

Interview with Michael Heinrich

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Michael Heinrich is the author of a major, multi-volume biography on Karl Marx. The first volume appeared 2018 – to coincide with the 200th anniversary of Marx’s birth – and is being translated into English. Heinrich’s research on Marx has coincided with the project of collecting the known manuscripts of Marx and Engels into the *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe*. His PhD dissertation, published as *The Science of Value* [Die Wissenschaft vom Wert - 1991], engaged with Marx’s critique of political economy, as well as the broader traditions of classical and neo-classical theories of political economy. Heinrich has also written commentaries and introductions on *Capital* and political economy as well as engaging in recent Anglophone debates over Marx’s theories in *Capital*.

What are the theoretical reasons for a biography? For you, Biography plays a

fundamental part in understanding Marx's theoretical work. Throughout the twentieth century, it seems that a debate over Marxist theory was equally a debate over Marx's biography and intellectual development as such. How has this translated into your account?

I have several reasons for doing so. The first reason comes from my prior theoretical work. When I wrote *The Science of Value* (1991), which will finally appear in English soon, I didn't simply present Marx's critique of political economy. I interrogated Marx's intellectual development. What was it about Marx's intellectual development that led to the critique of political economy? This taking into account of Marx's development was always present in my work. And in this I had to answer to – up to a certain point – Marx's biography. For example, I had to use Marx's letters for theoretical questions. But a letter is something quite different compared to a published text. With a letter you always have to ask *to whom* is this letter written? How free was Marx to tell the truth about his opinions? Did he merely seek to convince a publisher about a project or was he speaking to a comrade? You already need biographical context to answer these questions about the letters. The biographical context was therefore always present in my work, but I didn't fully realise that at the time.

In the last few years especially, new biographical works on Marx have been written. They seem to present Marx in a neutral way. During the Cold War it was quite easy to see: there were anti-Marxist biographies that personally damned Marx, and hagiographic biographies that put him up on a pedestal. Since the 1990s biographies appeared that basically said: "well yes, Marx was an important person, we are trying to look at his life and maybe we could also learn something about his works". They pretend to be neutral when they are not at all neutral. They are still biased, but they are presented in a much more sophisticated way.

Biographical writing has an even bigger political role today than it did during the Cold War. As I said, things were clear during the Cold War, but now they aren't so visible. I'll mention three recent biographies: Francis Wheen, Jonathan Sperber and Gareth Stedman Jones.[1]

Francis Wheen's book is well written and tries to present Marx's private life. However, he just invents large parts of it. He tells a lot of fairy tales and these fairy tales have great bias. As for Jonathan Sperber, judged by the extensive material he used, it seemed to be the most well founded biography when it appeared. Because he is a historian, he uses a lot of footnotes. You think every small detail is proven by the sources.[2] But when you check his sources, this isn't always the case. They don't always prove what *he* is saying. There is also a certain bias. Nevertheless, I think it is positive that Sperber says very clearly what he intends to do in his introduction. He explains his view that Marx was a person of the nineteenth century and has nothing to tell us today. Even though I disagree with this opinion, I esteem his clarity. Gareth Stedman Jones is not so open on this point, but I think he is doing something similar.[3] He also wants to put Marx back into the nineteenth century.

Biographies like these are far more effective than theoretical texts.

Theoretical texts are usually read by a small group of experts only. They discuss them in small circles. But biographies can reach a much larger audience and transport their messages far and wide. This was my other reason for writing a biography: it is important to settle accounts with all these fairy tales and to clear the space in order to discuss Marx's texts politically. I mean by this not only the important texts we all know, but also the journalistic texts and his notebooks that are less known, as well as his political actions.

Surely, the argument of biographers like Sperber, who claim Marx is a dinosaur of the nineteenth century, lack an understanding of the structural dynamics of capitalism. In a sense, they fall for the illustration rather than the structural dynamics of the capitalist mode of production. They see Marx's work as relegated to nineteenth-century England, which only functioned as his illustration, as he writes in the Preface to the first German edition of Capital.

I wouldn't be so quick! Using this preface, we can say that Marx *claimed* to do something other than simply analyse British capitalism. He wanted to present this as a theoretical development (as opposed to a presentation of capitalism's historical development). I always like to quote what comes in the manuscript of Volume 3, where Marx wrote that he wanted 'to present the internal organization of the capitalist mode of production in its ideal average'.^[4] But this is only Marx's claim. We can debate about whether he succeeded in carrying the claim through to fruition or not. Maybe he wanted this, but nevertheless was stuck in British capitalism. But if that were the case, we still have to discuss in detail what he was doing.

With Sperber as with Stedman Jones, I would say that they have a rather superficial treatment of *Capital*. Sperber's attitude is: Marx's theory is merely Ricardo's theory plus Hegelian dialectics. This is an old prejudice. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century this argument could be heard. In the meantime, we have many more of Marx's texts and many more discussions about Marx's critique of political economy, where the meaning of critique is considered, as well as the meaning of value, etc. Sperber ignores nearly all of this, but Stedman Jones does too.

Stedman Jones is very quick to say Marx failed in *Capital*. Why did he fail? Stedman Jones tries to show that with *Capital* Marx wanted to present a universal theory and he failed to do this. However, with this claim, Stedman Jones ascribes to Marx, he takes more from *Grundrisse* than from *Capital*.

We have to be cautious here. Was this really Marx's aim? What changed in Marx's development? According to Stedman Jones, the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* are essentially the same, so we can quote something from here and quote something from there. But I would say there is an epistemological difference between the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. Already the point, *what did Marx actually claim in his own terms*, how universal or non-universal the theory should be, is a difficult question. It should be discussed and the answer shouldn't be taken for granted so easily.

Let's talk something about the MEGA. In the English-speaking world there is a

divorce between the Marx and Engels Collected Works [MECW] – completed with a high degree of scientific precision which comprises of fifty volumes (unlike in France, where they don't have such a collection), and what is now taking place within the German world with the publications of the MEGA. The further publication of the MEGA creates a new space for debate going into the future and I see your biography as a way of orienting to discussions that will come of these publications, or at least orienting to them in a pre-emptive way. Are we at the beginning of new debates around Marx? This prospect really goes against the grain of the common-sense idea that everything has been written about Marx already, that nothing is new under the sun.

This last idea is really sweet. You can find it time after time. Again and again examples where people – as far back as the 1920s! – wanted to do a thesis on Marx and the professor said, “Oh a thesis on Marx, but everything about Marx has already been written! Choose another theme”. But Marx’s own writings were not even completely known. In the twentieth century, every generation has known a different Marx, because the different manuscripts were published only as time went on.

When the writings of the young Marx were published in the late 1920s and early 1930s, people used to say, “now we know the whole Marx! The old Marx and the young Marx”. And then, during the Second World War the *Grundrisse* were published. A broader reception started only in the sixties and seventies and again people said “Ah now we have the connecting link between the young and the old Marx! So now, finally, with *Grundrisse* we have the complete Marx”.

But what followed with the MEGA? To briefly mention only the field of economics, in the late seventies came the complete manuscripts of 1861-63 (of which *Theories of Surplus Value* is only a part) and in the nineties, the original manuscript of volume three appeared and then, fifteen years later, the original manuscripts of volume two. And now, with the publication of more and more *Notebooks* we will again enter new fields of Marx’s research process.

There is another important point. The MEGA publishes texts in their original form. This has *basically never happened before*. Think of the *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* for example, and the famous chapter on the critique of Hegelian philosophy and dialectics. *This chapter never existed in the original!* It was a collection of paragraphs that dealt with Hegel. And it was put together by the editors as a chapter. Marx himself did not put it together.

When the MEGA is completed in full, which will take at least fifteen more years, then we can say, “Now we have for the first time a really complete Marx, in the sense of what he left behind”. It is not the complete Marx, as it is not everything he had *ever* written. There are great gaps. We lack many letters. We are missing a number of drafts. But nevertheless it will be as complete as is now possible. Then, regarding *Capital*, a new discussion will start especially because of the *economic notebooks*, in which Marx was preparing the rewriting of *Capital*, which he planned in the 1870s. *Capital* -as we have read it for more than 100 years - does not give us the full picture of Marx’s thinking.

Volume three for example rests on a manuscript written in 1864-65. But Marx continued to carry out his research on credit, crisis and the profit rate after 1865. This research is not included in the text we are reading.

In terms of representing Marx, there is conflict between the teleological view of his intellectual development and one that emphasises his theoretical discoveries along with the political combats he was engaged in. What is your attitude towards the teleological readings of Marx (which are still with us)?

Teleology in biographies is always a rather poor ex-post-construction, overlooking the moments of contingency, which exist in every individual's life. My research program is different. First, we have to contextualise Marx's theoretical achievements and writings. *Capital* is usually read as a contemporary book. Of course, it has relevance for the present age. But it is not a contemporary book. Many parts of *Capital* have a political context, where Marx directed his fire at his contemporaries. For example, in his analysis of value-form and money, in the first three chapters in *Capital* volume one, Marx presents a strictly anti-Proudhonist theory. Marx did this already in 1859, in "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy".

However, during the early 1860s Marx recognised the weakness of his first approach through reading Bailey's critique of Ricardo. Therefore, in the analysis of value form and money in *Capital* we have an intersection of three fronts: the critic of Ricardo, the defence against Bailey and the attack on Proudhon. Of course, Marx wants to analyse value and money in capitalism, but he did this in a specific framework founded in the specific scientific and political debates of his times, or more precisely: the debates, he considered to be the serious ones. My first point is to look at the context, in order to get a better understanding of Marx's analysis.

Second, we have to see Marx as a person in a broader sense. When we read his texts, he is a theoretician for us. We usually focus on the logic of his theoretical arguments. But Marx also worked as a journalist for decades. He published hundreds of newspaper articles. And he was also a political activist, a militant in different degrees depending on the time. At certain times, he was very active, at others rather silent when there were limited possibilities for his activism. But the activism was still present for him. We have to bring together these three features: Marx the theorist, Marx the journalist, and Marx the militant. This was my main aim, namely, to contribute to a new view of Marx that brings these three parts together.

Tell us about what you bring that is new to an understanding of Marx. What did you discover for yourself, for instance of the relationship of Marx's early development and Hegel's philosophy?

I think there are really interesting new aspects in Marx's very early writings.

The new aspects I find question old judgments about the relation between Hegel and Marx. I think this relation is much more complicated than usually assumed, not only when we look at Marx but also when we look at Hegel. The picture of Hegel that many Marxists have long held is an extremely simplified one. But when you want to

understand a certain relation and one pole of the relation is simplified to the extreme, you will never understand the whole relation. Therefore, I had to occupy myself very much with Hegel and other sources Marx drew upon.

Please go into a little more detail on that point. Could you specify with some examples?

The traditional view of Hegel is the following: Hegel is an idealist, one of the main representatives of so-called German Idealism. However, there is a nice article by Walter Jaeschke that appeared in 2000, where he asked about when the label “German Idealism” actually emerged. His answer: in the 1860s! It was a construction made in the German writing of the history of philosophy! For my biographical work, I used two encyclopaedias of the 1840s. Both argue that Kant and Fichte were idealists, but of course, Hegel and Schelling were not. We really must rethink this relation of materialism-idealism, which was so long taken for granted.

I deal with Marx's *Dissertation* in my first volume. In the past there has been a lot of discussion about whether this dissertation is still idealistic or how much of it is materialistic. I would say that to pose the question in such a way presupposes an idea about the relation of materialism to idealism that rests upon a geographical metaphor. It is as if you have two cities, the city of idealism and the city of materialism, and you travel from one city to the other and ask, how far did you come? I would question the way the notions of materialism and idealism are habitually used.

What role did the relation of religion and philosophy play in Hegel's works, the reception of the Young Hegelians and then Marx's interventions, and his relationship to Bruno Bauer?

The relation of religion to philosophy was widely discussed in the 1830s. This was the milieu Marx grew up in as a student, in which he developed his own views. The debates over religion and philosophy were basically political. This is very important. Sometimes you read that the discussion of religion was only a disguise for the political discussion, insofar as one didn't dare have a political critique, one started with the critique of religion.

But this view is totally wrong. The critique of religion itself was a political matter in a state that defined itself as a Christian state, not in a general cultural sense, but in the sense of Protestant Christianity, which was organised by the state: the priests were state servants. The political critique in the 1840s was a result of the failure of these debates.

Originally, the Young Hegelians thought they had to help the Prussian state, which they viewed as a progressive state. However, the Prussian state didn't accept their help. Instead, the Prussian state became an ally of the reactionary religious factions. The Young Hegelians learned something about the character of the state through this fact. There is a very tight connection, therefore, between religion and politics, albeit at different levels. The discussions of religion are political in themselves. This was one level. The learning process that the Young Hegelians went through during the course of these discussions was another level.

Things are very interesting with regard to Hegel. What role did religion play in his philosophy? In his main philosophical works like the *Logic*, or the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he argues that philosophy and religion have the same content and that there is only a difference in the form of presentation. One should already be suspicious of this argument because Hegel was such a theoretician of *form*. The *form*-differences are so crucial to Hegel, and yet now he says "Oh, it is only a difference of form".

What does this mean?

Conservatives accused Hegel - in the 1830s - of being a secret enemy of religion, who didn't dare to say this openly. According to them, he dissolved religion into philosophy. On the other hand, Hegel was accused of having made too many compromises with religion, transforming philosophy into religion. And then – this will be discussed in my second volume – comes Bruno Bauer who edited Hegel's manuscripts on the philosophy of religion, and argued that Hegel's move was a kind of double covering. Hegel first presents himself as a secret pantheist and this gives rise to different interpretations. But at his real core, according to Bauer, Hegel is an atheist. In some respect Bauer agreed with the conservatives, but what was for them a critic against Hegel, that was a merit of Hegel for Bauer.

What about Hegel's criticism of the Romantic tradition, the beautiful soul as it appears in the Phenomenology, and Marx's transition [Übergang] over to Hegel's philosophy? Can you expand on this problem because I don't think the connection has often been made about Hegel's specific critique of the beautiful soul and Marx's adoption of Hegel's ideas?

Marx's transition to Hegel's philosophy is a difficult issue because there are nearly no documents testifying to it. We have Marx's poems and his letter to his father, where he wrote that on the one hand he gave up his poetic attempts and on the other hand, he already moved towards Hegel. We have no other documents from Marx, no letters, no diaries, no documents from a third person, either. Therefore, one has to be very cautious.

My point is that the usual narration, starting with Franz Mehring (in his Marx-biography) that Marx gave up his poetic attempts and the idea of making a career as a poet because he realised that he wasn't talented enough for it, is obviously wrong. Marx does not talk about talent at all, he spoke about his poems being idealistic in the sense that they confront a bad being [*Sein*] with a better ought [*Sollen*]. He didn't want to continue with this. He formulated a philosophical critic of his poems.

At the same time – spring and summer 1837 – Marx read Hegel. At first he didn't like Hegel, he wanted to reject Hegel with the help of ideas of Schelling and he tried to formulate an alternative. But finally, Marx couldn't escape Hegel.

There is, above all, a coincidence of time between these two events. It can certainly be by accident. But there is also the other coincidence that Marx criticised, in his own poems, this very confrontation between bad being and the ought-to-be. This was an important part of Hegel's critique of the Romantics. Again, this can be by accident. However, I

suppose that Marx indeed read Hegel's critique and that he referred this critique to his own poetic conceptions. I cite some passages, especially from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which I think fit perfectly with the young poetic Marx of this time. I cannot prove that he really read this, and that he really argued against himself as the poetic beautiful soul and so on, but it does sound plausible that he took this critique from Hegel. Giving up the poetic ideas and accepting the philosophy of Hegel seem to be two moments that belong to one process. I suggest how it could be. It cannot be more than a suggestion because we have no documents to prove it.

It is good grounds for an assumption.

Yes, it is an assumption and perhaps someone has good enough arguments to explain all of this in a different way. I don't mind. I would be glad to have such a discussion. As Marx does at the end of his preface of *Capital*, I also say, every scientific critique is welcome.

On Bruno Bauer, the question of 'self-consciousness' seems quite interesting as to the role that it played in his work and Marx's dissertation. But additionally, the role of Feuerbach, his critique of Christianity and the relation to Hegel. What did the picture look like between Marx and Feuerbach at this time?

I will cover the relation between Marx and Feuerbach in volume two of the biography. In volume one, I was much concerned with Marx and Bauer. However, in my presentation I did something quite different to what is usually done in Marx-biographies. The usual practice is to give, rather early on, an overview of Feuerbach or Bauer. They present nearly the whole intellectual development of the person, before they put the question of the relation of Marx to Bauer or to Feuerbach.

In such a way, very important details are lost. I focus on Marx and what he had at hand at a certain time. My first volume finishes with Marx's *Dissertation* and I was very interested in what he could use for this work. In this first volume I didn't analyse Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* because it only appeared in the summer of 1841. Marx delivered his PhD thesis already in the spring of that year, so he couldn't be influenced by this famous work. Only Feuerbach's articles that appeared in Arnold Ruge's *Yearbooks* could have influenced Marx at that time. Therefore, I discuss them only. The same is the case with Bruno Bauer, his famous *Die Posaune des Jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen* was written in August 1841, *after* Marx's *Dissertation*.

In the second volume, I will treat Marx's time in Bonn and his first steps towards the *Rhenanian Newspaper*. At this time, Feuerbach and Bauer made further important headway, and I discuss the influences. The connection between Marx and Bauer changes a lot. Before early 1842, Bauer and Marx were strongly connected and had common projects, but at the end of the year 1842, there was a split: a political split, a scientific split, and also a personal split. Marx moved much closer to Ruge and Feuerbach. Why did this happen? What was influential? This I will discuss in the second volume.

But what about 'self-consciousness' and Marx's relation to Hegel's History of Philosophy in the Dissertation, the reading of the Stoics and the late thinkers of Antiquity?

Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* were an important starting point for Marx's *Dissertation*, but the high estimation of Epicurus was already a clear critique of Hegel's views.

The notion of self-consciousness [*Selbstbewusstsein*] is very important, but it means very different things - even for the same thinker - at different periods of time. You find it in Hegel, in the *Phenomenology* and in *Encyclopaedia*, where it is not such an important term. In Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* it became much more important and because the discussion of this aspect of Hegel's philosophy dominated debates during the 1830s, the notion became well known. Bauer and other Young Hegelians then used it. In Bauer, it developed in a specific manner and became a much bigger and comprehensive concept.

There is also a discussion about how Bauer influenced Marx. Did they use the same notion of self-consciousness? However, in Bauer it was not even the same notion over the course of time. In his *Dissertation*, Marx was rather cautious with the notion. This was contrary to Bauer, who filled out the concept more and more. But for Marx after the *Dissertation*, it became less and less important, which could be one of the reasons for their split. But they had splits on several levels. There were various reasons for these splits.

And the criticism of Ruge in the Dissertation?

This was a critique that Marx made of the idea that Hegel accommodates his philosophy to some political pressure and political situations. It is a very superficial charge. For Marx the interesting point is what makes it possible that the philosophy can be accommodated? We have to go deeper in our insight. Insofar as this was the case, the very young Marx of the *Dissertation* shows that his analytical capabilities were in certain respects already better than those of Arnold Ruge who was much older and much more experienced. However, this was a theoretical difference and not a sharp difference at that. I suppose Ruge would have agreed if he had the chance to read the criticism, which he never could because it was never published during his lifetime. But politically Marx and Ruge became closer and founded the *German-France Yearbooks* together.

What about the political aspect of the Dissertation, for instance when Marx discusses the liberals, on the one side, and the positive philosophers, on the other. This is not a reference to the Young Hegelians and the splits that followed.

This is a very interesting point. Marx doesn't distinguish between the Young Hegelians and the Old Hegelians - a difference, which I also interrogate, in the first volume. The real core of this difference is perhaps mainly a construction already made in Marx's time with the terms that were used in his time. But things are not at all so clear. When Marx speaks of the liberals, I think the so-called Young Hegelians are included in this liberal party. The party itself is much greater than the Young Hegelians themselves. Some of the so-called Old Hegelians were also liberals in some sense. And the positive philosophy - the other pole Marx criticised - was a term used by Feuerbach in a well-known article, these were the philosophers who on the one hand tried to make use of certain Hegelian

categories but also tried to combine this with a very traditional form of religious thinking. Marx saw both of these tendencies as the main opposing tendencies in the discussions of his times and against both he put his criticism. We can also read this as an indication that Marx didn't define himself as a Young Hegelian. I think he tried to make clear that there was already some distance between the Young Hegelians and himself in these early years.

Does that run counter to many assumptions made by Marx biographers in the past?

Yes, this was a very dominant view and I must admit that I also shared this view in the past. The dominant assumption is that as a student in Berlin Marx became a Young Hegelian, then perhaps in 1843 under the influence of Feuerbach he developed a critique of the Young Hegelians. As in many other examples, when you look closer and in more detail, searching out the documents of the time, then you will learn that such a view is far too simplified. This is what I learned again and again during my work.

How Socratic! A lesson in knowing you didn't know.

Many opinions are too simplified. You have to learn to question them.

In rejecting this narrative, what kind of political implications does this insight have with regards to Marx's distancing from the Young Hegelians? How does it alter the understanding of Marx at this time?

I think the consequence is that Marx didn't join the typical Young Hegelians. There were conflicts between the Berliner Freien and what Marx was doing in the *Rhenanian newspaper*. It is much easier to understand these conflicts when you have in mind that, even in 1841, Marx was not a full Young Hegelian but already had quite some distance, politically speaking, from them. It is then not so surprising that this distance becomes greater. If you say he was a Young Hegelian, then you are compelled to ask: "Okay, why in 1842 was his development already different to many other Young Hegelians?" The usual justifications are, "He was occupied with politics and he didn't like these empty speculations". This is however not a satisfying argument at all. But you can find it in many Marxist discourses! Something happens. But why does it happen? The usual response is: because Marx was occupied with politics and he saw that the concepts do not work! This is not an explanation but a problem. What did he see as not working? And why? Why couldn't the others see this? They were also occupied with politics. I hope my presentation will clarify things a little bit more.

The picture one gets of Marx is that of a fiercely independent thinker. But why? Other aspects of his thought, like his legal training, seem to have been underestimated in the past.

Marx's legal training is commonly underestimated. This is a result of his own self-portrait in the 1859 *Preface* when he gave his readers a very brief autobiographical sketch. He said that he had studied law but his real interest was in philosophy, so people may think that he hadn't intensively studied law. When you look at the classes he attended, however, you see that he took law very seriously and you can see, especially in his

articles for the *Rhenanian newspaper* in 1842 but also later, that he was trained in law. His figures of argumentation show that he had good knowledge of law and he could put this knowledge to good use. In front of a court, Marx even twice argued in 1848 during the revolution. He was once personally accused, and the *New Rhenanian Newspaper* was once accused, of undermining state authority. In a very clever way, Marx combined legal argumentation and political arguments to show that the accusation made by the state didn't actually conform to the legal framework itself. Marx won both cases: as a lawyer, he had a one hundred percent success rate!

How important are the contingent beginnings, the world Marx was born into, post-French Revolution Rhineland, the social and economic context, to explain why Marx became Marx?

We have to admit that we effectively have no documents showing how Marx processed his early influences. We have many studies of the Rhineland, several documents about his father's activities and about his teachers in school. But there are no diaries and no letters where Marx himself described what influenced him, what he saw and or what decisively shaped his early development. We need to be cautious.

Think about it: when we look at our own biography, to what influenced us, why we became what we became, why we became leftists, very often there are already events in childhood. When you were a youngster, perhaps there was a teacher, who influenced you or an early friend, who opened your eyes to this or that or a book, which inspired you. All this happened under certain social conditions and inside a certain discursive framework, which usually you recognize only much later. I assume that all this also was the case for Marx. What I tried to do was to collect all the information about the surroundings, especially the particular conditions of the Rhineland. The Rhineland was a new Prussian province after having been ruled by the French for twenty years. It was comparatively liberal, with legal equality for citizens. The rest of Prussia was very conservative, half feudalist even. If Marx had been born into the same family in Berlin, this would have been a decisive change.

Regarding Marx's Jewish descent, in contrast to others, I would say that there was not really a Jewish influence on Marx. Already his father was quite removed from Judaism, he was a liberal and a supporter of the Enlightenment. He influenced the young Karl with these views. The majority of the teachers Marx had in school were also guided by Enlightenment ideals. Marx had already visited Ludwig von Westphalen (who later became his father in law) as a schoolboy because Ludwig's son Edgar was Marx's best friend at school. Ludwig von Westphalen was also part of this Enlightenment framework. We can recognize this influence for the first time in Marx's high school essay.

Nevertheless, I also write about the situation of Jews because the baptising of the family is sometimes a focal point in the literature, but the social conditions that gave meaning to the baptism in Marx's times are often neglected. I will continue the discussion about Jewish culture and anti-Semitism in the second volume, because of Marx's article on the *Jewish Question*, which is often interpreted as an anti-Semitic text. In the first volume, I try to give the basics, by especially focusing on the distinction between anti-Judaism of the

Middle Ages and the early modern times and anti-Semitism of 19th century, as well as the distinction between ethnic [*völkisch*] anti-Semitism and racist anti-Semitism. I will try to show that we can find in Marx – in his letters, for example – anti-Judaistic remarks and stereotypes, but not in the *Jewish Question*.

Working on his biography then, the man who said not to judge what people think of themselves but to judge what they are, are there any examples of this disjunct between what Marx says of himself and what he was?

This is difficult because what Marx said about himself is not always to be taken for granted. You must always have in mind to *whom* he is saying *what*. To a publisher he says something different than to a comrade he trusts, or to someone who is an ally, but whom he doesn't trust very much. What he says about himself depends on the situation. We must also keep in mind that Marx was a subject who learned intensively. He was learning all his life therefore he was also capable of throwing away former opinions he no longer held. When he learnt something new, he said "This is a new aspect, I didn't know this, I didn't have this in mind, so I cannot maintain what I wrote about this before". He criticised himself. What he said about himself and his positions changed. We aren't talking about one thing or one change. There are many changes. In the third volume for example, I will raise the problem of Marx's Eurocentrism. In the 1850s Marx - in his writings and articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*, on British policy in India - you can find a Eurocentric position quite clearly. However, this Eurocentric position slowly changed with new experiences and new writings. He didn't define his position very often, but when you interpret what he says, and expresses, you have to acknowledge that it changes.

What about the political movements in Germany? I found the sections where you spoke about the Gesellschaft für Menschenrecht and the kind of pre-Communist Manifesto writings of Georg Büchner fascinating.

Even though he died early, Georg Büchner is another person who will appear also later, when I will discuss the *Communist Manifesto*. I will compare the *Communist Manifesto* with Büchner's *The Hessian Courier*, written in 1834. It is only thirteen years older than the *Communist Manifesto* and Marx probably never read it. I think it is useful to compare the texts in order to see what was already possible to say, so as to see the new thing Marx did in the *Communist Manifesto*. This is a basic principle in my work. You cannot learn about such writings when you come to them with our present knowledge and consciousness alone. You have to look at the reference points of the time to understand what was typical of this time as well as what was new for this time. Georg Büchner, nowadays known as the famous poet who was ahead of his time, was also a very intelligent revolutionary (which cannot be said of all revolutionaries) and a very precise and illusion-free observer, what his letters especially show. He is indeed an excellent reference point.

The radical political movements in these times were rather isolated throughout Germany. Nevertheless, before the revolution 1848 there were constantly movements and conflicts that the German states suppressed severely. Having these movements and

the growing dissatisfaction of the people in mind, it doesn't look so surprising that 1848 the revolution spread so quickly. However, after the defeat of the revolution, the political as well as the discursive situation changed fundamentally. Prussia, with its militarism, became the hegemonic power and many former revolutionaries started to support the process of German unification under Prussian leadership. Other revolutionaries like Marx and Engels, who didn't want to adjust to the reactionary German states, had to go into exile. The defeat of the revolution of 1848 was a decisive turning point for German history, as well as for the biography of Marx. However, I will be concerned with these stories in the third volume of the biography.

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Image derived from http://marx-biografie.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/MH_bea.jpg

[1] Wheen 1999.

[2] Sperber 2013.

[3] Stedman Jones 2016.

[4] Marx 1981, p. 970. Translation modified.