In the history of Marxism, Engels’ relation to Marx and to his work gave rise to two kinds of reactions. On the one hand, a rather positive reaction, which emphasizes the financial, moral and spiritual support Engels’ friendship represented for Marx and on the other hand, a rather negative reaction, which deplores the reductive effects of philosophic and scientific initiatives of Engels concerning the originality and depth of his friend’s thought. Regarding the first reaction, it is undeniable that Marx has an immense existential and intellectual debt, in fact entirely acknowledged by him, towards his friend. We know that Marx has never had a stable work throughout his entire life and it is the fortune of his friend who financed his family’s material existence. Engel’s intellectual influence on Marx was also considerable. Marx begins to take in political economy from 1844 onwards and his philosophic and scientific interest comes from Engels’ pioneering study entitled *Umrisse zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie* (Engels 1844; see Hollander 2011: 25-42). Marx, who has always expressed the great admiration he nourished for this study, has drawn his inspiration from the critical thesis of the latter throughout his work. Besides the common work both friends had undertaken after their meeting in Paris in August 1844 (as *Die Heilige Familie* 1845, *Die deutsche Ideologie* 1846, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* 1848, etc.), several theoretical and empirical analyses, statistical studies, fieldwork that Marx introduced into his economic works were provided by Engels (in particular his *Die Lage der arbeitende Klasse in England* 1845).

The second type of reaction, rather negative, is a kind of leitmotiv, which recurs in the judgments of many specialists and commentators of Marx when they estimate Engels’ contribution to the Marxist thought: because of his unfortunate penchant for an accessible and popularized philosophy of knowledge, Engels is supposed to have unforgivably simplified,
impoverished, distorted, fossilized the complexity, finesse, flexibility and potential creativity of Marx’s analyses. Where Marx carefully abstained from describing, in a crude and disembodied form, the principles of his methodological approach, Engels did not hesitate to establish it as a rigid doctrine under the ambiguous and reductive name of “dialectical materialism” and formulated its so-called “eternal laws”. We will not embark here on the examination of the foundations of such an accusation, but we must remember that Marx, in his accounts as well as in his correspondence with Engels, never showed himself skeptical or doubtful regarding the epistemological initiatives of his friend, quite the contrary.

In the present study we shall attempt to address, through a different point of view, Engels’ relationship to Marx. "Marxism" undoubtedly constituted the most powerful and extensive doctrinal movement in the 20th century. It would not be exaggerated to assert that the name of Marx and his work played the same major role of intellectual reference during the last century as the name and work of Aristotle in the 12th and 13th centuries in Europe. The question which arises, obviously (and probably very naively, because each reader of Marx and the Marxist movement addressed this phenomenon in his own way) is to know from which source Marxism draws its power of persuasion and seduction. How to explain this profoundly impressive social phenomenon of modern times for which innumerable mass movements of a considerable scale recognized themselves and mobilized to further the Marxist doctrine all over the world? In other words, where does the extraordinary strength of Marxism as a doctrine come from? Does this strength lie exclusively in the rigor of the theoretical message Marx’s work harbors? The theoretical rigor of the message is undeniable to any attentive reader of the work. But the observer is forced to recognize that such an argument is hardly enough to exhaust the social phenomenon in question. Because in this phenomenon, the work and its theoretical construction are extended from all sides, so much so that the total ignorance of the content of the theoretical message does not prevent the unconditional adherence to the doctrine and the sacrificial fight for its domination whatsoever.

We believe that the significance and the role of Engels’ work and action in the history of ideas and political movements should be reconsidered and reevaluated in the light of these issues. It seems to us that Engels played a decisive role in the construction of "Marxism". Such a role can be analyzed at two levels. At the level of the conception and elaboration of the “dialectical materialism” (I) and at the level of the interpretation of Marx’s work in the context of dialectical materialism, i.e. in the general history of mankind (II). What constitutes the specificity and the "force" of Marxism as a doctrine is the fact that it is defined and asserted as a necessary and salutary moment in human history. This moment is considered as
necessary and salutary because it is supposed to correspond to a historical stage where the material conditions of the construction of social science are finally realized. The secret of the impressive intellectual and political success of Marxism in modern times lies, we believe, in the constellation or alchemy, which we shall gladly qualify as "enchanting", of the connection and interweaving of three concepts: "dialectics", "materialism" and "science". And it seems to us that, the architect of this enchanting alchemy is precisely Engels. We will end our study with some considerations on the personality of Engels because, as we shall see, the psychology of Engels also provides us with precious elements to analyze the aforesaid questions.

I. Dialectical materialism

Needless to say, we don’t intend to present a summary or a general overview of the reading Engels proposes on the becoming of the nature and history of mankind under the name of dialectical materialism in his major works (Anti-Dühring 1878, Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft 1880, Dialektik der Natur 1873-83, Der Ursprung der Familie 1884, Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie 1886). Our concern is to grasp the logic that governs the author’s conception or vision of history.

We must expressly stress that Engels as Marx and many other young German-speaking philosophers and intellectuals of the time, was an ardent and very attentive reader of Hegel. As many biographers of the author underline (particularly Mayer 1919, Band I, ch. 4) and as all of his theoretical texts reveal, Engels thinks and understands the world as a consciousness having assimilated the exceptionally rigorous, deep, difficult and abstract speculative philosophy of Hegel. “Assimilation” doesn’t mean “adhesion” or “adoption”. Nevertheless, whatever the critical distance Engels is led to take concerning the Hegelian philosophy and whatever the distrusts he could express about the idealistic character of Hegel’s dialectics, his intellectual or political interventions in the world suppose fundamentally the reading of Hegel, that is to say the education, the Bildung he has acquired in contact with the demanding thought of Hegel. Therefore this education represents a constituent element of the ground on which the aforesaid alchemy can take shape. To get a general but precise idea of what Engels means by "dialectics", we can refer to the well-known
passage of the Phenomenology’s Preface where Hegel formulates in a singularly concise form his conception of Truth as a dialectical process:

« In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True (das Wahre), not only as Substance, but equally as Subject »

(Hegel 1807: 22-23)

In this proposal, we must chiefly focus on the concept of “subject”. “The True is equally subject” means that the temporality constitutes a fundamental dimension of Truth, that Truth, as subject, emerges, builds and reveals itself in time, that it is essentially part of the becoming (Werden). In other words, Truth is a temporal, historical reality. Engels’ vision of dialectics concentrates its attention particularly on the definition of Truth as subject building itself in history. Indeed, in all his epistemological writings and in particular in Dialektik der Natur, Engels has always denounced and fought the "idealistic" conception of reality, whether natural or human, as “something ossified [Verknöchertes], something immutable [Unwandelbares], and above all, something that has been created at one stroke [mit einem Schlage Gemachtes] » (Engels 1873-83 : 315). According to the author, until the publication in 1755 of Kant’s essay Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels (General Natural History and Theory of the Heavens), « this petrified outlook on nature » remained in the history of sciences in Europe. The conviction of the “absolute immutability of nature [Unveränderlichkeit der Natur]” was unanimously shared by all natural sciences (ibid.: 314).

It is only after the publication of Kant’s essay, that the conception of nature as a reality which “does not just exist [die Natur nicht ist], but comes into being [wird] and passes away [vergeht] » (ibid.: 317) begins to be adopted by scientists. The dialectical vision conceives reality as pure motion (Bewegung), ceaseless transformation (Umgestaltung), unresting change (Veränderung). In certain passages of the book, Engels focuses on the question of contingency in relation to necessity. The analyses he develops on this question are complex and subtle; he strives not to oppose mechanically contingency and necessity. On this occasion, he praises the insight of Darwin in the Origin of Species (“in his epoch-making work [in seinem epochemachenden Werk]”), on the role of contingency in the theory of evolution (“Zufälligkeit und Notwendigkeit” – “Chance and Necessity”, ibid.: 489). In connection with this opposition, several reflections of Engels could be compared with Althusser’s approach of history as a “process without subject” [procès sans sujet] or what the same author calls the “unpredictable materialism” [matérialisme aléatoire] (Althusser 1984-88:34). Several
arguments of his epistemological interrogations denounce the vision of history as a process whose purpose or destination could be pre-programmed by a transcendental consciousness or an omnipotent will; he reminds us systematically that in the historical process, the “negative” and the “positive” are moments that cannot be separated and opposed as isolated, *sui generis* facts, as realities whose articulation would obey the logic of a linear causality. He warns against the temptation to make easy comparisons between one historical configuration and another at a qualitative level. But in the present study, what matters to us is the logic which results from the final message of Engels in connection with the issue of the construction of Marxism. It is undeniable that the author does not conceive history as a process supposed to be governed, directed, determined by a transcendental subject; on the contrary, he denounces such a vision as “metaphysic”. However, sharing intimately the Hegelian intuition of “the True as subject”, he conceives the historical process equally as subject. Something eminently “positive” comes true in history, at least in a sequence of history, following the example of a subject, and the something eminently positive in question is not “the True”, in an extremely abstract and vague sense, but a set of benefits for humanity, among them *science*. Let us develop this assertion.

In *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* we can read the following lines:

“Just as knowledge is unable to reach a complete conclusion in a perfect, ideal condition of humanity, so is history unable to do so; a perfect society, a perfect “state”, are things which can only exist in imagination [*Phantasie*]. On the contrary, all successive historical systems [*Zustände*] are only transitory stages [*Stufen*] in the endless course of development [*endlose Entwicklungsgang*] of human society from the lower to the higher [*vom Niedern zum Höhern*]. Each stage is necessary [*notwendig*], and therefore justified [*berechtigt*] for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin [*für die Zeit und die Bedingungen, denen sie ihren Ursprung verdankt*].”

(Engels 1886 : 267)

Engels underlines, at first, the inadequacy of the concepts of "perfection" and "completion" in a dialectical process. Perfection or completion, in so far as they suppose the end of history, and thus of motion, are absurd assumptions, pure products of imagination. This remark - understood in the sense of a vision of history composed of moments, situations, stages obeying, in every case, a specific logic and unfolding in particular conditions each as positive
as the other -, in this sense Engels’ remark, can be interpreted as an illustration of the aforementioned “unpredictable materialism” of Althusser. But the rest of the reasoning undermines such an interpretation. Engels speaks of the development of human society “from the lower to the higher”. Consequently, human history obeys the rhythm and sense of a teleological movement, constantly in progress. We may thus wonder why such a movement of progress should not lead, one day, to perfection. What could the phrase “from the lower to the higher” mean if not the idea of an evolution where the moments of history would be ordered according to the logic of an overtaking process, each moment completed representing a stage necessarily more advanced, more developed, more in progress than the precedent. Therefore there is a contradiction between the first and the second part of Engels’s reasoning. If we want to renounce the perspective of perfection, we must equally renounce the perspective of constant progress, i.e. the perspective of a movement, which is supposed to advance constantly and necessarily “from the lower to the higher”. But the perspective of constant progress of human society is the last hypothesis Engels would consent to renounce.

The question is obviously more complicated. We have seen above that according to Engels, thanks to Kant, sciences have ceased to consider nature and human existence as ossified realities and have begun to apprehend them as realities that “come into being and pass away”. In other words, each mortal reality, human existence or human history “comes into being”, develops, declines and “pass away”. Such a vision of the question can’t authorize the thinker to assert that human society must be considered as an uninterrupted progress. At one moment the process must be necessarily interrupted. What do we have to understand then by the term “uninterrupted”? Let us read the following lines:

“Natural science, which predicts a possible end even for the Earth, and for its habitability [Bewohnbarkeit] a fairly certain one; which therefore recognizes that for the history of mankind, too, there is not only an ascending but also a descending branch [nicht nur einen aufsteigenden, sondern auch einen absteigenden Ast]. At any rate [jedenfalls] we still find ourselves a considerable distance from the turning point (Wendepunkt) at which the historical course of society becomes one of descent”

(Engels 1886 : 268)

Indeed Engels takes here into account the necessity of the decline in human history - i.e. he envisages explicitly a descent branch of human society. But immediately afterwards, Engels hastens to say that “at any rate” we are a “considerable distance from the turning point” at which the descent will begin. In other terms, for the moment we can reassure ourselves, there
is absolutely no cause for alarm: progress is not threatened in the near future and for a long time. The reader would like to know the arguments, which justify such self-confidence. What allows Engels to use with so much self-confidence the adverb “jedenfalls”? What guarantee is there that the current phase of human society lies in the “ascending branch”? What if we were already caught in the “descending branch”? Questions without answers, because Engels’ conviction in progress is a matter of faith. Whatever the intricacies, the subtleties, the complexity of his dialectical reasoning, the philosophical depth, the conceptual rigor, the impressive erudition of his epistemological interrogations may be, the evidence that we find ourselves in the ascending branch of human history is never questioned, never suspected by the author.

Insofar as the ascending branch is currently in force in history, in every step of the historical process a “positivity” develops and strengthens as a subject. It may be that such a moment of history presents, at first sight, a worrisome, distressful and even regressive face. But when closely examined, such an observation appears to be an optical illusion. The eye is unable to detect immediately, in the midst of negativity, the contradictions, i.e. the forces that will prepare and allow reality to overcome the current state of things. A closer examination enables us to detect that negativity is an absolute necessity. It is not simply a suffering which the present has to endure for the advent of the superior form; it is not simply an effort or a sacrifice to be assumed in order to allow the uninterrupted march of history « from the lower to the higher ». The negative is definitely the condition of the positive. Marx equally expresses such a conviction in his Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844: “The transcendence [Aufhebung negation, surpassing, conservation] of self-estrangement [Selbstentfremdung] follows the same course as self-estrangement” (Marx 1844: 533; “Privateigentum und Kommunismus” - “Private Property and Communism”). What is exciting, exalting, enchanting in the dialectical materialism is its infinite hope in the positivity of the future. It is essentially science which ensures this positivity. The figure of “Science” replaces in Engels’s conception of the world the Hegelian aforementioned “True”: in the eyes of Engels, “Science is Subject”.

II. Marxism as « effective science»

In Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft (The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science - 1880), Engels asserts that throughout the
European history, movements have existed which could be assimilated to socialism such as “the German Reformation, the Peasants’ war, the Anabaptists and Thomas Münzer, the great English Revolution, the Levellers, the great French Revolution, Babeuf”, later “Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen”. But all these movements and their authors never realized that the reign of justice, equality, liberty whose advent they fervently hoped for, depended on the fulfillment of precise historical conditions and not on the lack of some “men of genius”. As Engels remarks, they were deeply convinced that

« if pure reason and justice have not, hitherto, ruled the world, this has been the case only because men have not rightly understood them. What was wanted was the individual man of Genius, who has now arisen and who understands the truth. That he has now arisen, that the truth has now been clearly understood, is not an inevitable event, following of necessity in the chains of historical development [aus dem Zusammenhang der geschichtlichen Entwicklung mit Notwendigkeit], but a mere happy accident [ein reiner Glücksfall]. He might just as well have been born 500 years earlier, and might then have spared humanity 500 years of error, strife, and suffering »

(Engels 1880:191-92)

For us, these lines are extremely significant and symptomatic regarding the theme of “science as subject”. According to Engels, if a man of great intelligence such as Fourier didn’t succeed in reaching effective science, if he was condemned to work within the boundaries of utopia, the reason lay in the fact that the historical conditions in which he lived were not yet ready and mature for the emergence of effective science. The latter had not yet become an “inevitable event”. Engels writes: “The great thinkers of the 18th century could no more than their predecessors go beyond the limits imposed upon them by their epoch” (ibid.: 189)

As long as the historical barriers, which prevent the access to science, are not removed, subjective intelligence, whatever its power of imagination and its capacity of assimilation may be, remains powerless before the complexity of reality. Let us consider the case of Hegel, this immense intelligence:

« That the Hegelian system did not solve the problem it propounded is here immaterial. Its epoch-making merit was that it propounded the problem. This problem is one that no single individual will ever be able to solve. Although Hegel was — with Saint-Simon — the most encyclopedic mind of his time, yet he was limited, first, by the necessary
limited [beschränkt] extent of his own knowledge and, second, by the limited extent and
depth of the knowledge and conceptions of his age »

(Engels 1880 : 206)

The materialism of Engelsian dialectical conception is essentially related to the motif of
“limits”. Marxism as “scientific socialism” basically owes its advent to the historical
conditions of the second half of the 19th century in Europe and not just to the genius of Marx,
in fact undeniable. More precisely, the scientific discoveries of Marx themselves illustrate and
confirm the principles of dialectical materialism. In Marx’s work, metaphysics is overcome in
favour of science and thus on behalf of the maturation of historical reality. According to
Engels, two major discoveries raise to the rank of science Marx’s analyses and his socialism:
« These two great discoveries, the materialistic conception of history and the revelation
of the secret of capitalistic production through surplus-value, we owe to Marx. With
these discoveries, Socialism became a science [mit ihnen wurde der Sozialismus eine
Wissenschaft] »

(Engels 1880 : 209)

We add to these discoveries a third one: “the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall”
which is supposed to provide the material conditions for the overcoming of the present world.
At first sight, our gesture to raise this controversial law to the rank and majesty of a discovery
might seem surprising. Marx himself had some doubts on the correctness of this law;
moreover, the latter was not published in his lifetime; Engels inserted it in the third volume of
Capital having patched over Marx’s vacillation. Certainly a closer examination of the
reasoning, which governs the demonstration of the law, reveals serious logical and analytical
problems. However despite the failures it harbors we consider that this law strongly
contributed to the fabrication of the aforementioned “alchemy”.

How did Marx discover the materialistic conception of history? We have seen above
that, according to Engels, all the revolutionary attempts prior to the intervention of Marx were
unable to escape from the powerlessness of idealism and utopia, because they all aspired to an
abstract emancipation of mankind through the establishment of the reign of an abstract reason
and a universal justice in the world. Therefore the desire of human emancipation was a
wishful thinking without any effectiveness. With Marx the ideal ceases to be an abstract and
impotent dream of human emancipation. The process of the transcendence of the current
conditions of the world is now effective thanks to the emergence and development of a new
social class, the proletariat. The latter is the concrete, real historical force whose action, *communism*, aims at the progressive destruction of the present state of things:

« Communism is for us not a state of affairs [Zustand] which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [Wirklichkeit] [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real [wirkliche] movement which abolishes [aufhebt] the present state of things »

Marx and Engels 1846 : 35-6 « Feuerbach »

The historical conditions in which this class emerges and develops, make its members lose gradually their local peculiarities (cultural, familial, social, religious, linguistic, etc.) in favour of an ever more anonymous identity. However, this faceless identity constitutes, paradoxically, the condition of possibility of a universal identity. In the eyes of Marx and Engels, universalization signifies total socialization. The process of destruction of local peculiarities develops in parallel with the process of socialization of the product which increases steadily in capitalist production. The social character of the product and the universal character of the proletarian advancing hand in hand, human emancipation will no longer be, in modern times, a simple wish or a dream but an effective reality (*Wirklichkeit*).

The theory of *Mehrwert* (*surplus-value*) is a more decisive discovery than the precedent. Obviously we will not here analyze in detail the conceptual construction of the Marxian issue of value. Our concern is to understand in what sense Engels considers that through this theory, Marx managed to uncover the secret of the capitalist mode of production and consequently succeeded in putting forward the science of this system. The end of the second section of *Capital* is well known (Marx 1867 : 189): we couldn’t “force the secret of profit making” but had to shift from the sphere of the circulation to the sphere of production. This shifting is supposed to take place at the origin of the discovery of the secret of surplus value. At first, this shifting is obviously to be attributed to Ricardo, whose analyses are at the basis of Marx’s theoretical edifice. But from the point of view of dialectical materialism, this shifting operation has a significance incommensurately greater than the epistemological role the Ricardian theory confers to it. As we remarked above, if utopian socialist theories were unable to free themselves from idealism, the reason lies in the fact that they have always assumed the hypothesis according to which the cause of the exploitation of labour by capital is due to unequal and unjust exchange. Proudhon, Owen, Fourier as well as the Ricardian Socialists have systematically sought to analyze the question of surplus value and exploitation in terms of justice, in the market order. This was tantamount to saying that the problem of the self-estrangement of the modern world could be solved and an egalitarian world could be
established thanks to the transformation of political laws and regulations, making men more just, more honest, more humane, and more altruistic. Such an approach is naturally radically opposed to the teachings of dialectical materialism insofar as, from a dialectical point of view, the issue of negativity or self-estrangement is in no way a moral or ethical problem. Marx by leaving the “noisy sphere” of circulation refuses to formulate the question of value, surplus value and exploitation in terms of justice, i.e. in ethical terms; he is firmly convinced that this question must be analyzed in terms of production, by addressing the problems raised by production. His opinion is that on the capitalist market, \textit{equal value is exchanged for equal value}. Consequently, on such a market, when the conditions of exchange are those of free competition, the labour power is paid at its just value. In the normal functioning of the capitalist system, there cannot be any injustice in the order of exchange. At the origin of the phenomenon of surplus value, there is no act of injustice but the disparity between the use value and the exchange value of this eminently particular good which is the labour power. Therefore, Marx's theory owes its materialism, i.e. its scientificity, essentially, to the shifting of the analytical attention from the order of circulation to the order of production. It is in the order of production, through the development of the productive forces and the conditions of capitalist production that the internal contradictions of the system will emerge and mature to destroy, in the near future, the present state of things. Socialism becomes science when we give up the hope to find the solution of the social question in the order of justice or ethics. Engels’ following passage illustrates eloquently this conviction:

"The final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange (...) The means of getting rid of the incongruities that have been brought to light must also be present, in a more or less developed condition, within the changed modes of production themselves. These means are not to be \textit{invented} by deduction from fundamental principles [\textit{aus dem Kopfe zu erfinden}], but are to be discovered in the stubborn facts of the existing system of production [\textit{in den vorliegenden materiellen Tatsachen der Produktion}]"

Engels 1880: 210

If the theory of value confers the status of science to the doctrine of Marx, the “law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall” confers it the status of \textit{dialectical} science. This law is supposed to demonstrate scientifically the necessary abolition of the capitalist system. As we reminded it above, the problem of present interrogation doesn’t concern the analytical
relevance of this law. We know that this relevance is largely questionable (cf. Dos Santos Ferreira 1984). Here our concern is to stress the significance of the dialectical character of the law. We know that Smith had largely outlined the theoretical framework of the law before Ricardo revised and developed it extensively on the analytical level. But in Ricardo’s opinion, any growing economic system is condemned to head for a definitive end in the long-term because, according to the law of diminishing returns, it will find an insurmountable barrier on its way. Obviously such a perspective of radical impossibility to grow indefinitely cannot satisfy the dialectical approach of history as Engels conceives it. Insofar as we take part in the ascending branch of history, the dialectical approach requires that the nature of the negativity which the law mentioned before implies, should be of a relative character in order to allow the perspective of a future positivity. In fact, Marx succeeded in putting in its right perspective the “law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall” by demonstrating that it is only valid for a particular economic system, i.e. the capitalist mode of production (ibid.:101 and sq.). The capitalist system’s process of growth is bound to meet, sooner or later, the barriers that will announce its inevitable abolition. But the death of capitalism does not mean the death of any economic system. On the contrary, this death, this negativity, will make room for the emergence of a new system immeasurably more harmonious, more just, more egalitarian and more human. Marx says:

«The means - unconditional development of the productive forces of society - comes continually into conflict with the limited purpose [mit dem beschränkten Zweck], the self-expansion [Verwertung] of the existing capital. The capitalist mode of production is, for this reason, a historical means [ein historisches Mittel] of developing the material forces of production and creating an appropriate world-market and is, at the same time, a continual conflict between its historical task [ihrer historischen Aufgabe] and its own corresponding relations of social production»

Marx 1867 : 260

The sordid pursuit of profit, the implacable logic of merciless exploitation of man by man that govern the capitalist mode of production, all this negativity, this self-estrangement should not blind us to the positivity that is preparing in the depths of the system. The latter carries out an “historical task”: it realizes the conditions of possibility of its own abolition and prepares the birth of a superior stage of human history.
Concluding remarks

The aforementioned “enchanted alchemy” of three concepts - dialectics, materialism and science - has been Engels’ work. The author strove systematically, expending on this an extraordinary intellectual and physical energy, to show in detail, exactly and accurately, the rigorous correspondence between the requisites of dialectical materialism and the teachings of the Marxian work. It should be recalled here that Marx had almost nothing of epistemological nature published in his lifetime. Without Engels’ stubborn, methodical and resolute epistemological work to establish the materialist, dialectic and scientific character of Marx’s work, the latter would probably not have gone down in history as a major milestone in modern thought.

It is obviously in reference to the Weberian concept of *Entzauberung* that we make use of the term “enchantment”. Moreover it would be more appropriate to speak of a reenchantment of the world as opposed to the disenchantment, which Protestant capitalism is supposed to cause in European everyday life from the 16th century, according to Weber. We believe that the Engelsian epistemological construction has perfectly responded to what we call the narcissism of the European man of modern Times. Metaphysics, in other words the attempt to explain reality or the world through a reference to a transcendental principle (this is the saint-simonian definition of metaphysics adopted by Marx and Engels), could no longer meet the aspirations of this man. The will to abolish, surpass and overcome myth, religion and metaphysics, the methodical pursuit of scientific objectivity have become, in modern conscience, an irresistible passion. On the other hand, the radical abolition of any transcendence risked leading to nothingness, to a social desert. The Engelsian alchemy has provided the conditions to escape from the nihilism of the will to establish a relation with the world purified of any myth. In other words, this alchemy has provided modern man the assurance to overcome (*aufheben*) definitely religion while firmly conserving religious hope, ethics while sticking firmly to his conviction regarding the advent of future good, any subjectivism while transforming the entire historical process into a subject, all myth and superstition while carrying out a firm belief in the necessary course of human experience “from the lower to the higher”.

The examination of the contribution of Engels in the construction of Marxism as a doctrine and a science must also be carried out through his particular psychology. We know that when compared to Marx, he always defined himself as a “second violin”. In *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie* we read:
«I cannot deny that both before and during my 40 years’ collaboration with Marx I had a certain independent share in laying the foundation of the theory (...) What I contributed (...) Marx could very well have done without me. What Marx accomplished I would not have achieved. Marx stood higher [stand höher], saw further [sah weiter], and took a wider and quicker view than all the rest of us. Marx was a genius [Marx war ein Genie]; we others were at best talented”

Engels1886b : 191-92, Footnote 1

These lines come from the pen of an intellectual in all respects exceptional as regards intelligence, culture and creation (see Mayer 1919, Band II : 528-29). First we must remember that Engels was familiar with a dozen languages: German, English, Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, Scandinavian languages, Russian, Polish, Romanian, Turkish, Persian (Labica 1997 : 10). Such extraordinary linguistic capacities allowed him to fit into all working-class circles throughout Europe, to be accepted and respected in these communities. His word counted. But it didn’t count exclusively because of his capacity to speak the language of the country and of the workers of this country. Engels’ culture was exceptional and his erudition impressive. His correspondence with Marx often shows the role of adviser, instigator, and corrector he was able to play for his friend. As we know, he survived Marx by a few dozen years and he supervised and controlled the various translations and publications of his late friend, in particular the first book of Capital. And it was still he who managed and published, on the basis of Marx’s manuscripts, the second and third books of Capital. Therefore one must meditate upon the impact the witness of a man of such quality could have on his addressees. Indeed as far as the motif of witness is concerned, the intervention of Engels could be compared with that of St. Paul when the latter undertakes his missionary journeys through Asia Minor, Greece and Macedonia between 40 and 60 AD. In the construction and diffusion of Marxism as a doctrine and a science, the role of Engels’ witness seems to us of crucial importance. The effect of truth the witness of a man of that stature can exercise on the addressee, the force of persuasion the word of such a man can have on the listener or reader when the cause he defends is not his own but the one of somebody who is absent; all this must be minutely analyzed and meditated upon (see Carlton 1965, ch.20; Hunt 2009, ch.9). We believe that without such a meditation, it would not be possible to penetrate the mystery of the socio-cultural phenomenon of modern Times, which is named “Marxism”.

References


