

Preface

I

This is not the first time that a new dictionary has emerged from the intention to translate, revise, or supplement a previous one. The most renowned reference book of the Enlightenment, Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, grew out of a translation project. Joachim Ritter's *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* began as a revision. The *Historisch-kritische Wörterbuch des Marxismus* resulted from the planning of supplementary volumes to a translation. These volumes were announced in the foreword to the German edition of the *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme* in 1983. They were intended to complement the French emphasis of this work with other, notably German, emphases. Contributions were welcomed from every critical direction linked to Marx.. When the project found itself trapped in then divided two-state Germany between dogmatic rejectionanathema on the one side and social-liberal fear of contact on the other, it became more international and sought widespread collaboration, especially with intellectuals from the »tricontinent« of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The limits of the supplement form were soon exceeded, for the supplement had grown to a length many times that of the original.

There were also internal reasons for a new start. During this period a new type of problematic surfaced in the comprehensive sense of a configuration of fields of crisis and critique. The »Limits of Growth« and other existential problems with which new social movements were concerned, as well as the implementation of a highly technological mode of production, all led to a progressive reformulation of the questions at hand. Soviet Perestroika and, ultimately, the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the specific world order that had emerged out of the October Revolution of 1917, as well as the victory of the antifascist East-West-Alliance in the Second World War promoted an »epistemological break« and a drive toward historicization that together pushed the dictionary project into completely new territory.

Although the *Historische Wörterbuch der Philosophie* serves as a virtually unattainable example of scholarship, it is most worthwhile to compare scholarly contents of the two works. Such a comparison shows almost no points of overlap. It

is rather as though the *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* were speaking into a gaping silence. This silence marks the discourse of the older work as bourgeois; and it is the need to break this bourgeois silence that constitutes the necessity of the Marxist dictionary.

Since the breakdown of the communist experiment, investigations of the reasons for its failure seem at best to have been motivated by merely archaeological interest, - as if neither the tradition of Western Marxism nor the diverse forms of scientific and cultural Marxism among intellectuals did not exist.

Even if this were so, and Marxism had declined and fallen, it would nevertheless remain a part of our history. The science, culture, and politics of the 20th century are impossible to understand without taking into account the Marxist challenge and the varied and antagonistic reactions to it.

The death announcement, however, is premature. An unfinished project cannot die, as long as the social problems which it had begun to address have neither been solved nor rendered meaningless. Marxist thinking is neither an isolated nor a sectarian phenomenon. It emerged from, and continues to develop as, practical and theoretical attention to the questions of human beings, their relations among themselves and to nature, and the problems of antagonisms and crises. These questions concern everyone. They remain to be solved. And the fact that they have not yet been solved is increasingly perceived as the question of the survival of humankind on »Spaceship Earth,« even if the scope of these questions has yet to be comprehended.

Just as the history of Christianity was not ended by the fall of early Christian rule, neither has the theoretical and practical search for a model of socialization based on the principles of solidarity and environmental soundness been ended by the fall of Communist rule. And just as the immeasurable crimes committed in the name of Christianity could not erase its ethical impulse, neither can the crimes committed in the name of socialism erase its ethical and political substance.

Joachim Ritter wrote in the foreword of his *Wörterbuch* that »it cannot be predicted, what a new synthesis will one day look like nor whether or not it is already at work«. This sentence could also be applied to Marxist knowledge on the threshold of the 21st century. From the current body of knowledge, it is just as impossible to predict

which separate elements will one day be taken up again and in what combination they will appear.

This fissured knowledge shot through with manifold antagonisms, this knowledge with its insights and blind spots, presumptuousness and experiences, refuted hypotheses and points of unrealized potential, is the immeasurable and still inchoate material of the historical-critical dictionary. It is obvious that this material can never be exhaustively presented, and that any presentation is possible only in the form of excurses and from a restricted standpoint. Additionally, any sharp separation of the material would have been senseless, the more so since it is in communication with European traditions and since the checkpoints between Marxist and »bourgeois« knowledge were always open, even if often traversed incognito by both sides. The exhibition of models of thought, conceptual tools, and delineation of thought processes opens up connections in every direction and demonstrates possible sites of interaction.

II

The current historical constellation is both favourable for and adverse to the project of a historical-critical dictionary of Marxism. The collapse of state Marxist censure of re-flection on the past is favourable. The archives are now open and the theories ownerless. The antihistorical clutch of the »victor« after the history is adverse: In many ways it amounts to an erasure of social memory. The post-Communist situation thus imprints the topic headings of »historical« and »critical« with an emphatic relevance to the present-day. These headings address the critical (and self-critical) evaluation of historical experience on the one hand, and the scientific survey, development, and critical examination of an enormous theoretical corpus on the other. A historical-critical look into the labyrinthine »library« of Marxist knowledge can help effect a curative return to one's senses. The process of remembering, and of subjecting memories to critical examination may even contribute to the dissolution of the blind compulsion to repeat.

The demise of Marxism-Leninism left behind an accumulated historical guilt in the common memory of the peoples. This guilt has formed into an enormous mountain of rubble which threatens to bury indiscriminately the rational elements of the fallen

system and the seeds of the future which the system contained along with the irrational and lethal elements. This situation forces Marxist thought to deal with the stress and pain of the negative in the form of fearless criticism in order to survive. It is the only way to save humankind's treasures of knowledge from the Enlightenment and social imagination from being lost in the wreckage. Only the kind of *redemptive critique* of which Walter Benjamin spoke will be able, like a Noah's ark, to carry these treasures into a different time.

This kind of criticism is also negative, it can hurt, but it never tacitly pretends to be beyond that which it criticizes. Instead, it opens itself up to historical experience and, by concerning itself with the particulars of that experience, is able to accept them. This criticism does not lay claim to the last word but rather upsets the complacent combination of dismal silence and shortsighted triumph.

The necessary attempt to give historical justice to the object of criticism will not always succeed. Nevertheless, it must be made. Appearing after a defeat, the claim to know better is not necessarily indicative of superior knowledge. Often enough, it is just another form of the inability to accept correction. A simple change of sides after the state-socialist catastrophe is the flight from responsible examination into historical amnesia.

One need not recall only the examples of opportune changes of convictions after the failure of the Soviet attempt at reform: De-Stalinization had already produced similar cases. In 1956, when Nikita S. Khrushchev pilloried the crimes of Stalin (which for the Communist experiment was equivalent to being »released on probation«, a probation forfeited no later than 1968 with the suppression of Czechoslovakian Reform Communism), Henri Lefebvre remarked that it was »the fashion among Marxists to mock quotation as ›the shortest path respectively from one thought to another.« He continues, »This fashion was created exactly by those who had never previously written a line or spoken a sentence without quoting Stalin themselves. Today their ignorance and the emptiness of their thought is concealed in a different manner.«

Without social memory, experience cannot exist. A historico-critical dictionary in times of a »historical break« (Peter Glotz) is significant insofar as it is a part of the process of remembering that mediates intellectual experiences. These intellectual

experiences are made up of historical-critical »quotation«, not only of the sort which displays brilliant achievements but also of the sort which exposes the theoretical emptiness of thought enamored of power.

III

In addition to its emphasis on relation to experience and practical criticism, the Historical-Critical Dictionary has a strong philological emphasis. All quotes from and references to sources are carefully recorded in the articles, in order to assist further independent work and offer Ariadne's threads to guide the reader through the labyrinths of literature. There are also pointers to be found as to which works merit new readings in order to make de-fetishize history. The history/histories of concepts, their multiple usages and connotations, operates subversively against false certainties and seemingly immovable edifices of thought.

A dictionary of concepts is an appropriate organizational structure for a project intended to lead to an open workshop atmosphere rather than a closed-minded *Weltanschauung*. While the idea of an encyclopaedia assumes control over discrete spheres of knowledge which interconnect like the links of a chain, this dictionary philosophizes with a hammer, in that it shatters the spheres of thought into individual terms. The over-arching meaning is not given. The imaginary control over this over-arching meaning should yield to the deconstruction of hermeneutic totalities. This theoretical reworking of »philosophical grammar« may aid in the introduction of Marxist knowledge into a new modernity enlightened by historical materialism, a modernity for which the unifying myths of subject and sense have dissolved and which is consequently able to take up the project of critical social theory anew.

IV

The dictionary addresses over 1200 conceptual terms which have become relevant both to Marxism with its distinct theoretical and practical lines and to social liberation movements. The theoretical and/or politically strategic terms which had become particularly meaningful to Marx and Engels and to the lines of thought connected to them were the first to be included. However, terms unknown to the Marxist classics or even the Marxist traditions, or, at the very least, not native to these traditions are

also included. This seemed to be the right choice with terms in which historically new problematics and epistemological claims are articulated or terms which illuminate previously neglected facets of Marxism. Many of these entries derive from present political-theoretical vocabularies and have never before been addressed in comparable dictionaries. In these entries, many of which are newly coined, the problems of this epoch are articulated. They are the unanswered questions and unsolved problems of an epoch of global crises: the transition to the highly technological mode of production of transnational capitalism, the failure of Soviet social formation which was determined by the structural inability to keep up with this transition, and the explosion of the North-South conflict in world capitalism once it was no longer held in check by the East-West opposition. Last but not least, the new social movements, most importantly feminism and the environmental movement, helped shape these new vocabularies. Even in places where the words are not new, the readings certainly are, in that their interpretative questions are the questions of the time. Historical events, geographical designations, and the names of organizations are not included, except in cases where they have become expressions in which strategic problems and reflections thereof are condensed. Names of persons appear only in the designations of critical directions or schools which originated with them. Metaphors, images, topoi, rhetorical forms, slogans, etc. are employed if they had become important to theoretical-political articulations. Terms which have a »split« history appear in a few cases as double entries under the possible variant designations. The resulting polyphony and plurality of perspectives is welcome. It leads into the center of the field of the unfinished history of Marxism.

V

The development of the conception of the project, the compilation of the entries to be elaborated, and the finding of appropriate authors were carried out partly through public and published discussions, partly through consultation with a great number of researchers on all continents. Not everything on the agenda could be brought to a successful conclusion.

Ten years of preparatory work preceded the appearance of this first volume. In the 'dictionary workshop', the editorial board has thoroughly discussed and carefully proofed and edited all contributions; and the authors were then consulted about the board's suggestions for revisions.

"The familiar leaves us in peace" Goethe once said, "but it is the contradictory that makes us productive." And productivity, one might add, creates the contradictory. For that reason, one might expect of this work that the author's might come to contradictory positions about a given matter as they work their way through it. In every meaningful scientific [*wissenschaftlich*] and even political endeavor, new contradictions will constantly emerge. And it must be emphasized that the editorial board has in no way intervened in a censorial manner. Even originally planned length-limits on the articles were quickly made porous because they had become a kind of Procrustean bed.

When the board did intervene, it was in order to heighten historical-philological precision, and occasionally to render the essays more compact. The construction principle of conceptual fragmentation brings with it the risk of overlap. The board sought to reduce such overlap as much as possible, although it was impossible to eliminate it altogether. Such technical revision, however, did not at all infringe upon the divergence of perspectives.

VI

We would like to thank the authors of the articles for their sometimes sorely tried patience and understanding – especially those who were already working on this project in 1983 and who had to learn time and again that our announced publication date was premature. Sadly, several of those authors did not live to witness the appearance of this volume: Emilia Giancotti, Helmut Gollwitzer, Dieter Herms, Gudrun Klatt, Karl Kühne, Henri Lefebvre, Eduard März.

We are grateful to the Institute of Philosophy of the Freie Universität Berlin for their support of this project and for the provision of workshop space. We thank the *Das Argument* collective for contributing to the fundamental financing of this project through their labor. That this volume can now be given to the public after ten years of work is a tribute to the idealism of all those who contributed in their various ways.

With the exception of a two-year position supported by the public Job-Creation Measure in 1986-87 no other funding could be found. A comprehensive project such as this would be difficult to complete through idealism alone.

The editorial board and the publishers hope not only for a positive reception but also for suggestions and collaboration.

“Truth is the daughter of time,” said Bacon. What most sharply differentiates the Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism from previous works is that has been imprinted by precisely that historical moment of secular upheaval that for many has meant hopelessness or resignation, but that can just as well be understood as a moment of impartial critique out of which an impulse for the future might spring.

Berlin, Autumn 1994

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Translated by Joseph Fracchia and Elizabeth C. Penland

Preface to the Second Edition

The second edition contains several minor corrections; a list of the errata is provided on the last page.

Even though barely a year has passed and the international reception has barely begun, we are pleased that a second printing has become necessary. Frank Cunningham has recently challenged the English-speaking world to “make use of the publication in its original German”, rather than waiting for a translation. Those who have become accustomed to the limited, local use of the German language will be astonished to hear from an Anglo-Canadian mouth that “Even those with only an elementary command of the language will be surprised to see how relatively easy it is to make sense of the topics in an area where one already has expertise.” Indeed, it is not only Humboldt and Goethe who will again inspire critical intellectuals around the world who are interested in social theory to learn German, but above all, Marx and Engels – and in this context Hegel.

Since the original appearance of the present volume more than one-hundred new contributors have joined, and great progress has been made in internationalizing the project. The total number of the categories to be included in the Dictionary is now more than 1,400.

Other aspects of the situation, however, are less positive. The *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) has refused to support the Dictionary. Moreover, the financial crisis in the university has begun to threaten the funding of the most elementary technical needs (e.g. copying, communication costs). In order to keep the project alive, we have availed ourselves of civil society and have founded the Berlin Institut for Critical Theory (InkriT). We ask for your support.¹ Further information can be obtained from the editorial board.²

¹ See <http://www.inkrit.de/index.htm>, section “Fellows”

² Write to Peter Jehle <peterjehle@inkrit.org>