

Engels and utopia. An Apocryphal ✘ Testament : Socialism, Utopian and Scientific

Publié le lundi 9 septembre 2019, par [Henri Maler](#)
(Première publication : 1998).

No book can be delivered with its instructions and anyway no specific instructions would prevent others from existing. But...

The following information, I think, is reliable and, therefore, can be given some credence : Engels too was once young before becoming old. It is the young man who, examining *The progress of social reform on the continent*, *The situation in England*, *The progress of communism in Germany* (the titles of his first articles), acknowledges and examines the various forms of socialism and communism without *ever* dismissing them as Utopias [1]. This same young man who, in most of the articles I have referred to, but also mainly in his *Description of communist colonies appeared lately and still existing* and his *Elberfeld address*, constantly praises communism for its effectiveness and rationality [2]. First for its effectiveness, since regarding the communist colonies, “we can see that all these experiments have been successful and that the community of property is not impossible at all” ; then for its rationality, insofar as Engels contrasts the “rational manner” of “regulating the economic affairs of society”, found in the “works of English socialists and some writings of Fourier”, with an unconscious mode of production, contrary to Reason, left “to the mercy of chance” [3]. In the same way, he contrasts, “the world of the free market” where “a rational organisation is out of the question” with a “sensibly organised society.” [4] The young man writing *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* or *The condition of the working class in England*, is, in many respects, ahead of Marx.

It is with that impatient young man, flirting on the outskirts of Utopia perhaps more than on the outskirts of philosophy, that an essay on the relationships between Engels and Utopia should start. However, since I must deal with “the legatee and theorist of Marxism” [5], I shall recall his youth only for the record, to check and correct the memory of the man become mature, since my contribution will address the meaning and the status of *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, i.e., a pamphlet that, it should be recalled, was to a certain extent pieced together from the chapters of a book, *The Anti-Düring*, that was to serve for a controversy dictated by the circumstances [6].

No book can be delivered with its instructions and anyway no specific instructions would prevent others from existing but Engels’s pamphlet has so often been the object of so many declarations of dutiful loyalty and has received so many testimonies of mournful forbearance, that we tend to be distrustful.

Those, for whom the announcement of science — found at long last — was a substitute for an examination of its foundations, took the short cut : a science so singular that it proposes to establish the foundations of revolutionary communism — no small feat ! Yet they first flattened it out into positivism crossed with dialectics and then folded it into a sort of scientism devoid of dialectics. With this brief depiction, the reader will have recognized the founders of orthodoxy, eager to squander the heritage and to establish their authority.

However, if Engels’s work is to be regarded as the “Introduction to Scientific Socialism”, hailed by Marx in his *Foreword*, it is insofar as the scientific transformation of socialism equals its dialectic transformation : the very strength of Engels’s demonstration lies in this statement

that, as we know, raises as many problems as it solves but which raises them on the appropriate ground. In other words, it is through dialectics that it is possible to get rid of abstract Utopia and open up to concrete Utopia.

Therefore, it is a misinterpretation to deplore either a short-sighted scientism on the one hand, as Sorel does when he fails to distinguish Engels's text from its orthodox fate, or its lack of Utopian warmth. Yet Engels is to be taken at his word when he sends "the scribblers and pen-pushers" back to their drawing-boards, adding, "Let them bring out the so-called superiority of their composed minds in the face of such 'follies'." "We prefer to rejoice in the emergence of brilliant ideas and germs of brilliant ideas that push up everywhere through the fantastic cover and to which those Philistines are blind." [7] If Engels left it to the Philistines to comment upon the founders' extravagance, it may be because he sensed that there would be no shortage of Philistines on the Marxists' side. If he preferred to rejoice at brilliant ideas, it is because he had not forgotten the enthusiasm of the impatient young man who praised, at times with some lack of judgment, all the Utopians' ideas that could contribute to a plan of total emancipation. The aging Engels remembered the young Engels.

In 1877 when Engels saw "a comprehensive breadth of view" in Saint-Simon, perhaps he remembered praising, as early as 1843, his "flashes of inspiration" but without saying exactly which ones. In 1877 the praise was more detailed but Engels was to make two attempts before achieving the final version.

On the contrary, when Engels praised Fourier's genius, he was certainly not reluctant in remembering the enthusiasm of his youth. In 1843, he retained from Fourier "the great axiom of social philosophy" — the satisfaction of the needs of all men through the free practice of every man's inclinations to activity. He called attention to the demonstration according to which "work and enjoyment can identify with each other". He praised the recognition of the need to promote association, although he immediately criticised Fourier's refusal to abolish private property [8]. Later texts abound in explicitly or implicitly admitted annexations, particularly about the alienation of work and its emancipation, the alienation of both men and women, and women's emancipation [9]. *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* reaffirms and expands on all this. However a point has perhaps not been sufficiently stressed so far : in a text focusing on the role of dialectics in the transformation of Utopia, Engels goes as far as to say that Fourier "uses the dialectic method in the same masterly way as his contemporary, Engels [10]".

Finally, as early as 1843, Engels was full of praise for Owen's plans and achievements, when dealing with his community experiments or with the relating building projects, warmly described in *the Elberfeld Address*. Time never lessened Engels's enthusiasm for Owen. For anyone who remembers that Marx and Engels's critique of Utopias rules out detailed programs and dogmatic dictates, such enthusiasm might even be regarded as out of proportion when reading the following statement, "And in his definite plan for the future, the technical working-out of details is managed with such practical knowledge (...) that the Owen method of social reform once accepted, there is from the practical point of view little to say against the actual arrangement of details [11]".

In any case, if one confines oneself to the above-mentioned pamphlet, it is obvious that the warm stream of concrete Utopia runs through the examination of the founders of socialism, who remained locked up in abstract Utopia. The considerable power of Engels's text lies in a bet that is largely won : to bring dialectics and Utopia together ; on this account, and with all the hazards of the genre, it is a founding text. But if the enthusiasm for Utopia is not altered by the proclaimed triumph of dialectics, why do the three chapters of *The Anti-Düring* in question still raise a number of questions ? Less probably because of the content they expound than because of the status that is attributed to them.

As the example of young Engels shows, *going through the phase of Utopia, however abstract Utopia may be, is necessary to the development of science*. Is it to be regarded as a biographical anecdote or as a theoretical imperative ? In the second case, is there not a Utopian phase that is necessary to the other way of establishing science addressed in Daniel Bensaïd's recent essay [12] ? Did what was true for Marx cease to be once "Socialism became a science" that had [now] to be elaborated in all its "details and relations", to use Engels's words [13] ? All these questions remain unanswered in Engels's pamphlet. Better yet, since some consider this pamphlet as the ultimate, exhaustive and final truth of Marx's theoretical work — a testamentary declaration as it were — they deliberately refrain from raising these questions.

To be convinced, one has only to dwell on the inconsistencies that can be found between the statements of this pseudo-testament and those in Engels's previous works and even more in Marx's : they disclose a complex itinerary [14].

A complex itinerary

What part did the founders play in the materialist development of socialism, in the critical development of economics and in the proletarian development of the theory ? The question is threefold : foundation, method and position are to be examined here. Marx and Engels's answers from 1844 to 1848 deserve to be recalled.

It is to its materialist *foundation*, acknowledged by the founders, that socialism owes its theoretical value. The now classic text, *The Holy Family*, shows how socialists and communists, as the heirs of French socialism, contributed to the materialist development of science ratified by the convergence of socialism and humanism. However Marx does not fail to emphasize that, because of the battle it had to wage against Hegelian speculative idealism and contrary to French materialism, German materialism had become "a materialism *now completed by speculation itself*." [15]

In *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx makes the implicit criticism even more explicit in turning it against Feuerbach himself : the limits of initial materialism are those of an *intuitive materialism* that, unlike *practical materialism*, is unable to capture the practical dimension of reality and, as a result, the conditions of its transformation. Unless human activity (and particularly revolutionary activity) is included in the understanding of materialism, one runs the risk of adopting either a contemplative attitude (Feuerbach's case) or a doctrinal position (common to eighteenth century materialists and to Utopians). Nevertheless, according to Marx, the materialist foundation of Utopian socialism represents undeniable progress.

The critique of economics became scientific owing to its *method*. At the outset, the first forms of socialism and communism seem to have played a major role in this process. In *The Holy Family*, Marx attributes to Proudhon the idea (inspired by Hegel) according to which "errors are the steps to science" [16] and stresses that each critical theory of economics is made possible by the previous one, and goes beyond it. In that respect, the allegedly Utopian works of Saint-Simon and Fourier should be regarded as historical phases of scientific development, of a scientific development of the critique of economics, "Therefore Proudhon's work is scientifically superseded by the critique of economics, including economics as it appears in Proudhon's concept." "But such a process has only been made possible thanks to Proudhon himself, in the same way as Proudhon's critique implies the critique of the mercantile system (mercantilism) by the Physiocrats, that of the Physiocrats by Adam Smith, that of Adam Smith — alongside with Fourier and Saint-Simon — by Ricardo." [17]

Yet in *Misère de la Philosophie*, the limits — so far lessened in the perspective of the merits — come to the fore : the first critiques of economics confine themselves to Utopia when they oppose a totality, whose logical sequence they cannot apprehend, to contradictions, whose origin they cannot understand. The break with Proudhon is established ; Ricardian socialists,

who rebel against Ricardo's conception on his very ground, are given a better treatment, though they indulge in a Utopian interpretation of economics that precisely misses the point of view of totality that is the strength of Ricardo's conception. The fact remains that, according to Marx, Utopians have paved the way for the critique.

Finally it is thanks to their *position* — more specifically to their class position — that Utopians are in keeping with the proletarian development of the theory. The writings of 1844-45 issue repeated praise in this respect : praise for Weitling and “the theoretical superiority of the German proletariat”, praise for Proudhon and his “first scientific manifesto of the proletariat”, praise for the “intellectual creations” of the French and English workers [18]. *Misère de la Philosophie* is a confirmation of such a proletarian development, “As economists are the scientific representatives of the bourgeoisie, socialists and communists are the theorists of the proletariat. [19]”

But such praise should not hide a more complex reality that is gradually disclosed. Although they can claim to support the interests of the working class, Utopians, due to the weak development of class struggle, tend to dilute such support insofar as they claim to directly represent the interests of all mankind. Socialists and communists may well be, “the theorists of proletariat” since as a priority they show a great deal of interest in the fate of the working class. Nevertheless the early socialists and communists “are but Utopians” [20].

There is nothing enigmatic in Marx and Engels's evolution so far. Let us simplify things : the first assessments up to *The Holy Family* are contemporary with the *adoption* of revolutionary communism since the major perspective is *the socialist development of science*. The second assessments from *Theses on Feuerbach* to the *Manifesto* are contemporary with the *foundation* of revolutionary communism since the dominant outlook is *the scientific development of socialism*.

The first outlook gradually lets the second take over. The *socialist development of science* that accomplishes the transformation of economics and philosophy emphasizes the theoretical relevance of socialist critiques and that of the materialist foundations of their purpose : the replacement of the bourgeoisie's class point of view by the proletariat's class point of view. On the contrary *the scientific development of socialism*, which is implied by the development of socialism, emphasizes the theoretical shortcomings of a science that claims to be the foundation of the historical process and that, as a result, takes on a dogmatic position.

Those are the limits defined by the concept of Utopia when in 1847 it was first used to describe the first forms of socialism and communism, *for the first time* (as has to be stressed) in a publication by Marx, *Misère de la Philosophie*. To be more accurate, let us say that the existence of such limits is ratified by a new distinction, at least from a semantic point of view — the distinction between doctrinal science and revolutionary science : the various forms of socialism and communism, insofar as they speak not only the language of practice but also of theory, fall under doctrinal science that is to be superseded by its revolutionary outcome.

However the scientific dimension of Utopia is not omitted ; the Utopians' contribution to the development of science is not neglected, the part they play in the development of the critique is still highly praised, as can be seen in the *Manifesto*. The diagnosis is no longer exactly the same in *Socialism, utopian and scientific* ; primarily because this text does not embrace the dynamics of the elaboration of the theory but aims at recapitulating it.

A recapitulative assessment

The very title of the German version, *Development of Socialism, from Utopia to science*, is not as simplistic as the original title of the pamphlet in French. The fact remains that socialism has become a science. How ? “Socialism became a science” thanks to Marx's two “discoveries”, “the materialist conception of History and the revelation of the secret of capitalist production

through surplus-value" [21]. However when following Engels's demonstration it appears that those two discoveries owe nothing to Utopian socialism. Does this mean that, precisely for that reason, Utopian socialism does not play any theoretical part in the birth of scientific theory ? Here again the three above-mentioned questions appear again : foundation, method, and position.

Does the materialist conception of History owe its foundation to the Utopians' contribution in spite of their unfinished materialism ? In *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, at the moment of reckoning, nothing is less certain.

As the very composition of the second chapter shows, Engels explains the birth of scientific socialism by a twofold transition : from metaphysics to dialectics, from idealism to materialism. However, he emphasizes that it is the materialist concept of history, strengthened by its recourse to dialectics, which distinguishes scientific socialism from Utopian socialism, only to rule out *the part played by Utopians, with their limits, in the foundation of such a conception*. He merely remarks on their incompatibility, "the socialism of earlier days was incompatible with this materialistic conception as the conception of Nature of the French materialists was with dialectics and modern natural science [22]." Such a lapidary judgment contrasts with Marx's demonstration in *The Holy Family*. When Engels quotes excerpts from *The Holy Family* in his Introduction to the first English edition, not only are they presented in such a way that the importance of the French origin of materialism is lessened, they are also *excised of anything involving the relation to socialism*.

In the end and in spite of a *hampered method*, does the critique of economics still lie within the framework of the critique of the "founders of the systems" ? It is permissible to think so. Indeed, if Marx endorsed the uncompleted presentation of the history of materialism insofar as he did not write anything else on the same subject at the time, the situation here is different : Marx, in his *Theories about the Increase in Value*, judges economics and its history by his own method and by the results of his own work.

In that respect, the praise of Ricardian socialists, insofar as they are the heirs of classic economics, is re-asserted, as can be seen in the part dedicated to "the opposition to economists". This part is precisely limited to the socialist authors who "adopt the point of view of economics" or who "fight it from its very point of view", an opposition that Marx, due to those criteria, distinguishes from the opposition of the founders whose relegation is blatant [23]. In a "rigorously scientific History" (an expression Marx uses for Proudhon [24]), Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon are obviously out of place : they have not enlightened anybody in the least about the theory on the increase in value. In a similar way the critique of economics seems to have been born without the Utopians' contribution. It appears that, for Marx, the assessment made in the final perspective of the scientific development of socialism threatens to annihilate the lessons learned in the initial perspective of the socialist development of science.

Finally, should it be admitted that in spite of an ambiguous position the founders' socialism takes part in the proletarian development of science ? Such ambiguity is clearly emphasized in the *Manifesto*, "Even though they are aware of supporting working class interests in their social plans, the rudimentary form of class struggle as well as their own social position lead them to consider themselves as high above any class antagonism." "They want to better the situation of all the members of society, even the most privileged. [25]"

This ambiguity will lead Engels to say, "Not one of them appears as a representative of the interest of that proletariat which historical development had, in the meantime, produced. Like the French philosophers, they do not claim to emancipate a particular class to begin with, but all humanity at once. [26]" Even if the statement is true, such a presentation shows, at least in this passage, a clear change in tone. There is a blatant first shift : whereas Marx claims that

they are aware of supporting working class interests above all, Engels emphasizes that it is not a circumscribed class that they want to emancipate. A second shift follows : whereas Marx emphasizes their awareness that they support working class interests, Engels stresses the fact that they do not consider themselves as their representatives.

Let us make things perfectly clear : our purpose is not to denounce who knows what falsification of history or dogmatic distortion in Engels's text : in the perspective of the scientific development of socialism given as established (but only in this perspective) Engels's retrospective assessment is widely justified. It is however to be regarded as the sort of assessment it really is : a partial and temporary one. It has to be regarded as partial, otherwise it is Marx's Marxism that is mutilated, if it is admitted that the path that leads to truth is part of the truth. It also has to be regarded as temporary, otherwise it is the fate of Marxism after Marx that is ignored.

An incomplete assessment

How can the distortions between the texts of 1844-48 and Engels's pamphlet be explained ? What meaning can be attributed to them ? We cannot get away with merely observing the so-called inconsistencies or diagnosing an obvious evolution. Therefore it is necessary to start again from further back.

Assessments of the scientific value of Utopias differ according to the variations of the critique. It is a matter of perspective : as we have already mentioned, the perspective of a socialist development of science is gradually substituted by the perspective of a scientific development of socialism. To this change in perspective, a second one is added : the assessment of the founders is gradually conducted from a retrospective point of view and no longer from a prospective one. It is then possible to understand why the History Marx's works relate does not correspond to the one in Engels's text : at the moment of reckoning, the latter sets out a history of the transition to science which is operated *with* Marx's work, a history that does not line up with that of the transition at work *within* Marx's work. But if it is admitted that the path that leads to truth is part of the truth, the meaning of the result is to be sought in the dynamics of the work. To neglect the dynamics would imply that Engels's version, disconnected as it would then be from the real history of Marx's thought, would be promoted to the rank of official history, thus becoming a device aimed at a canonization of Marxism, the meaning of which would be distorted, contrary to the meaning of Engels's very text.

And yet it should be easy to understand that Engels's partial assessment cannot be regarded as an exhaustive lesson. Supposing such a lesson existed, it can only be drawn if Marx's work is captured in the entirety of its scopes and history. Nevertheless there is a part of this lesson which seems to be clear enough : *the meaning and function of the distinction between Utopian socialism and scientific socialism cannot be merely to dismiss Utopia for the sole benefit of science.*

The development of socialism from Utopia to science is not a mere transition, if this is supposed to mean a transition from one side to the other side (or worse, a transition to something else). It is a transition from Utopian socialism to scientific socialism that retains the continuity of what changes or passes. It is a transition only to the extent that it is also surpasses what prevailed before : *it is not the mere transmission of a heritage, but it is a rescue*, as Miguel Abensour demonstrated [27].

On the other hand if the final assessment (and above all its conclusion) Engels puts forward is the one to be retained, Science opposes Utopia. Such is the conclusion that stands out in the view of those who ignore, more or less deliberately, the initial dynamics of Marx's construction ; in the view of those who retain only the beginnings of the critique to come ; in the view of those who nullify assessments which, as they were drawn up before Science, were supposedly made null and void, obsolete, by the foundation of science. On the table that Engels invites us

to sit down at and enjoy the “brilliant ideas and germs of brilliant ideas that push up everywhere through the fantastic cover”, there are only leftovers : the praise of an anticipation of Science, enacted by Science. Such anticipation then takes on a specific meaning : Utopians’ anticipation is no contribution, but mere premonition : *the anticipation of Science plays no part in its elaboration.*

Thus for their critics, Utopias have no other value than what is attributed to childhood memories : touched by the charm that emanates from them, they delight in their immaturity in the same way as one delights in the childhood of humanity by contemplating Greek art. But Utopias are not works of art : the Philistines are back. The debt is paid off before taking leave with time out for a moment’s nostalgia. They treat themselves to a retrospective devoid of future and perspective. *The sales are on.* Before claiming that there is only *an opposition, and no remains,* between Science and Utopia.

By opposing Science and Utopia, Marx’s theory is guaranteed an unassailable *position of authority* : it alone can detect (unscientific or Utopian) heresies and therefore set the immovable boundaries of orthodoxy.

Furthermore, by opposing Science and Utopia Marx’s theory is guaranteed *a position of exclusive coverage* : the theory is granted the monopoly of science, with its monopolistic position the proof of its scientific qualities. From the monotheist point of view of orthodoxy, several forms of Utopian socialism might exist, but there is — and can be — but one, and only one, kind of scientific socialism.

Finally, the victory of Science over Utopia gives *a position of eternity* to Marx’s theory, thus set up within its definitive boundaries by the triumph of Science. The absorption of the multiplicity of Utopias into the unity of Science puts an end to their critique : once the vaccine has been inoculated, Science needs but a few regular booster shots to secure its immunity.

The distinction between Utopian socialism and scientific socialism, when limited to the mutual exclusion of Science and Utopia, does not only lead to promoting the return of the doctrinal science beyond which Marx had assigned himself to go. When limited to an unequivocal anticipation, it also hallows a conception of the history of the theory which reduces the Utopian phase to a short-lived premonition whose meaning wears out in the advent of Science. Such is the main lesson which is to be drawn if Engels’s assessment is not regarded as temporary but final.

So the Utopian phase would supposedly be a premonition, not a contribution : the heritage noted by Marx is thus defused. But if on the contrary this heritage is to be re-activated, Engels’s statement has to be radicalized : When Utopias are fertile, they are so thanks to what they surpass and not thanks to what they anticipate, at least in the flat sense of the notion of anticipation.

Furthermore the Utopian phase would supposedly be a short-lived premonition : thus the rescue operated by Marx is dissimulated. But if there is a lesson to learn from Utopias whose functions are terminated, it is *not* that the Utopian function is terminated. In their hurry to draw a conclusion, some miss (or forget) half of it.

Engels hastily pronounces the theoretical fall of Utopia because he firmly believes, with Marx, in its historical fall to come. There is no denying that the decline and decay of the founders’ Utopia, as well as that of their sectarian and petit bourgeois heirs, did happen according to Marx and Engels’s forecast. But such decline and decay are far from being the sign of the progress of emancipation and the end of all Utopia. The diagnosis of the theoretical fall of abstract Utopia and the forecast of its historical fall are not sufficient to explain either the always harmful return of doctrinal science within Marxism or the sometimes fertile revival of alternative Utopias outside Marxism.

The massive return of doctrinal Utopia within a Stanilized Marxism cannot be reduced to the temporary returns Marx envisaged ; neither can it be reduced to the necessary returns Lukacs alluded to, both types of returns being regarded by both of them as dangerous but fragile.

The insistent returns of alternative Utopias cannot be understood only as part of the fragmentary returns acknowledged by Ernst Bloch who considered them as contributions of secondary importance to a global but concrete Utopia, enclosed in Marx's communism.

The reader has probably understood : the certainty of the theoretical and historical decline and decay of Utopia might well only be the reverse side of a Utopian promise vested in History and by History : a promised Utopia, insistent in Marx's work, which unceasingly misled his heirs ; a chimerical Utopia which diverts from the strategic Utopia, outlined by Marx himself. Therefore, we have not finished reckoning with the Utopia that, for better or worse, makes up Marx's theory. The heritage needs to be filtered and redistributed, with no guarantee that this will lead to an authenticated Marxism, a "real" Marxism [28].

For the time being I can conclude thus : Engels's pamphlet does not represent Marx's testament any more than it represents Engels's political testament. If Engels was indeed "the legatee and theorist of Marxism", there is no choice but to admit that *his heritage, like ours, is not preceded by any testament* [29].

Translated by Jean-Louis Kara

Published in *Science & Society* - Vol. 62, No. 1, Friedrich Engels : A Critical Centenary Appreciation (Spring, 1998), pp. 48-61.

Source : « Engels et l'utopie. Un testament apocryphe : "Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique" », dans *Friedrich Engels, savant et révolutionnaire*, P.U.F, 1997 (actes du colloque tenu à l'Université de Nanterre, 17-18 octobre 1995).

[Version originale en français publiée ici même](#)

Voir en ligne :
<https://www.henri-maler.fr/Engels-and-utopia-An-Apocryphal-Testament-Socialism-Utopian-and-Scientific.html>

Notes

<https://www.henri-maler.fr/>

[1] Marx-Engels Werke (MEW), t. 1.

[2] MEW, t. 2.

[3] *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy*, in Engels, Selected Writings, Penguin Books, 1967, pp. 166-167.

[4] *The Elberfeld Address*, MEW, t. 2.

[5] Title of the conference session where this contribution was presented.

[6] *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, in Engels, Selected Writings, Penguin Books, 1967.

[7] op.cit, p. 190.

[8] So far we have referred to the article entitled *The progress of social reform on the*

Continent, MEW, t. 1, pp. 480-496.

[9] Fourier's praise of "enjoyable work" filters through in the following sentence, for instance, to be read in *The condition of the working class in England* : "As voluntary, productive activity is the highest enjoyment known to us, so is compulsory toil the most cruel, degrading punishment" (in Marx-Engels, *On Britain*, Moscow, 1953, pp. 151-152). Fourier's critical analysis of the alienation of both men and women is hardly different in another passage of the same book, the radical features and the ambivalence of which are astounding (op. cit., pp. 179-180).

[10] op. cit., p. 193

[11] op. cit. p. 196. Can such a statement be reconciled with the following one, in *La Question du logement (The Question of Housing)* ? : "Utopia does not consist in asserting that men will be freed of the chains forged by their historical past only if the opposition between town and country is done away with. Utopia begins from the moment when man decides to stipulate, 'from the basis of currently existing conditions', *the form* that the resolution of one or another opposition should take in present society (*The Question of Housing*, underlined by Engels). Such a distortion does deserve further analysis and commentary, as does the continuity that links together the utopians and Engels concerning the theme of a rational organization of society : what are the differences between the rationality invoked in the name of the Enlightenment, which Engels criticizes again and again, and the rationality claimed in the name of History, which constantly shows up throughout Engels's works whereas it is much more discreet in Marx's ?

[12] Daniel Bensaïd, *Marx, l'intempestif*, Fayard, 1995.

[13] op. cit. p. 205.

[14] An itinerary the winds and detours of which I tried to trace in *Congédier l'utopie ? L'utopie selon Marx, (Dismiss utopia ? Utopia according to Marx)*, L'Harmattan, 1994.

[15] *Die Heilige Familie*, Dietz Verlag Berlin, 1953, p.

[16] op. cit., p.

[17] op. cit, p.

[18] Respectively in " Comments to be added to the article concerning the King of Prussia and social reform" » (MEW t. 1, p. 405) and in *The Holy Family*, (op cit., p. 144 and p. 116).

[19] MEW, t. 4, p. 143.

[20] MEW, t. 4, p. 143.

[21] op. cit., p. 205.

[22] op. cit., p. 205.

[23] Chapter 21, *Gegensatz gerger die Ôkonomen*, MEW, t. 26.3, pp. 234-319.

[24] In his letter to J.B. Schweitzer, January 1st, 1865.

[25] MEW, t.4, p. 490.

[26] op. cit., p. 187. « Appears » or, more exactly, « considers himself »

[27] *Les formes de l'utopie socialiste et communiste. Essai sur le communisme critique et l'utopie*, Miguel Abensour, 1972. Out of this doctoral thesis (which has not been published as a whole) was taken *L'Histoire de l'Utopie et le destin de sa critique*, in *Textures* n° 6/7 (1973) and n° 8/9 (1974). The reader can also refer to the article "Marx, quelle critique de l'utopie ?", in *Lignes* n°17, October 1992, pp. 43-65.

[28] The rescue of socialism as it appears in its initial forms is not only the rescue of a vaguely glimpsed content, it is also the rescue of the theoretical scopes which it is based on. Scientific socialism can represent the development and the accomplishment of utopian socialism only to the extent that utopian socialism is already scientific. But the rescue of socialism is not a remainder-free operation : Utopia - whether of the sterile or fertile kind - remains in the heart of the theory by which it is supposed to be developed and amplified, and the heritage Marx bequeathed us needs to be filtered in its turn. This is what I have tried to accomplish in *Convoiter l'impossible. L'utopie avec Marx, malgré Marx (The pursuit of the impossible, Utopia with Marx and in spite of Marx)*, Albin Michel, 1995.

[29] An expression used by René Char in *Les feuillets d'Hypnos*.