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## **INTRODUCTION: POLISH PHILOSOPHICAL REVISIONISTS IN MARXISM**

The term 'philosophical revisionism in Marxism' has several meanings and applications. In our opinion there are good reasons to restrict it to certain philosophical conceptions in the countries in which Marxism or Marxism-Leninism was/is the official ideology and the "state philosophy."<sup>1</sup> In the case of the Soviet Bloc countries the broader term 'revisionism' is applied to complex political, ideological, and intellectual phenomena that came into being after the death of Stalin in 1953<sup>2</sup>. His death marked the beginning of a new era in these countries, although it became evident only in 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev started the process of de-Stalinization with his Secret Speech delivered at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in which he denounced Stalin's repressive politics. In three Communist countries, in Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland, philosophical movements revising Marxism happened as a part of this process of de-Stalinization.

In Yugoslavia, the Praxis school was a philosophical movement formed in the 1960s and 1970s by Gajo Petrović, Milan Kangrga and Mihailo Marković<sup>3</sup>. The members of the school emphasized the necessity for a return to the *real* Marx distorted by Lenin, Stalin, and

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<sup>1</sup> At least in philosophy revisionism should not be identified with any creative modification of an existing theory but restricted to the alterations and corrections of a doctrine, i.e., a philosophical conception or its orthodox version that is guarded ideologically and politically.

<sup>2</sup> There were, of course, earlier modifications of Marxism, starting with the views of Eduard Bernstein and Jean Jaures, Leon Trotsky, and later Titoists. However, Polish revisionists didn't relate to these predecessors.

<sup>3</sup> The Yugoslavian edition of their journal *Praxis* was published between 1964 and 1974, the international edition between 1965 and 1973.

Tito. They tended to refer to the works of young Marx and underlined the creative and practical nature of human beings; they opposed apologetic nature of Leninism and Stalinism and saw philosophy as a radical critique.

In Hungary it was the Budapest School, which emerged in the 1960s after the Hungarian Revolution. Its center was the Sociological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science and its members were students and colleagues of György Lukács, among others Ágnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, and György Márkus. At the beginning they were developing Lukács's works on social ontology and aesthetics, and can be described as revisionists to the extent Lukács's views were revisions of Marxism. Later they abandoned Marxism completely.

In Poland, unlike in Yugoslavia and Hungary, Marxist revisionism was never a social phenomenon based on the communal activity of cooperating individuals who were concentrated around one academic institution, a journal, or a summer school. It was always individualist and based on informal relations among scholars and men of letters living mainly in Warsaw and working mostly at the University of Warsaw (see: Mikołajczyk 2013, p. 40-56). They were philosophers, social and economical scientists, journalists, as well as novelists. This is why we prefer to talk about revisionists instead of revisionism.

What we are interested in here are the revisions of Marxism elaborated by Polish philosophers and usually triggered by ideological and political motives. There were—in a sense—two waves of Polish revisionism in Marxism and two generations of revisionists. The first wave took place in the 1950s and 1960s when “the term «revisionism» was used by the party authorities and official ideologists in Communist countries to stigmatize those who, while remaining party members or Marxists, attacked various Communist dogmas” (Kolakowski 1978, p. 456). The term 'revisionist' was then an invective used by the followers of the orthodox ideology and approved by party authorities but it was also used—somehow perversely, rebelliously, and proudly—by revisionists themselves. At the end of the 1960s its political use almost disappeared and it remained a stigmatizing term only within academic discussions. The second wave came about—quite surprisingly—in the 1970's and 1980's when Marxism was subject to some new and interesting revisions. We deal briefly with the questions of how and why all this happened in the next two parts of this introduction.

### **Which historical, social and political circumstances made Polish philosophical revisionism possible?**

The years 1956 and 1957 were in Poland the time of a political thaw. Not only Stalin's death and Khrushchev denunciation of Stalinism but also the mysterious death of Bolesław Bierut, a Polish communist leader, and the workers protest in 1956 caused significant changes in Polish politics. The Polish Communist party decided to break with the Stalinist legacy in favor of a more reformist and more democratic but also very nationalistic politics. Under the new leadership of Władysław Gomułka the negotiations with the Soviets brought small gains: a limited national autonomy, the abandonment of the collectivization of agriculture, the liberalization of the policy towards the Roman Catholic Church, and the improvement of economical situation.

De-Stalinization also enabled little room for ideological discussions. Since the Stalinist errors and distortions had been condemned critical and creative thinkers, usually party members, began discussing ideological issues. They did not yet reject Marxism as a philosophical and ideological foundation for the socialist project of the socio-economical progress nor did they distance themselves from political activity. Rather, their aim was to separate real Marxism from its Leninist and Stalinist distortions and to develop it creatively in order to adjust it to current conditions.

Alas, it soon turned out that the opening for ideological discussions was very narrow, superficial, and short-lasting. Nationalism and ideological dogmatism prevailed, and within the next ten years the political thaw was replaced with a much more rigid political system. "In 1956 Poland was, relatively speaking, a country of free speech and free criticism" but soon "the party machine regained its lost positions step by step," cultural freedom became restricted, and the economic reform was slowed down (Kolakowski 1978, p. 454). The Communist party still needed ideologists and the ideological justification of its policy but intellectuals (philosophers, sociologists, economists etc.) were less and less eager to deliver it. In the middle of the 1960s anti-intellectual and anti-Semitic tendencies in the Communist party grew stronger and stronger, and intellectuals were rapidly becoming more and more disillusioned.

The crucial moment of the process of eliminating the revisionist

movement from Polish reality happened in 1968. After the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the anti-Jewish attitude in the Polish Communist party had grown so strong that it became one of the triggers of the Polish 1968 political crisis. Students' and intellectuals' protests were followed by purges within the Communist party and the expulsion from Poland of thousands of people of Jewish ancestry. Four of the thinkers whose views we discuss in this volume as revisionist, namely Zygmunt Bauman, Bronisław Baczko, Leszek Kołakowski, and Krzysztof Pomian, were not only expelled from the University of Warsaw but also forced to emigrate, and they left Poland in the period between 1968 and 1972.

The crisis within the Communist party and the deterioration of the conditions of life brought about social protests in 1970, and the leadership of the party was taken over by Edward Gierek. The need for ideological justification of the socialist system and politics disappeared ultimately and utterly because under his leadership the Polish Communist party began appealing to purely consumptionist ideology and to the idea of social progress arising from the technological modernization of the country. In this way the era of politically and ideologically motivated revisions of Marxism was over. Well, almost. Marxism might not have been guarded and dogmatically protected daily by the Communist party but it remained its official ideology and continued to be a frame of reference for many philosophers. When philosophers problematized its core concepts and infused it with new ideas they were revisionists, only if it was other philosophers who bothered to notice it. What is more, after 1968 the epithet 'a revisionist' lost its political stigmatizing power, as almost no revisionists were left in Poland. The ideological connotation of the term quickly faded away and it remained—at best—an invective used in academic discussions.

### **Who and how revised Marxism in Poland?**

The simple answer is that it was done by young intellectuals seeing themselves as obligated to social and political activity, eager to participate in the process of the constitution of a new postwar Communist society. Marxism was for them a philosophical world-view and a political program rising hopes for a better socio-economic reality. Revisionists were committed Communists and their attitude toward Marxism was almost religious. Marxism, Promethean and scientific at the same time, was supposed to replace religion, for which the radically

secular revisionists saw no place in the new society. (See: Mikołajczyk 2013, p. 44-48) After the shock of 1956 they stuck by the slogan: 'socialism–yes, distortions–no,' they thought that "Marxist socialism was possible without Leninist political forms, that Communism might be attacked within «the framework of Marxism»,” and they “believed for some time ... that Stalinism was curable in the sense that Communism could be restored or «democratized» without questioning its foundations” (Kolakowski 1978, p. 461).

They saw themselves in an elitist way, i.e., as true and devoted Marxists fighting with dogmas, orthodoxy, myths, and unfounded faith both within Marxism-Leninism and outside it. They were willing to accept the position of sectarians, heretics, or apostates. Their political and ideological involvement forced them to attack pre-war but still active Polish philosophers of the Lvov-Warsaw School and other non-Marxist thinkers (Roman Ingarden, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Stanisław Ossowski), who were classified as “bourgeois thinkers” unable to understand and assimilate Marxism.

This does not mean that we are dealing with Marxists who restricted themselves to studying Marx or to the laborious extracting of the one and only one correct and obligatory version of Marx's philosophy. They studied Marx because they were academic philosophers but they were also actively involved in the building of socialist ideology and this is why they wanted to “return to «authentic» Marxism” in order to find in it arguments against both: religious views and nationalist ideas in Communist ideology (Kolakowski 1978, p. 460; Mikołajczyk 2013, pp. 56-59). As supporters of science and students of the history of philosophy, they rejected the Stalinist and Leninist additions to Marx's philosophy, e.g., Stalin's theory of language or Lenin's theory of reflection. They abandoned Engels' natural philosophy in favor of the world-view of the natural sciences. Finally, as creative and politically involved thinkers, they wanted to offer new ideas, to develop Marx's philosophy, and to adjust it to the contemporary world of real socialism.

There were two sources of inspiration for the new vista. The Polish translations of Marx's *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (in 1958) and Gramsci's *The Prison Notebooks* (in 1950) became a revelation for the first generation of revisionists. The second source was the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, György Lukács, of other

western socialist thinkers, and even of analytic philosophers. This new vista was a humanistically oriented form of Marxist philosophy, so very different from the philosophical picture present in Marx's *Capital* or even in the *Manifesto* (see: Kolakowski 1978, p. 463).

One can say that these readings allowed revisionists to realize that they opted for a humanist version of socialism and not for a socialist version of humanism, which—it seems—they had promoted before they became revisionists<sup>4</sup>. They wanted a socialist system with a human face that would be rational and protected from religious faith or ideological dogmas by following scientific rules of argumentation and testing theories. They searched for a philosophy and ideology more anthropocentric than dialectical, and more historical than materialist. All this shows in Kolakowski's description of revisionism present in Eastern Europe as “an attempt to reform Communist systems in order to graft on to them respect for truth and logical arguments, for commonsense, democratic values, civil rights, economic efficiency, and other honorable things, in such a way that would leave the core of the system untouched” (Kolakowski 1989, pp. 207-208). He provides this picture, written much later, in 1988, with a critical comment stating that Marxist revisionism was internally inconsistent because the real core of the communist system was the permanent turning of all those “honourable things” into ruin. He adds that nonetheless this internal inconsistency was somehow effective in destroying and dismantling parts of the official Marxist-Leninist ideology (Kolakowski 1989, p. 208).

The core of this new revisionist, non-dogmatic, humanist Marxism became the issues of human nature that self-constitutes itself in the process of social practice; of the role of an individual in history; of civil rights to freedom, criticism, and individual opinions; the nature of human cognition and its world; of alienation in the socialist society; as well as the problem of the possibility of ethics and morality without an absolute foundation and the need to separate ethics both from religion and politics.

The work on answers to these questions showed revisionists

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<sup>4</sup> It seems that the distinction wasn't quite clear for them. The collection of Kolakowski's essays published in 1968 was titled: *Toward a Marxist Humanism* (New York: Grove Press).

more and more clearly that intellectually honest and convincing answers cannot be put in concert together with Marxism.

The revisionist corrections of Marx's philosophy had to decline because revisionists began to see the utopian, dogmatic, and irremovably oppressive character of Marxism and Communist systems, which had not been clearly visible at the beginning of the revisionists' intellectual journey. Initially they idealized Marxist political program. Yet, living under Stalin and making "devastating comparison between socialist reality and the values and promises to be found in the «classics»" were the reasons for their disenchantment and turning against Marxism (Kolakowski 1978, p. 457). In the 1960s revisionists' intellectual criticism and creativity contributed inevitably to the recognition of the restrictive and—in the case of many issues—oversimplified, schematic, ossified, and non-scientific nature of Marxism (Kolakowski 1978, p. 461). Instead of looking for a legitimization of the Communist state and party policy, which would be theoretically better and more convincing, revisionists started to question the very idea of legitimization (Kolakowski 1978, p. 461). Instead of looking for "authentic Marx" and a better version of Communist ideology they started a non-Marxian criticism of both Marxist doctrine and socialist reality.

### ***Leszek Kołakowski (1927-2009)***

Undoubtedly Kołakowski was the most famous and influential Polish philosopher deeply involved in revising Marxism. His revisionist phase started in the middle of the 1950s and was terminated in 1968 when long lasting persecutions, e.g., interventions of censorship into his texts and ultimately the ban on publishing, surveillance, and banishment from the Communist party were topped with the accusation that he—like Socrates—was spoiling students' minds. This accusation eventually resulted in the ban of teaching. For a creative philosopher, a passionate commentator of political reality, and a charismatic teacher that was the last straw, so Kołakowski left Poland and cast away his own revisionist Marxist position becoming—according to his own declaration—conservative, liberal, and socialist (Kolakowski 1990).

Commenting on his political or ideological essays Kołakowski characterizes his position in the 1950s and 1960s as revisionist. He summarizes his own critical texts written during that period as a

“compendium of a «revisionist spirit»” with a value limited to the situation in that time. He saw his “attempts at the regeneration of Marxism” as ambiguous efforts to criticize the Leninist-Stalinist version of Marxism that was “strikingly loutish and vulgar.” He wanted to revise, rejuvenate, and improve Marxism as—in Kołakowski’s own words—an “effective instrument for the analysis of contemporary world” (Kołakowski 1989, p. 208). Yet, the real significance of these attempts was the demonstration that Marx’s thought was as useless for understanding and criticizing the present society as would be Descartes’ works in the role of a handbook of contemporary physics, though both remain important elements of the intellectual history of Europe (Kolakowski 1989, p. 209).

It seems, however, that he is far too modest. Zbigniew Mentzel very perceptively describes the philosophical significance of Kołakowski’s texts written in the 1950s and 60’s. Their significance does not reduce to the fact that their content was subversive towards political power. Far more important—especially from the philosophical point of view—was the fact that Kolakowski’s papers contained original thinking that stimulated his contemporaries and other people later to undertake their own critical thinking (Mentzel 1989, p. v).

One of the best examples of Kołakowski’s creativity is the monumental *Main Currents of Marxism*, published in Polish in 1976 but based on lectures given by Kołakowski earlier at the University of Warsaw. In the paper *Regarding Marxism* presented in this volume, Ryszard Panasiuk emphasizes that the book was planned by Kołakowski as a textbook and that his plan has been fulfilled. But *Main Currents* is much more than just a textbook. Kołakowski looks at Marx’s philosophy and Marxism from his own, revisionist, philosophical and ethical perspective and evaluates both. As Panasiuk points out, for Kołakowski Marxism is not a scientific theory of society and history but a strictly philosophical project, based on a certain conception of the human being and on an axiology, both of which have a long philosophical pre-history. Kołakowski finds prophetic elements in Marx’s philosophy and sees similarities between it and the millenarians’ dream of a paradise on Earth. Panasiuk also emphasizes Kołakowski’s criticism of Marx’s conception of man that is based on assumptions, which cannot be maintained in the face of the results of practical realization of Marx’s program.



In the present volume Kołakowski's philosophy is also analyzed by Adam Olczyk in his paper *Marxist Trait of Revisionism: Leszek Kołakowski's Consistent Transition to Inconsistent Philosophy*. Olczyk describes motives for Kołakowski's shift from an orthodox Marxist into a main revisionary figure. Kołakowski firmly believed that Marxism, like any other philosophical system, was not a finite doctrine but a theory subject to modifications; that the process of its modification "will never cease"; that being a philosopher does not mean to theorize but also to practice philosophy; and that the obligation of a philosopher is to turn against "all the falsehood present in the world" and object to "any kind of fallacy." Olczyk argues that what awakened Kołakowski from his dogmatic slumber was the focus on ethical issues and understanding "that philosophical issues are the ones that relate to our moral attitude" (Olczyk, p. 29).

#### ***Bronisław Baczko (1924-2016)***

Neither original thinking nor revisionism can exist without the art of asking questions and problematizing both answers and questions. Baczko was a thinker praised for his ability to problematize every philosophical system. (See: Pomian, 1989, pp. 13-14) He was a professor at the University of Warsaw until 1968 and an important leader of the intellectual community. He was one of the founders of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas and his seminars at the University of Warsaw and the Polish Academy of Science, offering the possibility of open discussion, brought together many academics from different disciplines and crowds of students.

In his philosophical works Baczko was strongly influenced by his friends, who were historians. He wanted to modify historical studies of philosophy by explaining philosophical ideas against the background of their historical context, particularly the context constituted by communal ideas, images, and visions of the world, as well as fears, hopes, and obsessions circulating in the society of a given period. According to Helder Mendes Baiao, for Baczko there were no exceptions, even "Marx needed to be historicized" (Baiao, p. 44). Baiao deals in his paper *On History and Liberty: the «Revisionism» of Bronisław Baczko* with the philosophical assumptions of the Warsaw School of the

History of Ideas<sup>5</sup> and with Baczko's contributions to the research perspective elaborated by the School. A specificity of its approach to historical ideas was "to look for the values" or for "humanist content in ideas." This is why young Marx was interesting for Baczko: "he studied religion from an anthropological point of view" (Baiao, p. 43).

Baczko's early works, e.g., his book on Rousseau, were not only (hi)stories of ideas. They had also a general philosophical topic of perennial significance, namely the problem of the relation between the intellectual and social institutions and the ethical aspect of their relation (Pomian 1989). Baiao is interested in ethical principles followed by Baczko in his historical research. A historian has the obligation to pursue truth and avoid ideological manipulation of the past forced by political pressure. Baiao emphasizes that the core of Baczko's influence was located in his way of philosophizing: in his methodology and in the views that underlie it, namely individualism and historical relativism. These assumptions were evidently in conflict with Marxist emphasis on the priority of a society over individual and on teleologically mobilized historical necessities. The reconstruction presented in the text allows Baiao to claim that during his whole scientific career Baczko remained committed to „his vision of an «open» conception of History” (Baiao, p. 57).

### **Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017)**

Our choice of Bauman as a revisionist philosopher is somehow controversial because in the 1950s and 1960s he was a sociologist, not a philosopher. As Dariusz Brzeziński reminds us in his *Human Praxis, Alternative Thinking and Heterogeneous Culture: Zygmunt Bauman's Revisionist Thought* the academic career of Bauman started in 1953. At that time Bauman was a loyal member of the Communist Party “and a follower of the Marxist-Leninist ideology” (Brzeziński, p. 64)

He wrote his first revisionist paper relatively soon after October

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<sup>5</sup> Contrary to Baiao and César R. Fernandes, to whom he refers, we think that the translation of 'Warszawska szkoła historii idei' into 'the Warsaw Circle of Intellectual History' is not a correct one in one important aspect: it characterizes the nature of historical studies done by its members whereas the Polish name characterizes the object of their studies. *Intellectual* history can refer to anything, whereas the topic of the studies of the Warsaw School were *ideas* and their history was more socio-cultural, i.e., showing the cultural context of studied ideas, than intellectual.

1956. He criticized the members of the Communist party and “expressed his hope that significant changes will take place in Poland.” He also claimed that the “mechanist”—as he described it later—version of Marxism cannot be the foundation of social research and improvements. In his revisionist phase, before leaving Poland, Bauman moved gradually toward philosophy since his inspiration for criticizing the official Marxist doctrine were—typically for revisionists—the works of young Marx. He turned towards a praxist interpretation of Marx.

Brzeziński emphasizes that revisionist ideas, elaborated by Bauman in papers written after 1956, did not vanish after 1968, when Bauman was expelled from the University of Warsaw and left Poland. Revisionist ideas are the basis of Bauman’s conception of utopia, his critique of modernity, his focus on human *praxis*, and the belief in the “heterogeneity of culture” (Brzeziński, p. 63). Also the idea that intellectuals are obliged to critical thinking and to opposing rigid schemes and patterns became a guidepost for his future intellectual journey.

### ***Adam Schaff (1913-2006)***

The choice of Schaff as a Marxist revisionist is equally controversial, though for a different reason. He was seen as an official party philosopher and ideologist, not as a revisionist moving away from Marxism. Schaff, a devoted Communist, even a Stalinist, and the member of the Central Committee of the Communist party for many years, distanced himself from revisionists, and never abandoned Marxist alliance. Yet, even he earned the epithet of a revisionist.

Studying the reality of socialist society was common to Schaff and Bauman. Both saw the need to introduce into Marxism changes motivated by its confrontation with the socialist reality. In *Marxism and the Human Individual*, published in 1965, Schaff argued, in concert with Bauman, that socialist societies are not free from alienation. This idea, as well as his understanding of class struggle, were clearly revisionist for party authorities. In 1968 Schaff was expelled from the Central Committee and lost his influence on Polish philosophy. Krzysztof Świrek in his paper *'Getting Hands Dirty': on Adam Schaff's Political Writings* is right in stating that classifying Schaff as a revisionist did not have its source in a substantial change of his philosophical or political

views but in the very restrictive nature of Marxism in the 1960s as well as in “tactical and personal games within the Party” (Świrek, p. 84). Świrek tracks the paradoxical nature of Schaff’s attitude that earned him a label of an orthodox revisionist. On the one hand Schaff wanted to keep a “critical distance towards the political practice of existing socialism,” on the other hand, he wanted to „stay faithful to what he understood as strategic interests of socialist countries” (Świrek, p. 102). He believed that the “theory of the author of *Capital* provides the key to understanding the present and future tendencies of developed societies” but simultaneously he tried to develop Marxist theory in the light of problems unknown to the Classics (Świrek, p. 92).

### ***Krzysztof Pomian (1934-)***

In the case of Pomian, a decade younger than Kołakowski and Baczko, in fact, their student, the revisionist phase of philosophical journey was very short. He was active in revisionists’ circles, shared their attitudes and the need for being actively involved in the socialist reality of Poland and yet he quickly realized that what interested him was not ethics and discussion on values or history of philosophy but historiography. In his more general historiographic considerations he accepted the general view of the Warsaw School of the History of Ideas that ideas could not be explained by oversimplified reference to class background of their authors or followers.

Marcin Leszczyński in *Historiography after Revisionism: Remarks on Pomian’s Idea of Writing History* analyses Pomian’s revisionism against the background of Polish revisionism in general. He aptly points out that historiographical revisionism is simply a reinterpretation of the past. In this sense it is “a typical condition of history as discipline” (Leszczyński, p. 104). However, revisionism—as it was understood in Poland—was more than that. It had philosophical, political, and ethical aspects. Leszczyński shows that Pomian’s theoretical propositions in historiography originated from his critical attitude towards Marxism-Leninism, and towards historical materialism in particular. Pomian advocated historical pluralism and presentism, neither of which was in agreement with the orthodox version of historical materialism.

### ***Jerzy Kmita (1931-2012)***

Historical materialism was the main frame of reference also for two

thinkers of the second generation of Polish modifiers of Marxism: Jerzy Kmita and Leszek Nowak. Both were working at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and established the Poznań Methodological School<sup>6</sup>.

Whereas the first generation of Polish revisionists modified Marxism for ideological reasons, the intention of the second generation was simply to revise it for theoretical purposes. Kmita and Nowak considered Marx's approach inspiring, but were convinced that without methodologically driven changes Marx's legacy will be lost and his social theory could not be successfully applied to describe and explain reality. Both approached Marx initially from a perspective of the philosophy of science, both reconstructed Marx's scientific method, both were inspired by Marx's way of thinking.

In the paper entitled *Jerzy Kmita's Methodological Interpretation of Karl Marx's Philosophy: from Ideology to Methodological Concepts* Anna Pałubicka emphasizes the contribution of the Poznań Methodological School to Polish Marxist theory. As the title of the paper suggests, she focuses on Kmita's methodological reinterpretation of Marx, done from the perspective of the methodology of the humanities. Kmita was more interested in Marx's way of thinking and his methodology than in the "content" of his philosophy. Regardless of the changes Kmita introduced into historical materialism, Pałubicka believes that there are no reasons to classify Kmita's proposition as revisionist. She reminds us that even though Kmita himself saw that he was correcting Marx, he still declared that he stood true to Marx.

However, we think that Kmita's crucial conceptions are revisionist. The methodological perspective allowed Kmita to claim that the most important legacy of Marx is cultural or historical relativism and the biggest weakness of Marx's methodology is the fact that Marx applied the approach of natural sciences to social and human sciences. Both these statements could be considered revisionist not only in reference to the Marxism of the 1950s but also in the late 1960s and 1970s, in spite of the fact that Marx's methodology was not under the protection of the ideological guardians of Marxism. Also two other conceptions of Kmita, namely his conception of a humanist interpretation and the functional-genetic model of explanation were

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<sup>6</sup> Together with Jerzy Topolski.

revisionist. It is true that in the 1970s an activist (praxist) approach was already sufficiently fortified in the Polish academic Marxism to allow philosophers to consider an individual as actively constituting itself in socio-historical environment and not simply as a passive intersection of social relations. However, in historical materialism the concept of self-constitution ought to be balanced by the concept of being constituted by social forces. Kmita's formal idea of a rational agent acting in the way described by the humanist interpretation was—according to orthodox critics—as far away from historical materialism as was the model of functional-genetic explanation, based on the rejection of the causal explanation of cultural phenomena.

### ***Leszek Nowak (1943-2009)***

Even less orthodox were the ideas developed by Nowak in his conception of (socialist) social-economic reality. Krzysztof Brzechczyn traces changes in Nowak's and his followers' attitude towards Marxism in his paper *From interpretation to refutation of Marxism: On Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian historical materialism*. One of Nowak's first ideas referring to social reality, the adaptive explanation of the relationships among elements constituting socio-economic formations, elaborated in the 1970s, was revisionist. It could have been politically condemned as a possible instrument of "an unacceptable political critique of real socialism" if not "a very sophisticated hermetical terminology and logical apparatus" which made Nowak's theory difficult to understand outside the academia (Brzechczyn, p. 170). By contrast, a non-Marxian historical materialism, proposed by Nowak in the 1980s as a theory of a socialist system, was less hermetic and "definitely went very far beyond the borders set by Party authorities" (Brzechczyn, p. 170). Nowak's theory of triple class power, belonging to the non-Marxian historical materialism, caps the categorial interpretation of Marxist dialectics and the adaptive interpretation of socio-historical dependencies. The non-Marxian historical materialism became unacceptable for the Communist party particularly when Nowak engaged himself and his ideas in the Solidarity movement. As a consequence, he not only had to face academic criticism but also imprisonment and dismissal from the university. There is no exaggeration in the statement that he was the last victim of the battle against revisionism in Polish Marxism. And so be it.

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