, as its examination in the ‘natural light of reason’. This rationalism prepared the terrain for historicism and ‘scientific’ historiography (i.e. founded upon the critical use of sources). Marxian, and later Marxist historical materialism attempts to explain history through reference to the mode of production and reproduction of social life.

Just as once Christianity in the course of becoming a state religion (‘the Constantinian turn’) passed into an ideological state apparatus, giving ‘the authoritarian relations iron structures and a centre in their handling of ideas and the transmission of traditions’ (**Haug** 1983, 6), so Communist Marxism in power underwent a similar transformation. Its ideological apparatuses, in their ‘authoritarian controlled arrangement and concealment’ (ibid.) like a ‘Central Administration of eternal truths’ (**Havemann** 1971), operated at the apex of the ‘command-administrative’ régime created by **Stalin**. Once more, the self-evident

right, indeed duty of Marxists to have a critical relation to their own history and an historical relation to their own theories, had to be bitterly fought for. Under European state socialism of the twentieth century it was finally during the five years of *perestroika*, the attempt at democratisation under **Gorbachev**, that individuals were liberated from formal constraints. The collapse of European state socialism ‘promoted an “epistemological break” and a stimulus towards historicisation’. This stamped the historical-critical method with ‘an emphatic actuality’ for Marxists. ‘Here it is a case of, on the one hand, the critical (and self-critical) evaluation of historical experiences and, on the other, the analytical survey, development and critical working through of an enormous mass of intellectual material’ (*HKWM* 1, *Preface*).

1. After ‘the remarkable rudiments of an historical-critical treatment of the Bible’ in Thomas **Hobbes**'s *Leviathan* (**Lange**, I, III.2, 285), whose fourth book on the intrigues of religious institutions is entitled ‘Of The Kingdom of Darkness’, the ground for Pierre **Bayle**'s historical-critical dictionary was prepared by, more than any other work, Baruch **Spinoza**'s critique of the Bible, the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, published anonymously in 1670 – a genuinely ‘revolutionary text’ (**Giancotti Boscherini** 1985, 23), an ‘organ of political struggle’ (**Gadamer** 1976, 19). According to the subtitle, it claims to show that ‘the Freedom of Philosophising can not only be allowed safe to Piety and a Republic's Peace: but it cannot be taken away except at the same time with the Republic's Peace and Piety’.

‘Erreurs’ and ‘fautes’ (mistakes) are key categories in **Bayle**'s historical-critical dictionary. He had originally planned ‘un Dictionnaire de Fautes’. However, the surfeit of uninteresting mistakes would have made the work ‘pedantic’, a consideration which led him to a ‘nouvelle Oeconomie’: beginning with what can be historically reported, he added to this (in the

form of footnotes, clearly set in smaller type) commentaries, corrections, critiques of inherited judgements and occasionally philosophical reflections. Exemplary is the nineteen-page article on **Spinoza**, at the time slandered and deeply hated by clerical ideologists of all confessions. In terms of *form*: the historical part of the article comprises often not more than two or three lines to a page; the rest is taken up, in *petit*, by the 'critical' comments. In terms of *content*: **Bayle** indeed names **Spinoza's** *Tractatus*, using the official obligatory terminology, 'calamitous' ('un livre pernicieux et détestable, où il fit glisser toutes les sémences de l'Athéisme'); nevertheless, he presents **Spinoza's** personal irreproachability in a thus even better light: 'c'étoit un homme qui n'aimoit pas la contrainte de la conscience, & grand ennemi de la dissimulation'. He concludes from **Spinoza's** ethically exemplary conduct the possibility of a community of atheists living together more peacefully than a community of Christians. 'Cela est étrange; mais au fond il ne s'en faut pas plus étonner, que de voir des gens qui vivent très-mal, quoiqu'ils aient une pleine persuasion de l'Évangile'.

Leibniz enters into combat against this emancipation of moral criteria from religious conviction in his *Theodicy*. He criticises **Bayle's** historical-critical dictionary 'where religion and reason appear to be in conflict with each other [*en combattantes*]' and where Mr. **Bayle** made it known that it was his intention to make reason be quiet after he had made it speak for only too long' ('Preface', 35; trans. modified). In the second edition of the historical-critical dictionary, **Bayle** added an essay to his presentation of the Manichean and sceptical positions (which had been reproved 'by some religious bigots'), which, according to **Leibniz**, 'was supposed to present the innocence and utility of his method by means of examples, authorities and reasons (*Theodicy*, 'Introduction', §39; trans. modified). **Leibniz** sees in such a claimed autonomy of reason the beginning of the end of faith. No opposition between the two orientations should be allowed to come about:

reason is 'just as much a gift of God as belief'; their struggle would therefore be 'a struggle of God against God' (*ibid.*). He appears to sense that the apology for religion was entering dangerous terrain. In no way should it be claimed 'that that which one believes is untenable: for that means allowing reason for its part to triumph in a way that would destroy belief' (§41; trans. modified).

While **Descartes** had tried to demonstrate the compatibility of science and especially his own philosophy with religion, **Bayle**, in fact, 'as **Voltaire** remarks, didn't openly attack Christianity in a single line, but he also didn't write a single line which was not intended to awaken doubt' (**Lange**, I, IV.1, 11; trans. modified). He indeed maintains the appearance that the contradiction between reason and revelation would be decided in favour of the latter. 'However, the effect was calculated to produce a decision of the reader in the opposed sense' (398 et sq.; trans. modified). The effect 'was one of the greatest which a book can have', both upon the republic of letters as upon the educated in general (399). 'His style', **Hettner** says, 'is of the most dramatic vivacity, and fresh, direct, bold, provoking, and yet ever clear and rapid in the attainment of its aim; while he seems only to be skilfully playing with the subject, he probes and dissects it to its inmost depths' (1894, 48). From here comes 'the mode of combat of **Voltaire** and the French Encyclopaedists' and it still continued to have effects on **Lessing's** mode of thinking and writing (*ibid.*; op.cit **Lange**, I, IV.1, 11). A trace can be found in **Lessing's** judgement of Alexander **Pope**: 'He has read over before the material of this and that writer, and, without investigating them according to their own founding principles, kept from each one whatever he believed would allow itself to be best rhymed together in well-sounding verse. I believe even, in considering his sources, to have uncovered his operations, that I have made some other historical-critical notes' (*Pope, A Metaphysician!*, W 3, 663).

Bayle's historical-critical dictionary opened an epoch in the sense of an irreversible epistemological break. **Kant**, for example, wished in a review of a work of **Herder** that 'an historical-critical mind [...] had done some work in advance'. A criterion of historical-critical competence here was that such a person 'would have, from the immense mass of [...] notices, drawn out primarily those which contradict each other and presented them next to each other (with additional recollections due to the believability of any reporter)' and thus would have avoided 'basing [himself] upon one-sided reports without having previously weighed carefully the reports of others' (*W* 10, 801). This describes the impact of the historical-critical method in the epoch of the Enlightenment. If one abstracts from its objective content, knowledge is, according to **Kant**, 'subjectively regarded, either historical [*historisch*] or rational'. Here, 'historical' is still not understood in the sense of real history [*Geschichte*], but rather, as the reckoning of dates which 'are given' to the knowing subject 'from outside; whether through immediate experience or narration, or (as in the case of general knowledge) through instruction' (*CPR*, B863 et sq.). The Archimedean counterpoint on which this determination turns is the *cognitio ex principiis*, according to which the reception of such facts by the cognising subject is not only reasonable, but is drawn from this subject's own reason. Whoever relies upon the 'historical [*das Historische*]' (here **Kant** includes also the case of studying already given philosophies rather than philosophising on the basis of principles found in oneself), 'has formed his mind on another's reason, [...] and although, objectively considered, it is indeed knowledge due to reason, it is yet, in its subjective character, merely historical [*historisch*]'. Whoever has 'grasped and learnt well' such knowledge is, nevertheless, merely 'a plaster-cast of a living man' (B864). Subjectively rational is (objectively rational) knowledge only 'when it has been drawn from universal sources of reason, [...] from which there can also arise critique, nay, even the rejection of what has been learnt' (B864 et sq.; trans. modified). The problem with the historical [*das Historische*] is that it, like

everything 'else which we can only learn from the testimony of the experience of others', must in the first instance be 'believed'. Notwithstanding that, it is 'not in itself a matter of belief', since for some it was once 'personal experience and fact, or is presupposed as such'. Thus 'it must be possible by this path (that of historical belief) to arrive at knowledge; and the objects of history and geography, just as everything which it is possible to know [...] belong [...] to the realm of facts' (*CJ*, §91). In this sense of a critical survey of historically passed down facts, **Kant's** *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* is therefore an historical-critical work.

2. After his first two sensational publications on the censor and the freedom of the press, the twenty-four year old **Marx** attacks the conservative and even reactionary deployment of the historical-critical method in the 'historical school of law', which has carried 'its love for sources to such an extreme that it calls on the boatman to row not on the river's current, but on its source' (*MECW* 1, 203; trans. modified). Gustav **Hugo**, who founded the school, twisted **Kant's** relativisation of 'historical' knowledge into its opposite since he opined, as **Marx** notices, 'that because we cannot know what is true, we consequently allow the untrue, if it exists at all, to pass as fully valid' (*MECW* 1, 204). That the existing state of affairs is irrational – and in so far as it was irrational, bad – hitherto had been the argument for its very transformation. After the Counter-Enlightenment had failed with its attempt to present the *ancien régime* as rational, it now totalised the verdict of the irrational. If **Hegel** had posited that rational [*vernünftig*] = real [*wirklich*], **Hugo** posited that the positively real = irrational, and thus, that reason = unreal. 'With self-satisfied zeal he adduces arguments from every region of the world to provide additional evidence that no rational necessity is inherent in the positive institutions, e.g., property, the state constitution, marriage, etc., that they even contradict reason' (*ibid.* trans. modified). In order to wrest the argument of reason from the Left, **Hugo** 'profanes all that the just, moral, political man regards as holy, but he smashes these holy things only to be able to

worship them as *historical relics*' (ibid.). His critique 'levels down': '*Everything existing serves him as an authority, every authority serves him as an argument*' (ibid.). A radical relativism neutralises all differences of civilisational development. 'With him, *eighteenth-century scepticism* in regard to the *rationality of what exists* appears as *scepticism* in regard to the *existence of reason*. He adopts the *Enlightenment* [...]; he thinks the *false flowers* have been plucked from the chains in order to wear *real chains* without any flowers' (MECW 1, 205; trans. modified). With that, the historical-critical delegitimisation of any régime of violence has become the apology for the '*right of arbitrary violence*' (MECW 1, 210; trans. modified). **Marx** then applies the historical-critical method to the less outspoken 'juridical and historical theories' subsequent to **Hugo**, which 'after some operations of the *critical art of separating* allow the *old original text* to be made legible again' (ibid.; trans. modified).

Subsequently, **Marx** and **Engels** transfer the historical-critical claim to the terrain of history, which they survey in a new way in terms of social theory and with a focus upon class struggles. In the meantime, **Feuerbach** had sublated [*aufgehoben*] the critique of the Bible into the 'atheistic' critique of religion. To transform the critique of Heaven into the critique of the Earth and to broaden the critique of religion into general ideology-critique will be the sense of the practical-materialist conception of history that seeks the ultimate driving forces and 'elements' of the historical process in the production and reproduction of social life. **Marx's** critique of political economy will allow the historical dimension of the capitalist value-forms to step forward from under the appearance of the natural, an appearance that enshrouds them in the consciousness of everyday life just as in economic theory. The thus uncovered historical-transitory nature of the capitalist relations of production is supposed to nurture the history-making force of the proletariat. The 'Historical [*das Historische*]' is indeed – according to **Gramsci's** insight, sharpened through his grappling with Benedetto **Croce** – not necessarily part of ongoing history

[*geschichtlich*], (cf. **Haug** 1994, 1214); instead, 'the tradition of all the dead generations' can weigh 'like a nightmare on the brain of the living' (*18th Brumaire*, MECW 11, 103). This practical-theoretical impulse, to go to the social roots of that which has become historically congealed in order to help another world become reality, lies at the foundation of **Marx's** opening of the 'continent of history' (**Althusser** 1969, 7; 1971, 72), even if this emancipatory sense has often been obscured by discourses invoking objective laws.

3. Henceforth, already in reaction to the socialist labour movement, Friedrich **Nietzsche** declares 'history and critique' to be the epitome of the decadent (*The Birth of Tragedy*, 23; trans. modified). When a people begins 'to comprehend itself historically and to smash the mythical bulwarks that surround it', there occurs a 'secularisation' in the sense of a 'break with the unconscious metaphysics' (ibid.) which constitute the 'value' of a people, thanks to which 'it is able to press upon its experiences the stamp of the eternal' (ibid.). This is that which **Nietzsche** sees 'corroded by the historical-critical spirit of our culture [*Bildung*]' (ibid.). In *Beyond Good and Evil* (209), he praises, against historical-critical scepticism, 'the scepticism of daring masculinity, which is closely related to the genius for war and conquest', and which he sees embodied in Frederick the Great. He praises its paradoxical master-race mindset: It 'despises and nonetheless seizes to itself; [...] It gives the spirit a dangerous freedom, but keeps the heart severe. It is the German form of scepticism, which [...] has brought Europe for some time under the dominion of the German spirit and its critical and historical mistrust' (ibid; trans. modified).

The 'historical-critical spirit of our culture' castigated by **Nietzsche** finds its anti-positivist formulation in the *Geistesgeschichte* coined fundamentally by Wilhelm **Dilthey**. It demands that we 'analyze historically and critically the value of the individual procedures which thinking uses in solving its problems in this area; it demands further that we clarify, through

observation of that great development whose subject is humanity itself, what the nature of knowledge and understanding is in this field' (*Introduction to the Human Sciences*, 78). **Dilthey** explains the medieval 'dominance of superstition' as 'an abbreviated and falsified passing down of the old world as an authority' (thus, essentially, following in **Bayle's** footsteps). Against the 'uncritical' connection of the 'epistemological-theoretical presupposition of the historical school and of idealism' in **Humboldt**, **Dilthey** founds the 'construction of a historical world in the social sciences' on a 'critique of historical reason' (136). He begins from the supposition that psychologically describable inner-structures are expressed in world-views etc. Also here, 'politics was continued [...] on the scientific fronts' (**Krauss**, *Literaturgeschichte*, 30), for **Dilthey** expected a 'consolidation of the upper classes' due to the increase in the 'independent power of the social sciences' (*Briefwechsel*, 29.2.1892).

4. After preparing the way for it, **Bayle's** *Historical-Critical Dictionary* was eclipsed by the success of the *Encyclopaedia* edited by **Diderot** and **d'Alembert**. It is only in editorial practice that the concept of the historical-critical has been firmly established. Erich **Auerbach's** description of the 'critical edition' is particularly valid for the 'historical-critical edition of texts': it is regarded among the works of philology in the republic of letters as 'la plus noble et la plus authentique' (1965, 9). It 'investigates primarily the age, the originality and the authenticity of the written works, and evaluates their original accuracy or their occasionally accidental, occasionally deliberate corruption, often up until the point of verifiably re-establishing what an author had really written, or the convincing ascertainment of that which the supposed author did not write' (**Wolf** 1807, 39 et sq.). In order to achieve this in a transparent (verifiable) way, both history and bearers of the tradition ('textual witnesses') as well as textual variants should be accounted for, preferably embedded in the history of the conditions of their production and contextual references; insofar as effect and tradition interact, the

history of reception is to be included (cf. *Grundzüge* 1996, 179 et sqq.). Karl **Lachmann** developed the paradigm of the critical edition for the editing of collected works of the 'old' authors (whose aim was the reconstruction of the often only fragmentary or corrupted text passed down by tradition) and later carried it over to the edition of collected works of a modern author such as **Lessing** (1838–40). 'The historical-critical edition of **Schiller's** works (1867) according to this model', edited by Karl **Goedecke**, 'became authoritative for the subsequent editions' (*Reallexikon* 1958, 318). Of course, historical-critical reconstruction aiming at the authenticity of the text is not to be separated from the mediation of meaning: 'To live classically and to realise antiquity practically in oneself' was for Friedrich **Schlegel** the 'goal of philology', even if he was uncertain whether this was possible 'without any cynicism' (*Athenäumsfragmente*, Nr. 147).

Regarding authors ostracised for their critique of domination and ideology, or those persecuted due to their fundamentally democratic orientation or their commitment to the cause of the exploited and the oppressed, or those who were censored and whose books were burnt – in other words, precisely those authors which are particularly interesting for an historical-critical dictionary of Marxism –, the concept of the historical-critical refers to the unfinished-historical dimension of social movements and their struggles. More comprehensively than its predecessors in the early bourgeois epoch, the historical-critical method really does live up to its name and thus, from having a merely formal existence, comes into its own in terms of content. For example, in the search for traces of that 'other history' of women, which had been effaced or written over in masculine terms in the course of patriarchal oppression, the historical-critical method assumes the additional meaning of brushing history against the grain from the standpoint of the oppressed. This is often the case when it is applied to colonised people or to all those held in subaltern positions. The

‘historical-critical’ censorship of the tradition from the standpoint of the rulers themselves must also be subjected to this procedure. This is what Karl **Barth** had in his sights when he remarked that ‘the historical-critical [authors] needed to be more critical for me’ (1922/1999, XVIII). What he meant was the then dominant historical-critical interpretation of the Bible, which reduced the subject-matter that is treated in the Bible – liberation from enslaving relations – to the question of ‘how it really was’. Against this reductive method, which made the Messiah out to be a ‘historical Jesus’ tailored to fit the bourgeois idea of a good person, **Barth** wrote: ‘*krinein* means for me in relation to an historical document: the measuring of all words and word groups contained in it against the cause of which they clearly speak, if appearances are not deceptive’ (XVIII et sq.).

In the history of philosophy and theory, the historical-critical method is fuelled up when it deals with witnesses of radical critique of domination and ideology, to begin with **Democritus**, the materialist and indeed the only democrat among the classical philosophers (c.f. fragment 241, attributed by the tradition, significantly, to a **Demokrates**), whose works, according to **Aristoxenos**, were bought up by the anti-democrat and anti-materialist **Plato**, in order ‘to burn all of **Democritus**’s writings which he could find’ (**Diogenes Laertius**, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 9.40). The tradition was continued by **Epicurus**, who was slandered for centuries as the ‘swine’ (c.f. *ibid.*, 10.3 et sqq.; **Kimmich** 1993), because he declared fear of death and above all, the notion of a punishing or rewarding ‘Beyond’ (introduced into philosophy by **Plato** and strengthened by **Cicero**) as groundless (‘For that which has been dissolved into its elements experiences no sensations, and that which has no sensation is nothing to us’ (§2, *Principal Doctrines/Vatican Sayings*); by **Spinoza**, who as an author was cursed by the Jewish Rabbis and forbidden by the Christian institutions; and by the radical-democratic and Marxist authors caught between the mill stones of Stalinism and fascism. In all

such cases, where access of the transmission of tradition has been blocked, hushed up, demolished or slandered by censors imbued with the standpoint of the rulers, the historical-critical fuses with the cause itself. Such an expansion of the historical-critical method, when it comes into its own not merely formally but also at the level of its content, is demonstrated by Peter **Weiss** in a scene of the *Ästhetik des Widerstands*. Here, the Pergamon altar is viewed in the early years of nazism through the eyes of young anti-fascists, who see it in the light of thousands of years of the history of class oppression and – not only economic but also corporeal-aesthetic – exploitation. Thereby is reclaimed, for the cause of the oppressed, the very power which has been taken from them and instrumentalised for the symbolic reproduction of the ruling order.

5. The concept of philology makes an astonishing appearance in **Gramsci**’s *Prison Notebooks*, where ‘the theory and practice of philological critique found in the notebooks constitute in themselves a most important contribution to the elaboration of an anti-dogmatic philosophy of praxis’ (**Buttigieg** 1991, 64). **Gramsci** spoke of philology not only in the technical sense of work with texts but, rather, uses it to describe any method which deals with the concrete individual, including, ultimately, the methodology of a mass party. He may well have been inspired by Giambattista **Vico**. While **Vico** assigned to philosophy the ascertainment of the true [*verum*] founded upon reason, he entrusted philology, as a ‘new critical art’, with the ascertainment of those things which are certain (*certum*), because ‘they depend upon human will’ (*The New Science*, Element X, §138, 63).

First, philology for **Gramsci** has ‘a simply instrumental value, together with erudition’ (Q 11, §42). In order to study **Marx**’s ‘conception of the world’, which was never set forth by its founder systematically (and whose essential coherence is to be sought not in each single text or series of texts but in the whole development of his multiform intellectual labour [...]), it

is necessary first to do meticulous philological work conducted with maximum scrupulousness with regard to exactitude, scientific honesty, and intellectual loyalty, and without any preconception and apriorism or preconceived idea' (Q 16, §2). **Gramsci** then outlines fundamental principles of an historical-critical engagement with **Marx** and a correspondingly historical-critical edition of his works that offers 'a text based on a critical use of sources' (ibid.). At the same time, 'the question of the relations of homogeneity between the two founders of the philosophy of praxis must be posed'; one should neither 'identify' them with each other 'nor is it necessary to think that everything which the second attributed to the first is absolutely authentic and without infiltration' (ibid.). Such philology acquired immediately explosive political force in the face of the dogmatic tendencies in the Communist International.

Second, against the tendency of making historical materialism into a 'science of laws' about (and above) society and history, **Gramsci** elevates philology to an organon for the logic of the historical, which he saw as being distinguished by the fact that it allowed individual elements to come into their own, all the more so when the subject is an almost integral part of the object, namely insofar as we are dealing with human activity. 'The experience upon which the philosophy of praxis is founded cannot be schematised; it is history itself in its infinite variety and multiplicity' (Q 11, §25). Regarding the study of history, however, he says that it 'can give place to the birth of "philology" as a method of erudition in the assessment of particular facts', which made it necessary to enlarge 'the sphere of philology as it has been traditionally understood' (ibid.). In these conditions, regular contexts can be reformulated as 'tendential laws', 'which correspond in politics to the statistical laws or the law of great numbers' (ibid.). The paradigm of an expanded philology aimed not only against scientific objectivism but also against the speculative interpretation of history, in order to free itself from 'every residue of transcendence and of theology also in their last speculative incarnation' (Q

10.I, §8): 'If the concept of structure is conceived speculatively, it certainly becomes a "hidden God"; but it doesn't need to be conceived speculatively, but rather, historically, as the ensemble of social relations in which real men move and operate, as an ensemble of objective conditions that can and must be studied with the methods of "philology"' (ibid.). – 'The fragmentary character of the notebooks is due', according to Joseph A. Buttigieg's insight, 'at least in part, to the "philological" method governing their composition' (63).

Third, Gramsci carries over – and here the practical-political quintessence of his intervention can be glimpsed – the concept of philology to the practice of 'mass parties and their organic adherence to the innermost (productive-economic) life of the masses'; here it is not only a case of 'knowledge and judgement of the importance' of the feelings experienced intensely by the masses, but also of an acting upon these 'by the collective organism through "active and conscious collective participation", through "compassionateness" ["*con-passionalità*"]', through experience of immediate particulars, through a system that could be called that of a "living philology". Thus a close tie is formed between the great masses, party and leading group and the entire well articulated whole can move as a "collective-human"' (Q 11, §25).

6. Regarding the publication of **Marx's** work, technical-philological problems are compounded by those connected with the historical-critical reception of these texts. Indeed, thanks to the administrative virtues of the those involved and their followers, if we leave aside the final version of *The German Ideology*, almost everything is preserved here, and nothing – except for **Marx's** handwriting, which only experts are able to decipher – would have stood in the way of publication, were it not for their unparalleled world-historical effects and repercussions. The problem was not simply in the camp of the enemies, the most horrific of whom appeared in the form of Nazi 'counter-Bolshevism' (**Haug** 1980, 59-

63). Rather, it was also in the camp of the friends and followers who, whenever they made available to the public something from the mountain of manuscripts, almost always made merely tactical use of it. Indisputably, Friedrich **Engels** delivered such a great service in bringing Volumes II and III of *Capital* into print that he could be named the 'father of Marxism', and Marxism itself as 'Engelsism' (**Künzli**, cited in Hirsch 1968, 95); nonetheless, he published the *Theses on Feuerbach* in 1888 with serious changes, which partly create misunderstandings, sometimes coming close to falsification of the text and furnishing material for a vulgarised reception. The form of 'Works' into which he brought **Marx's** manuscripts of *Capital* Volumes II and III was driven by political objectives, not those of historical-critical transparency (cf. *MEF* 2001). Karl **Kautsky** edited the *Theories of Surplus Value* with significant interventions, transpositions, and smoothing over, in contempt of all the rules of a critical edition. The underlying manuscripts represent of course, to a large extent, more or less very rough drafts. 'Beside extensive analysis are short, abrupt sentences, often only references for later elaboration. Marx also regularly changes between three languages [...] – German, French and English. This and other difficulties allow in individual cases several possible readings [...]. It is therefore inappropriate to polish the text here, and completely impossible to fabricate a "fluent" text, if we don't want something completely different from the work of Marx to be the result' (MEW 26.1, *Vorwort*, XIV et sq.; cf. **Sander** 1983).

A further hindrance is the claim, absolutising a legitimate position, that any text exists 'as an intellectual production [...] only in its interpretations' (**Heinrich** 1991, 22). The perceptions that often overlay the originals like group prejudices led **Brecht** to say that Marxism has become so unknown 'chiefly through the many writings about it' (letter to **Korsch**, 1939, *GA* 29, 131). Faced with this situation, the decision of the CPSU to publish 'the whole "**Marx and Engels**"' in an historical-critical form, instead of a merely selected

edition, had great significance. The merits of the editor of the first *MEGA*, David **Rjazanov**, are immeasurable (cf. **Vollgraf** et al. 1997). The cunning way in which he got copies of Marx's manuscripts out of social-democratic custody is a story in and of itself – as is their later rescue from the grasp of the Nazis. But then **Stalin** had **Rjazanov** murdered. After the German offensive against the Soviet Union the *MEGA* project was abandoned. This decision may have been made even easier for the Stalinist leadership by the fact that the complete and authentic **Marx** who had begun to come to light could not be made to accord with the methods of domination it practised, or with the Marxism-Leninism which it had codified for its own legitimation.

In the 1970s, the second *MEGA* began as an international project under the auspices of the Moscow and Berlin Institutes for Marxism-Leninism (IML). It is one of the contradictions of the post-Stalinist political structures that, alongside the enormous costs, they also took the 'ideological' risk upon themselves of publishing material that, in the last instance, was not compatible with their still powerful forms of command-administrative state domination. While the versions of the texts together with the critical apparatus satisfied the highest 'technical' exigencies and represented an enormous achievement, the introductions, not infrequently, locked **Marx** up unhistorically and uncritically with Byzantine praise in a mausoleum (cf. **Haug** 1985). This ceremonial and celebratory prison conceded to **Marx** no problems, no crisis-ridden learning process, no obscurity, no textual ambiguities. However, the mass of manuscripts that were published in the *MEGA* according to the rules of the historical-critical art speaks another language. It is as if **Marx**, like a sculptor, had continually relocated his workshop, leaving behind extensive excerpts, sketches and work torsos in the former premises. Even the single volume of *Capital* published by **Marx** himself contains so many layers of revision in which an undeclared paradigm change occurs that it could be compared with a 'palimpsest', an incessantly repainted, layer after layer,

time and again newly inscribed parchment (**Scaron** 1975, VIII; **Lefebvre** 1983, XXX et sqq.). An historical-critical edition, beginning from the version of the last authorised version (in this case, edited by **Engels**), would have to make clear the different layers of revisions and, if possible, to historicise them. The Latin American edition of Pedro **Scaron** for the publishing house Siglo XXI is structured as ‘una primera aproximación a una edición crítica’ of this type, (1975, XI). It documents all of the versions published in Marx's lifetime as well as giving Engels's changes to the fourth German edition ‘en conjunto’, albeit not completely. It has the extraordinary advantage of showing **Marx**'s learning process, whose direction and rationality has been little investigated and even less comprehended and consulted as important for interpretation; indeed, for the Hegelian-Marxist perspective of many interpreters (for example, **Fetscher**, **Reichelt**, **Backhaus**, **Heinrich**) it has even appeared as a history of degeneration. Since, however, the critique of political economy only makes sense so long as it allows us to think simultaneously a reality subjected to constant transformation since the time of **Marx**, the development of **Marx**'s concepts is to be noted with particular care. The editors of the *MEGA*, confronted by the extremely complex textual status, decided to publish the different versions not ‘en conjunto’, but each on its own. Not only different German versions of *Capital* were to be considered, but also, among others, the French translation modified by **Marx**. Even (be it as a contrast in order to document **Marx**'s and **Engels**'s divergent understanding of method) the English translation was consulted, ‘for whose text’, **Engels** said, ‘I am responsible in the last instance’ (*MECW* 37, 5). Of course, any judgment of changes or translations would have required competence in terms of content and any evaluation would have needed to skate on the dangerous slippery ice of censorship, freezing into the text unclarified differences of school and tendency, instead of offering them up to the process of open discussion.

The editors of Volume I of *Capital* in *MEW*, in turn, followed the – according to **Engels**'s statement – ‘most possibly, definitive establishment of the text’ in the fourth edition and abstained, with some exceptions, from making known the layers of the text. **Engels**'s alleged adoption of all essential **Marxian** changes of the French edition was not completely checked and supplemented. Thus, the standard German edition lacks changes which give decisive clues for the further development of **Marx**'s version of the dialectic, whose ‘limits’ were so important for **Marx** that he referred Russian readers of *Capital* to the French translation, even though there had long been a Russian edition (cf. *MECW* 24, 200). Instead, the text was all the more pedantically guarded to the extent that even an obvious printer's error which had escaped **Marx** in his corrections of the second edition was still hauled out, against all common sense, until the twelfth edition of *MEW* 23 (1977) (**Skambraks** 1979). Another that had crept into the third posthumous edition curated by **Engels** (53, 5th line from the top: ‘commodity’ instead of ‘commodities’) and was still faithfully and blindly reproduced in the thirty-third edition (1989). It legitimated Hegelian-dialectical interpretations, even though **Marx** had angrily thundered against such interpretations in the *Marginal Notes on Wagner* and had referred to the (still) correct version in the second edition (cf. **Haug** 1992).

That interpretation and historical-critical editorial technique limited to formal issues cannot be neatly separated is also shown by the *MEGA* index, not very different from that of the *MEW*. Under the direction of the IML until 1989, many of **Marx**'s concepts that had become important outside the narrow spell of Marxism-Leninism were absent, while concepts were registered which not only were absent from **Marx**'s text (‘law of surplus-value’) but which also directly contradict **Marx**'s thought in part: thus, in the index to Volume II.5, the critique of political economy becomes ‘Marxist political economy’, and **Marx**'s key concept of ‘critique’ is entirely absent (**Haug** 1985, 216).

The historical-critical character of the *MEGA* is concentrated in the imperative for transparency of the editorial dossier, under an array of ‘diacritical’ symbols and a ‘critical apparatus’ that provides evidence of corrections and itemises variants. The introduction gives an account, as attested to by the 1993 rules, reformulated for the post-Communist situation, about ‘the constitution of the volume, its demarcation from or rather its relation to other volumes and its inner articulation; – the reasons for the incorporation or exclusion of documents; – the composition of materials, the textual-critical analysis corresponding to their specific character; – the editorial decisions reached as a result of textual critique (e.g. attribution of authorship, dating, reproduction of the text, presentation of variants and other editorial particularities)’ (*Editionsrichtlinien*, 30).

7. The collapse of European state socialism ejected **Marx** and the Marxist universe out of the ‘eternity’ of an ideology orbiting around state rule and its legitimation and has thrown them into the open air of history, as free floating ‘property without a master’. The task of the *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism* has been derived from this world-historical caesura. Its claim can be best expressed by Walter **Benjamin**'s concept of ‘rescuing critique [*rettende Kritik*]’, together with the image of a ‘Noah's ark’ of critical knowledge (*HKWM* 1, *Preface*, III). In terms of content, the historical-critical method here responds to ‘a constellation of dangers, which threatens both the tradition and those who receive it’ (*AP* 475; trans. modified). The intention of rescuing does not disarm the ‘destructive or critical momentum of materialist historiography’ about which **Benjamin** speaks (*ibid.*). It is not to be confused with apology.

In dealing with **Marx**, the first word has a type of analytical philology that expands the ‘love of the word’ to ‘love of the concept’. It is not **Plato**'s doctrine of ideas and all of its later disguises that should orient this reading. It is, rather, in the first instance, Ludwig **Wittgenstein**'s fundamental sentence: ‘the meaning of a word is its use in the language’ (*Philosophical Investigations*,

§43). Before a **Marxian** concept can be followed in historical struggles and in contemporary embroilments, its use by **Marx** must be secured in philological textual work. In this process we normally see ambiguities that make it impossible to remain stuck to the text. Whoever accepts ‘that it is not a case of the preservation of a monument but rather of a “work in progress”, and that progress consists precisely in continuing the work in an historical-critical manner’ (**Knepler** 1996, 53), will ask the question about which of the ‘spectral shades’ (to extend **Derrida**'s metaphor of ‘spectral analysis’) of **Marx** are to be taken up and which are not. For the *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism*, despite the importance which it attributes to the works of the founders of Marxism, the principle of conservative hermeneutics cannot be valid: the latter finds its authoritative essence in the past and sets itself the task of the ‘rehabilitation of authority and tradition’, because its paradigm is formed by the interpretation of juridical laws, holy writings and canonical art works (cf. **Gadamer** 1989, 277 et sqq.). More than ever is forbidden the pseudo-historical construction of legends aptly formulated by Werner **Krauss**: ‘History is made by heroes and it can therefore only be interpreted by prophets who resemble such heroes’ (*Literaturgeschichte*, 42). For Marxists, leaning uncritically on the thought of **Marx** should be excluded. Among the ‘intellectual restraints’ that the *HKWM* must always seek to remove (**Knepler** 1996, 54), not the least are the dogmatic ones. ‘Every term’, Georges **Labica** wrote in his preface to the *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, ‘was treated like a defendant who couldn't be believed simply on the basis of what he said about himself. [...] Whenever it was necessary, [the investigation] called upon different witnesses, close and distant relations, and resorted to the means of cross-examination and searching’ (vii).

Whenever the *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism* subjects the classical texts as well as the most important witnesses of their history of reception and efficacy to an historically informed critical re-reading, it will provide the best weapon against unhistorical and

uncritical Marxisms as they will always reappear. It cannot know the historical struggles of the future – but it can prepare the way for them. ‘Which individuals or groups, which organisation or institution could come to an overall view of the research and discourses of the past and the present, even only in their rudiments, paying attention to them and making them useful’, Peter **von Oertzen** wrote regarding the *HKWM*, ‘if there were no place where at least a part of them were summarised and made accessible?’ (1996, 68).

The young Hans Magnus **Enzensberger** declared that it was the ‘task of historical critique not to mummify the past but rather to expose it to the grasp of those who come later on’ (1963, 9). But a mere museum of things from the past, mummified or not, would not be sufficient for the coming generations. **Marx**’s theories are ‘at the same time a part of the historical process, thus also themselves a process’ (**Luxemburg**, *GW* 1/2, 377). As Rudi **Dutschke** urged the student movement to historical-critical continuity with the socialism of the workers’ movement, he knew that, as indispensable as it was, the matter was not resolved with historical knowledge alone. ‘The old concepts of socialism must be critically sublated [*aufgehoben*], not destroyed and not artificially conserved. A new concept cannot yet be at hand, it can only be worked out in practical struggle, in the regular mediation of reflection and action, of praxis and theory’ (1968, 90 et sq.). The never finishing mediation of reflection and action in struggles gives the historical-critical method its non-doctrinal meaning. It is precisely herein that the historical-critical method finds its particular task in a dictionary of Marxism. As a ‘compendium of critical memory and open thought-workshop’ (**Behrend** 1996), it does not historicise, but rather, philosophises with the hammer and scrutinises the historical [*das Historische*] with a view to its ongoing historical [*geschichtlich*] potentialities. This is the difference between an historical-critical dictionary and an Encyclopaedia that claims to reveal a closed circle of circles of knowledge. At the same time, the ‘uncanny dimension’ of work on

the *HKWM* presupposes that it does not ‘stand *over* its object, but *in* it. It doesn’t simply represent that which existed outside of and without it, but relates to its object in the present or even in certain respects calls it into existence or exerts an influence on its formation’ (**Haug** 1999, 95).

The historical-critical question regarding Marxism, with which this dictionary approaches history, is productive not only in relation to its own narrow object. It makes it necessary and possible to read ‘intellectual history’ – first and foremost, the European intellectual history that has become hegemonic on a worldwide scale – against the grain. Thus, it is not only the masses of knowledge of the emancipatory social movements that are taken up here; there are also aspects of another world on originally ‘bourgeois’ terrain if one approaches them with the ‘Marx-probe’. For the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, model of exemplary scholarship in form but, on the other hand, largely uncritical in terms of content, ‘everything existing [still appears] as an authority, every authority [...] as an argument’ (*MECW* 1, 204). On the other hand, the historically-materialist grounded historical-critical method, where it is successful, can lead to an ‘increasing condensation (integration) of reality’ as **Benjamin** had in mind, ‘in which everything past (in its time) can acquire a higher grade of actuality than it had in its moment of existing’ (*AP* 392). What appears in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* of **Marx** as anti-historical, the shaking off of the ‘tradition of all the dead generations’ (*MECW* 11, 103), obtains here, as in **Gramsci**, the meaning of unleashing the formative momentum of history.

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->absolute historicism, authority, censor, command-administrative system, critique, critique of religion, death, dialectics, dogmatism, encyclopedia, Engelsism, Enlightenment, epistemology, error, eternity, forgetting/rememering, *Geistesgeschichte*, the hereafter/this world, hermeneutics, history, historical/logical, historical school of law, historicisation, historicism, human sciences, ideology critique, ideology theory, interpretation, irrationality, limits of dialectics, Marxism-Leninism, materialist reading of the Bible, MEGA, mistake, rationalism, reading, reason, reconstruction, rescuing critique, Stalinism, text, *Theses on Feuerbach*, tradition

Aufklärung, Autorität, befehlsadministratives System, Dialektik, Dogmatismus, Engelsismus, Enzyklopädie, Epistemologie, Ewigkeit, Fehler, Feuerbach–Thesen, Geistesgeschichte, Geisteswissenschaft, Geschichte, Grenzen der Dialektik, Hermeneutik, Historische Rechtsschule, Historisches/Logisches, Historisierung, Historismus, Historizismus (absoluter), Ideologiekritik, Ideologietheorie, Interpretation, Irrationalität, Irrtum, Jenseits/Diesseits, Kritik, Lesen, Marxismus–Leninismus, materialistische Bibellektüre, MEGA, Rationalismus, Rekonstruktion, Religionskritik, rettende Kritik, Stalinismus, Text, Tod, Tradition, Vergessen/Erinnern, Vernunft, Zensur