

Tomasz R. Wiśniewski, Warsaw

## **Historical Materialism: An Unfinished Project?**

In his famous speech, originally delivered in September 1980, Jürgen Habermas stated: “I think that instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity.”<sup>1</sup> It appears to me that if we put into this sentence the notion “historical materialism” instead of the word “modernity”, we would obtain not only an obviously true phrase but also the thesis which would be something far more than a bit tricky bon mot – the slogan, motto for possible project of renewing European humanism.

We must however be clear that all comparisons have their serious limitations. Therefore, as it is doubtless that in either case of “modernity” or “historical materialism” we are dealing with some kind of “a project”, the theoretical status of both are evidently different as it comes to the question of the sphere of reality they refer to. Thus, “modernity” is not only a specific “theoretical product” of a certain group of thinkers belonging to resoundingly unclear category of “philosophy of the Enlightenment” but also, or perhaps even at first place, the particular moment easy to be pointed out in the history of Western civilisation (no matter how controversial this notion could be seen today by some), characterised by a bunch of distinctive hallmarks, which are, depending on the given axiological approach, either criticized in some manner (and at the end of the day it’s always neoconservative manner), or staunchly defended (therefore always being prone to the allegation of being ideological) as the highest achievement of historical development.

The case of historical materialism seems to be much more complicated. First of all, the notion does not directly refer to any particular socio-historical reality, on the contrary, no matter what our emotional or axiological approach is, historical materialism is by almost all associated with a kind of specific theoretical tool relevant to the sphere we could call “social epistemology”. Being far from giving the definitive answer to the question if such a tool has ever existed in history as a completely elaborated one, we still have to be agreeable that its potential field of

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<sup>1</sup> J. Habermas, “Modernity – An Incomplete Project”, <http://clarkbuckner.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Habermas-Modernity-An-Incomplete-Project-14pgs.pdf>, 12 (access 2018-05-26).