

The crisis of French Marxism

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It is already several years since Perry Anderson wrote, not incorrectly, that “Paris is today the capital of intellectual reaction in Europe.” [1] In the same text he put forward the notion that France, Germany and Italy had been the countries of refuge for Marxist theory after the defeats suffered by the workers’ movement in the inter-war period. On the other hand, the rebirth of a Marxist culture after 1968 was expressed by a shift in its theoretical and geographic centre of gravity – from philosophical or epistemological to economic concerns and from a decline of “Latin Marxism” to a new Anglo-Saxon hegemony.

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Considered yesterday as powerful because true, received and flattered by university institutions, Marxist research is today unemployed, in tatters and reduced to beggary. It would however be an illusion to think that this poverty is the ransom of former splendour. The idea of “non-existent Marxism” in France does not only apply to the beginning of the century but even before. [2]

Before the First World War, figures like Jean Jaurès and Lucien Herr only had a distant relationship with Marx, and Guesde was only a common vulgariser: there was no one of the stature of Labriola, no discussion comparable with the great controversies of Russian, German or Austrian socialism. [3] At the time of the Third International there was nothing that can be compared, even distantly, with Gramsci, Korsch, Lukacs, Grossman. [4]

There are reasons for this sterility

Perry Anderson sheds light on his picture of “Western Marxism” by the distended relationship and quasi-rupture between theory and practice, through the effects of Stalinism and the defeats of the 1930s. In France this break took place a great deal further back. To a certain extent it comes from the French Revolution and formation of the Republic. A deep gulf was then created between on the one hand a militant workers’ movement, hardened by the memory of June 1848 and the Commune, distrustful of institutions and intellectuals, and on the other a progressive, socialist-inclined intelligentsia sucked in by university careers or parliamentary promotion.

The result was a lasting divorce between a radical social movement, tinted with workerism (whose legacy passed from revolutionary syndicalism to the Communist Party of the 1930s) and university intellectuals, strongly impregnated with positivist traditions, obstinately hostile to German philosophy and dialectics. Comte already intended to chase away the spectre of the revolution by finding the recipe for progress in order. [5] By recommending the treatment of “social facts as things”, Durkheim saw sociology as a remedy for social pathology. [6] His lectures on socialism, given at the University of Bordeaux in 1895, follow in the footsteps of Saint-Simon and Comte, to reach the conclusion that the history of socialism “is intertwined with the history of sociology”.

Faithful to his rules of method, a stranger to any idea of critical theory, he reduced socialism itself to a social fact or a “thing”.

In short, by encouraging a certain social mobility and cooptation into the new elites, the parliamentary republic very early on wrenched its potential organic intellectuals away from the workers’ movement. By elevating Voltaire and Enlightenment thinking to the status of state ideology, it established a fierce intellectual protectionism and the rule of the universities. The rare original thinkers and militant figures were outsiders and marginalized like Blanqui, Sorel or Bernard Lazare. [7] They shared a fierce criticism of positivism. Only Sorel, despite his confusion and his wanderings, had an approximate knowledge of Hegel and sometimes an original interpretation of Marx. But his thinking was too subversive for social-democracy, too anti-positivist for the Stalinised Communist Party and his associates too compromising for him to have any influence.

The shock of the Russian Revolution could have led to a reunion between an intellectual vanguard and the social movement. This was partly the case. The attraction of the October Revolution had an effect above all in literary circles, particularly the rallying of support from the surrealist current to the young Revolution. But the birth or rebirth of militant Marxism was suffocated in the egg by the forced Bolshevisation of the young Communist Party and the Stalinisation of the International.

The work of Georges Politzer testifies to this missed rendezvous. [8] A comparison of his *Critiques des fondements de la psychologie* of 1925 with his articles of the 1930s on Diderot and Descartes, or with his *Principes elementaires de philosophie*, is enough to show the extent of the disaster. From an explorer of living Marxism, on the path to a constructive meeting with psychoanalysis, he became a craftsman of the “popular front” in philosophy; faced with the rise of irrationality, he set himself to dig the static and derisory trenches of the Enlightenment and Cartesian rationality. More broadly, the triumph in Moscow of the needs of the state over class consciousness, allowed communist intellectuals to find, through selected texts of Engels or Lenin, traces of the good old positivism. [9]

In Paris, they did not want to know that, in the 1857 crisis, Marx “by sheer chance” plunged into Hegel’s *Logic* before settling down to the slow process of producing *Capital*. Nor that Lenin, under the blow of August 1914, found nothing more urgent than to plunge himself onto the same *Logic*, to seek a second breath of Marxism different from the orthodoxy of German social-democracy. Hegel did make a discreet entrance into the universities with Kojève’s lectures on *Phenomenologie de l’Esprit*, but, as far as French thinking is concerned, he has remained basically a “dead dog”. [10]

As for the Communist Party, far from worrying about the relationship between theory and practice, it had a bluntly utilitarian conception of intellectuals. According to the rules of a rigorous division of labour between the learned and politics, or between poets and politics, they were useful petition-signers and gatherers for the big anti-fascist battles, decorative allies on platforms, without ever ceasing to be dubious allies, incurably petty-bourgeois, and thus likely traitors. In life and death, Paul Nizan remained haunted by this traitor syndrome.

In both the Second and Third Internationals the link between theory and practice was always very precarious. No great theoretical controversies, no schools of thought, an almost total drought and sterility of Marxism torn between literature and activism.

The Resistance was the crucible of a third encounter between the workers’ movement and intellectuals. The Communist Party won enormous prestige from this and attracted a new generation: Althusser, Desanti, Furet, Le Roy Ladurie, Morin, Duras, even Foucault went through the Communist Party. [11]

This is so much the case that if we look for the Golden Age of Marxism in France, it is the 1960s and

the outstanding publications of Althusser which come naturally to mind. In any case this is where its international reputation comes from. In fact this misleading academic sanctification was a precursor of the ideological debacle of the 1970s. It was not in fact a renaissance of militant Marxism but the establishment of a “scientist” Marxism, fitted meekly into the framework of triumphal structuralism.

The 1950s were the years of disenchantment. The Liberation had not lived up to its promise of radical emancipation. France was sucked into its colonial wars and the parliamentary swamps of the Fourth Republic. The armed crushing of Budapest and the revelation of the Khrushchev report had extinguished the great sun of Stalingrad. A section of the intellectual elite began to turn away from the present and the hot events of the day to brood over its melancholy in the distant past.

The anthropological work of Levi-Strauss developed under the triple sponsorship of Comte, Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. [12] It also identified with a certain interpretation of Marx: “Marx taught that social science was no more built on the level of events than physics on the basis of facts about sensitivity.” Structural anthropology sought in kin relationships the same universal invariants as those revealed in language by Saussurian linguistics. While the research inspired by these methods could turn out to be fruitful in their respective disciplines, they nevertheless inspired an ideology of the time which left behind history, words and meaning. [13]

The relatively prosperous capitalism of the post-war period seemed then to be definitely established in the immobility of its structures. The new history dissolved events into the long term. History as such was in disgrace and its narrative knowledge seemed very unrigorous alongside the grand structural architecture. There were a few voices, such as those of Castoriadis, Morin or Lefort, [14] to denounce this form of “refreezing” of thought by the radical eviction of any subjectivity. Calling openly for the formation of a “non-dialectical culture”, Foucault politely sent Marx back to the closet of the nineteenth century from which he could not emerge:

“At the deepest level of Western knowledge Marxism did not introduce any real break; it placed itself without difficulty within an epistemological disposition which accepted it with favour. Marxism is in the thought of the nineteenth century like a fish in water, that is to say that anywhere else it can no longer breathe.” [15]

Louis Althusser’s intervention came in the context of this ideological offensive. With the lapse of time it is not easy to understand the fascination of these texts, which on rereading have aged rapidly and badly. By trying to give Marxism its scientific credentials, Althusser seemed to emancipate theory from the fussy protection of politics. He seemed to turn the page of the Cold War period, that of the “intellectuals in arms”, “philosophers we were, without writings of our own, but making politics of all writing”. [16]

From now on, “theoretical practice” became in itself “its own criterion”, the validity of theoretical practice was to be found in theory itself, dispensing with the traditional Marxist notion of the confirmation of theory in social and political practice. For the communist students of the time, in conflict with the authority of the Party, this emancipation of theory gave the signal for a new freedom of thought.

Thus Althusser gave Marxism a scientific and academic dignity. In the Introduction to *For Marx*, he openly confided this frustration of the Communist intellectual seen as a simply mercenary petitioner:

“There was no way out for a philosopher. If he spoke and wrote the philosophy the Party wanted he was restricted to commentary and slight idiosyncrasies in his own way of using the Famous Quotations. We had no audience among our peers.” [17] Passing from the clash of ideological swords to the serene majesty of scientific laws, Marxism was finally accorded the precious recognition of

academe.

This was a godsend for the green young generation of the university boom. Servants of a new all-powerful — because true — science, the intellectuals lost their guilt faced with the “party of the working class” and became themselves producers without complexes, because, said the master, “knowledge should also be seen as production”. They thus had both the technocratic power of this science and the good conscience of the cause.

If the Althusserian proposition of the “epistemological break” in Marx introduced a new freedom, this freedom had its price. [18] A theory emancipated from politics? Certainly. But to such a point that it locked itself into the closed frame of its own “theoretical practice”, at a respectful distance from practice itself. In this armed peace between theory and practice, politics remained in the politician hands of the party leadership.

So it was a sort of controlled freedom. A new breath of air blew through the student cells, heavy with the cold smoke of the orthodox dialectical materialism. Althusser invited dialogue with linguistics, with psychoanalysis, anthropology. The new generation enthusiastically took to Lacan, Godeliei Foucault, Barthes. [19] This appetite for great discoveries was nevertheless at the cost of history, the poor relation of the new “epistemological foundation”. Because “the knowledge of history is no more historical than the knowledge of sugar is sugary”, historical history could be left to the ideologues and the corpses of the Gulag could freeze in peace. The new science would not disturb Stalin’s ghost. In fact it paid him homage. All fire was in fact directed against the “theoretical leftism” of Lukacs or the “historicism” of Gramsci, accused of confusing “within historical materialism both the theory of history and dialectical materialism, which are however two different disciplines”.

A major sin! Which was counterposed to the applied reading of the immortal masterpiece of the master linguist of the Kremlin, of the chorus master of science, of Stalin in person, *Historical Materialism and Dialectical Materialism*. A science of history on the one hand; on the other, a science “of the distinction between truth and error”, a meta-science, a metalogy, a general epistemology? Between the two, political practice remained the secular sphere of competence of the party.

Because this science and the regime could live easily together. They had in common a taste for order. One of Althusser’s texts marks one of his rare direct interventions in the crisis of the Union of Communist Students (UEC). Today it sends shivers down our spine:

“Any discussion between communists is always a scientific discussion: it is on this scientific basis that the Marxist-Leninist conception of criticism and self criticism rests; the right to criticise and the duty to self-criticise have one and the same principle: the real recognition of the Marxist-Leninist science and its consequences.” [20]

The distinction between technical division and social division of labour was used to justify, through the inequality of the pedagogical relationship, a certain university order, on condition that in what was taught one could discern “the permanent dividing line between technical division and social division of labour, the most constant and deepest class dividing line”, between “real science” and “pure ideology”.

Such an approach could lead just as well to submission to academic verdicts on “true science” as well to the purely ideological rebellions inspired by the Cultural Revolution, against everything which could be denounced as bourgeois “fake science”: science and ideology were closely intertwined beyond the famous “break”.

Some years later, one of the first disciples, Jacques Rancière, noted bitterly:

“The Marxism that we learnt in the Althusserian school with the vehemence and perhaps the excesses of the break, was a philosophy of order, all of whose principles distanced us from the revolt movement shaking the bourgeois order.” [21]

Pushed towards politics by the shake-up of 1968, Althusser came up against the unavoidable wall of Stalinism. Despised history was to hit back against the empty arrogance of structure. Althusser thus dealt with Stalinism in his own manner. As a “theoretical deviation” and not as a formidable counter-revolution, heavy with all the non-conceptual weight of its purges and camps. In 1973 in his *Réponse à John Lewis*, the positive still weighed much more than the negative in the scales of dialectical materialism:

“Stalin cannot for very obvious and powerful reasons be reduced to the deviation which is linked to his name... He had other merits in history. He understood that the immediate miracle of the world revolution had to be given up and socialism built in one country, and he understood all the consequences: defending it at all cost as the base and rearguard of all socialism in the world, making it, faced with the siege of imperialism, an invulnerable fortress and thus as a priority giving it the heavy industry which produced the tanks of Stalingrad which served the heroism of the Soviet people in a struggle to the death to free the world of Nazism. This is also our history. And through the very tragedies and caricatures of this history, millions of communists learnt, even though Stalin taught them as dogma, that the principles of Leninism existed.” (!)

In 1973! The Althusserian version of Leninism was not in the vanguard of de-Stalinisation. This fixation laid the ground for the most spectacular turnarounds among his disciples. Their anti-communism today is as strong as their previous Stalinist (or Maoist) fervour. Althusser finally attacked the “Stalinist deviation”, but in order to better preserve the essence, at the cost of a new evacuation of history and its terrible crimes. “The only left criticism of the Stalinist deviation” was still for him the “criticism, silent but carried out in action, by the Chinese revolution”. That Soviet tanks were used in Prague and Budapest, the fact of the German-Soviet pact, and the camps whose existence was known well before Solzhenitsyn’s revelation, all this was just a detail; without theoretical status, just a handful of sand hardly moving under the boots of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, made rigid by dogmatism.

Althusser was careful to give an advance justification of his continuing blindness. The “theoretical deviations which led to the great historical failures of the proletariat” were “at bottom” philosophical deviations: “we are then close to understanding now why they submerged those who denounced them: were they not in a certain way inevitable as a result of the necessary underdevelopment of Marxist philosophy?”

Fortunate philosophy, which can arrive after the battle to look over a ruined field, after having left poor politics and vulgar practice floundering all day in blood and corpses. No period is immediately clear to its actors. But this wise owl has too easy an excuse: there are enough dissidents and oppositions liquidated, enough deported disappeared, to testify that this history was not the only history possible, and that Stalin was not a fatality written into the determinist machinery of dialectical materialism.

Ten years before his physical death, Althusser was carried away by the collapse of a wall, which he had contributed to building in the name of an illusory realpolitik and a certain idea of militant fidelity. In 1976 he still greeted the congress of the Communist Party as “a decisive event, a crucial turning point in the history of the French Communist Party and workers’ movement”. He criticised the abandoning of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the internal regime of the party, but

welcomed its strategic innovations and categorically rejected the possibility of a right to tendency: “the recognition of organized tendencies seems to me out of the question in the French Communist Party.”

In was only in 1978 that he wrote *Ce qui ne peut plus durer dans le Parti communiste* (What can no longer continue in the Communist Party). Very late. Too late. Once again, philosophical Marxism arrived after the battle to record the damage. His “universe of thought” abolished, Althusser did not take long to fall into definitive silence. Armed with the scalpel of science, he thought he could send history to the rubbish bin of ideology.

History exacted a cruel revenge

What is considered today as the Golden Age of French Marxism was thus a terrible misunderstanding. Did Marxist theory in France, or even simple knowledge of Marx advance? Undoubtedly. But in a distorted way. The foreign reader should be reminded of the extraordinary university protectionism and the editorial provincialism reigning in France. In the 1960s, a large amount of Marx’s work, including the *Grundrisse*, was unavailable in French. The texts of the Frankfurt school and some books by De Volpe and Colletti were only translated in the 1970s. The third volume of *Principe Esperance* was published in 1992. The main books by Grossmann and Rosdolsky are still not available. Not a single text by Zeleny, Alfred Schmidt, Geymonat, Dussel or Sacristan exists. Just a few titles from Anglo-Saxon Marxism and almost nothing from Japanese Marxism.

Althusser’s success created a movement towards Marxism. He provoked passionate discussions. But this call to read *Capital*, of salutary effect on an intellectual tradition that was so little prepared to welcome Marx’s thought, was not without its paradoxical consequences. Many thought that reading Althusser’s *Lire le Capital* (Reading Capital) dispensed them from reading *Capital* itself. Obviously, Althusser was not responsible for this.

The current of thought associated with the name Althusser has the inconveniences of a school without the advantages. In practice, it hid the fact that there were other approaches (Mandel’s books sold well but almost without engaging discussion or criticism, Michel Henry’s book on Marx in 1977 passed almost without notice [22]), without nourishing a real current able to stand up to the ideological about-turn of the 1980s. Philosophers like Etienne Balibar or Georges Labica remain faithful to their origins but it is now difficult to see the effects of the Althusserian legacy in their research because it has subsequently been largely influenced by Gramsci and the Italian Marxists. [23]

In the mid-1960s, the Althusserian wave pushed into the background fertile and promising work such as that of Lucien Goldmann [24], who died too young, or Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre was however, for young militants enthusiastically throwing themselves into the adventure of Marxism, a reviving and to a certain extent pernicious source. In 1958 he broke publicly with the party and his book *Le somme et le reste* was banned. In the eyes of critical intellectuals, the author nevertheless remained the respected but contested philosopher of an open Marxism interested in everything. While Garaudy and Althusser remained, in their irreducible opposition, two old cast-offs, Lefebvre, a freelance sniper, was greedy for the joy of living and exploring. Previously considered lazy, after his break with the party he became extraordinarily productive, as though suddenly freed from internal censorship. Sociologist of daily life, and philosopher of history, the theory of language, problems of cybernetics and urbanism; critical of the state, he opened up many new areas of work and often left them unfinished. In this frenetic production there are quite a lot of good things and quite a lot of

waste. This is perhaps why Lefebvre has been a lasting influence without ever creating a school.

He is nevertheless part of this diffuse current, difficult to reduce to the badly-named “68-thought” to which it is attempted to reduce French Marxism today. [25] Through his reading of Pascal or Hegel, he camped firmly on the dialectical and anti-positivist side. In the period when the structural machineries were triumphing, he worked as a craftsman decoding the surface effects of everyday life. Always seeking the tiny indications of fragmentary resistance to the “bureaucratic society of ordered consumptio”:

“To break the vicious circle ... we require nothing less than the conquest of everyday life by a series of actions — seizures, assaults, transformations — that should be carried out according to a strategy. It is only what follows which will tell us that we have thus rediscovered unity between language and real life, between life-changing action and knowledge.”

Having written these lines at the University of Nanterre in 1967, Lefebvre was certainly one of those the least surprised by the “eruption” of 1968.

He was in fact a point of resistance to the structuralist wave:

“Claude Levi-Strauss’ campaign against history and historicity can only be explained by a violent prejudice in favour of the synchronic against the diachronic, which is not necessary. This is structuralist dogmatism.” [26]

Grafted onto the already rigid body of Stalinised Marxism, this dogmatism cohabited perfectly well with the positivist posterity dear to French universities. It could on the other hand only be in conflict with a historical and dialectical approach. Identified with the “ideological” humanism of the young Marx, Lefebvre in his turn became a sort of “dead dog”. From 1958, he had the impertinence to write:

“Marxism has its own categories. It changes in the light of the historical and social conditions. It develops through objective contradictions, of which some the most important from this point of view, are its contradictions.”

In short, he lacked respect for the sacred epistemological break.

In 1965, he followed through his idea. Three years after the publication of *Tristes tropiques*, the same year as the publication of *For Marx*, and a year before the publication of the *Ecrits* of Lacan and of *Mots et Choses*, he obstinately rejected the dissolution of the subject into the structure, of the event into space:

“A revolution flows from a structure; but the revolutionary event is conjunctural.”

What was clearly at stake in this controversy was yet again nothing else than the positivist kowtowing of a certain Marxism to the stupid evidence of the facts:

“Neo-positivism puts (or thinks it puts) a full stop to challenging, preferring to record.”

Against the illusions in progress and the claim of modernity to achieve unlimited growth in the supposedly eternal stability of structure, Lefebvre warned against “remarkable, indeed spectacular, growth without development.” [27]

Coming back to the question from another angle, he counterposed a demythologised conception of historicity to the deceitful religion of history. Against the stream of a history without long-term in

opposition to periodisation, he still dared state that the theory of history turns into strategy:

“The notion of strategy overcomes the oppositions and distinctions usually used in analysing the facts: causality and finality, chance and determinism.” [28]

Lefebvre has been reproached for his later (at the end of the 1970s) move towards the CP. It was indeed a strange move, or, perhaps a gesture of defiance to the prevailing climate, from he who from 1958 had proclaimed the independence of critical thought:

“The Marxist political man will show that the “camp” of the socialist countries is not shaken that the contradictions in this camp do not lead to conflicts, that it retains its political cohesion, its economic and military power, that it has even been strengthened, determinant in a new world; that the Communist Party continues to present a coherent line, an objectively established programme. The Marxist philosopher cannot be content with ideological and philosophical arguments, nor with taking political positions. He is sorry for the political man when he sees him, through forced blindness or lack of lucid sincerity, obliged to deny the malaise. He, the philosopher, wants to first of all clarify the contradictions within socialism, to which politicians too often only make allusions, to then immediately hide them.”

Breaking with the party, he was led to rehabilitate the critical place of philosophical discourse, without being able to find the ground for a new practice. This was still the period when it was said “no health outside the party”. However, although Althusser continued his theoretical practice at a prudent distance from the policy of the party, the “philosophical” discourse of Lefebvre was from the outset an intervention into the private hunting grounds of the party and a frontal accusation of Stalinism: “Marxism has become a state ideology and the ideology of the state”. The Rajk trial and the tanks in Budapest in his opinion demanded a theoretical and moral break as clear as that caused by the Dreyfus trial. The Rajk trial? It was undoubtedly a little late. But it was nevertheless earlier than the Maoist novices who only discovered the Gulag and woke up from their Stalinist hypnosis with Solzhenitsyn.

Lefebvre undoubtedly made concessions and compromises. He never fitted very well into the Stalinist mould. It was perhaps because he belonged to the generation of the 1920s raised by the breath of October, to which belonged the group of philosophers (Guterman, Friedmann, Politzer, Nizan, Lefebvre), that there was always something a living pre-Stalinist Marxism in him. Coming from a youthful and revolutionary period, something filled with hope continued to come to the surface.

The rupture in 1968 and the reaction of the social movement should logically have encouraged a shake-up of the theoretical field. Previously triumphant structuralism fell into disgrace and repressed subjectivity took its revenge. The time when Levi-Strauss gave social sciences the goal not of constituting man but of “dissolving” him seemed past. As Perry Anderson quite correctly notes, this turnaround brought back to the front of the scene a “subjectivism without subject”, a subject disintegrated by the force of his desires.

Under the symbolic banner of the *Rhizome*, a prolific tuber, Deleuze and Guattari sounded the battle cry of their charge against Marxism. The *repentis* of Maoism like Glucksmann, Bernard-Henry Levy, Jambert, Lardreau and many others undertook the painful process of the return march: the wind from the West had won over the wind from the East. From 1972, the signing of the Common Programme of the Left left the ideologues disarmed at the return to politics. Summoned to undertake militant activity, most of them threw in the sponge and returned to their own business, discovering the revengeful virtues of good old philosophy. Disenchanted, they pompously announced to the world that the masses were good but the proletariat bad; the revolution good but politics bad,

self-proclaimed spokespersons excellent but the activists frightful. [29]

Perry Anderson considers that the 1970s were the years of a shift in Marxist controversies: from philosophy towards strategy, from epistemology to economy. The result is nonetheless rather meagre, in France anyway.

As far as strategy is concerned, the discussion stimulated by the balance sheet of May 1968, of Chile and of the Portuguese Revolution, was a straw fire. Apart from certain contributions by Poulantzas and re-readings of Gramsci (Christine Buci-Glucksmann), there is almost nothing left. The ephemeral effervescence of Eurocommunism was the occasion to rediscover Kautsky and Austro-Marxism, hardly to innovate. As for the economic discussion that was also short-lived. The group around the review *Critique de l'Economie politique* (Vallier, Salama, Dallemagne) fell apart without forming a school. The regulatory school, which appeared at the beginning of the 1980s, was only partly related to Marxism. [30] While it had the merit of enriching the theory of long waves, while it could profit from reading *Capital* without just confining itself to Volume I but the three books and the overall regulation of reproduction as whole, while it drew attention to the new sociology of work, it seems to have already reached the limits of its contribution. [31]

However, the balance sheet is even worse to the extent that the prosperity of the previous period is exaggerated. Marxist theory in France suffers from many handicaps. First of all the absence of dialectical thought. Badiou, and he was not wrong, found only three eminent representatives: Pascal, Rousseau and Mallarmé! It is undoubtedly not by chance that those producing original work come from a foreign culture (L. Goldmann, Michael Löwy, R. Fausto). And we have still not finished paying the price for the suffocation of critical thought by the Communist Party.

However, the success of Althusser and his school was in direct proportion to the lack of knowledge of Marxism in France. At least today there is some media coverage and academic welcome of Marxism. It is even being normalised. But there is much greater knowledge of the texts and much research, that is as discreet as it is original, in history, in epistemology, in philosophy or in economy. But there is the problem that the collapse of the Communist Party, without any significant militant current emerging, is leaving this work to lie fallow, without political condensers or a real place for discussion.

In other words, the break between theory and practice is deeper than ever, and this has necessarily a cost. Some reviews try to create the links for a discussion. In the first rank of these are *Actuel Marx*, although it is not without certain faults of academic Marxology. The group around Jean-Marie Vincent and Toni Negri with *Futur Antérieur* is an interesting attempt. *Critique Communiste* is the only militant theoretical-political review. Intellectuals like Andre Gorz, Patrick Tort, Maurice Godelier, A. Badiou continue with solitary and original work.

More generally, the French infirmities of Marxist theory remain. Divided between a philosophical tradition and anthropological or historical research, it is resistant to economy, or, more exactly, to that movement of knowledge which Marx, in counterposition to the parcelling out of the positive sciences called "the German science". [32] At a time when the dominant ideology is once again announcing the death of Marx, or where a lazy ready-to-think is content with a fast-food of chosen quotations, the refoundation (or foundation) of a Marxist culture requires reading Marx. Twenty-five years after Althusser first made the invitation, this work remains to be done.

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P.S.

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Footnotes

[1] Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, London, 1983.

[2] Daniel Lindenberg, *Le marxisme introuvable*, Paris.

[3] Jean Jaurès: One of the main leaders of French socialism before the First World War, assassinated for his opposition to the war. Lucien Herr: influential French socialist intellectual at the turn of the century. Jules Guesde: one of the so-called Marxist leaders of the French Socialist Party at the turn of the century. Antonio Labriola: Italian Marxist philosopher at the turn of the century.

[4] Antonio Gramsci: Important Italian theoretician of Marxism between the wars, notably in his *Prison Notebooks* written while imprisoned by the fascist authorities. Georg Lukacs: Hungarian Marxist and literary critic. Member of Bela Kun government in 1918., later a critical supporter of Stalinism.

[5] Auguste Comte: founder of “positivist” sociology.

[6] Emile Durkheim: Leading figure of modern French positivist sociology (19/20th century).

[7] Auguste Blanqui: French revolutionary of the 19th century, criticised for elitist and conspiratorial methods. Georges Sorel: French syndicalist theoretician. Bernard Lazare: Jewish-French libertarian socialist intellectual, among the first defenders of Dreyfus against anti-Semitic slanders (turn of the century).

[8] Georges Politzer: French Communist (Stalinist) philosopher and psychologist, killed by the Nazis during the Second World War.

[9] On this see Georges Labica, *Le marxisme-leninisme*, Paris.

[10] Kojève: French-Russian philosopher, introduced Hegel to the French public during the 1930s.

[11] Michel Foucault: postmodernist philosopher and historian of sexuality.

[12] Claude Levi-Strauss: French anthropologist. Marcel Mauss: French anthropologist follower of Durkheim (between the wars).

[13] See F. Dosse, *Histoire du structuralisme*, two vols, Paris, 1991-92.

- [14] Cornelius Castoriadis: French-Greek philosopher and psychoanalyst, ex-Trotskyist, former leader of the Marxist movement “Socialism or Barbarism” (1940s-50s).
- [15] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, Paris, 1966.
- [16] Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, London, 1966, p. 22.
- [17] *Ibid*, p. 27.
- [18] Althusser’s proposition that there was a distinct break between the “Young Marx” and later, marked by the book *The German Ideology*, characterised by his development of a theory of history (historical materialism) and a new philosophy (dialectical materialism).
- [19] Jacques Lacan: philosopher of psychoanalysis. Maurice Godelier: contemporary structuralist anthropologist and sociologist.
- [20] Louis Althusser, *Problemes etudiants*, Paris, 1963.
- [21] Jacques Rancière, *La leçon d’Althusser*, Paris, 1974. Rancière, philosopher and historian, is an ex-disciple of Althusser.
- [22] Michel Henry, *Marx*, 2 vols, Paris, 1977. This is an attentive reading of Marx, from a phenomenological point of view, at the antipodes of an Althusserian reading.
- [23] Etienne Balibar: Marxist philosopher, former member of CP and former disciple of Althusser. Georges Labica: Marxist philosopher, former member of the CP. Organizer of the *Dictionary of Marxism*.
- [24] Lucien Goldmann: French-Romanian Marxist philosopher, disciple of Lukacs.
- [25] Ferry and Renault, *La Pensee 68*, Paris, 1988.
- [26] Henri Lefebvre, *Le langage et la société*, Paris, 1966.
- [27] Henri Lefebvre, *La sociologie de Marx*, Paris, 1965.
- [28] Henri Lefebvre, *La fin de l’histoire*, Paris, 1970.
- [29] See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze et plain*, Paris 1977. Badiou is an ex-Maoist Marxist philosopher.
- [30] Of the “regulation school” economists, Alain Lipietz still identifies as a Marxist, unlike Aglietta and R. Boyer.
- [31] See the book of Dockes and Rosier, *Le rythmes économiques*, Paris.
- [32] See Manuel Sacristan, *El trabajo científico de Marx y su noción de ciencia*.