

Title: The Originality of Marx's French Edition of *Capital*: An Historical Analysis

Author: Rodrigo Maiolini Rebello Pinho

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Summary: Using recently published correspondence, the 1872-75 French edition of *Capital*, Vol. I, for which Marx rewrote numerous passages, is shown to be the version he saw as the basis for all future editions. Engels's preference for the previous German editions distorts the "standard" editions of the work to this day – Editors



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KARL MARX



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Cover of the 1st French edition of *Le Capital*. Reprint of the work, in Paris, by Librairie du Progrès, in 1885. Source: Marx, 2018, p. 1.

I. The Editions of Volume I of *Capital*

There are many editions and translations of Volume I of *Capital*, the only volume of Marx's magnum opus published during his lifetime. During his life, there were four editions and two translations of it. There were two German editions, also one Russian and one French. There were thus two translations: one into Russian and one into French. Marx supervised the Russian translation, the first to be carried out, maintained an active dialog with his translators, and praised the finished translation¹. But he went much further with the French translation: he completely rewrote it, making substantial changes and additions. The fact that it was completely rewritten by the author himself, as he revised the translation in great detail, means that it became an original work and provides us with a very rare opportunity: that of comparing two versions that can both be seen as originals, using one to provide insights into the other or to reveal differences between them.

If the originality of the French edition were not sufficient for it to claim a place in Marx's official bibliography (as it is one of his works, not just a translation)², the most

¹ On the Russian translation, see the following letters: Marx-Engels, 4/10/1868 (Marx, 2010a, V.43, pp. 120–122), Marx-Danielson (includes a brief autobiography of Marx), 7/10/1868 (Id., Ibid., pp. 123–125), Marx-Kugelman, 12/10/1868 (Id., Ibid., p. 130), Marx-Danielson, 13/6/1871 (Marx, 2010a, V. 44, pp. 152-153), Marx-Danielson, 9/11/1871 (Id., Ibid., pp. 238-240), Marx-César De Paepe, 11/24/1871 (Id., Ibid., pp. 262-264), Marx-Laura and Paul Lafargue, 11/24/1871 (Id., Ibid., p. 265). A summary on the translation, dissemination, and impact of the work on theoretical debates in Russia (where the other volumes of the work were also first translated) is in Albert Resis, “*Das Kapital comes to Russia*” (1970), which also characterizes the social and economic context of the country in which the work was published and absorbed.

² Bouffard, Feron and Fondu, editors of the recent publication of a facsimile edition of the 1st French edition (Bouffard et al., 2018), criticize what they call the “*version Roy*” (we will see that, actually, it is a *Marx version*), but do not fail to recognize that “this first French translation of *Capital*” (“*cette première traduction française du Capital*”) is actually “an original version of Marx's text, ... all the more because it does not exactly correspond to any of the four German editions published between 1867 and 1890” (“*une version originale du texte de Marx*”, “*d’autant plus qu’elle ne correspond exactement à aucune des quatre éditions allemandes publiées de 1867 à 1890*” -- 2018, p. 11). It was not an accident that they entitled one of their articles “The French edition of *Capital*, an original work” (“*L’édition française du Capital, une œuvre originale*” - 2018, p. 07). It is important to note that there are others with an unfavorable opinion of the first French edition. For example: the French translator Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, the philosopher Jacques D'Hondt, and the sociologist William Outhwaite (Emeritus Professor of the University of Newcastle). Those with an opinion similar to ours on the matter include (each in their own way, of course) Kevin B. Anderson (Professor at the University of California), Jorge Grespan (Professor at the University of São Paulo and editor of new Brazilian editions of *Capital*), Regina Roth, Carl-Erich Vollgraf, Timm Grassmann (the last three are co-editors of *MEGA*², which includes all editions and manuscripts of *Capital*), Marcello Musto (Professor at the University of Toronto) and the French philosopher Jacques Bidet. For his part, Bidet openly prefers the French edition and suggests that, in this edition, Marx removed references to Hegelian categories, thus creating a “Hegelianism-free” Volume I. This is a very interesting hypothesis to be investigated in more detail. Lastly, I would like to thank Prof. Outhwaite who, in scientific solidarity, kindly sent me his articles on the topic discussed here.

important reason for its importance is the fact that, of all the editions of Volume I, the French edition is the last written by Marx. To wit, it came later than the 2nd German edition; the 3rd German edition was already in the hands of Engels and was published shortly after Marx's death in 1883, and the 4th appeared in 1890. Therefore the 3rd and 4th German editions are posthumous, and the latter is the basis for most foreign editions, including the Brazilian editions³.

A chronological summary of all of the editions of Volume I, over the 16 years from the first edition in 1867 through Marx's death in 1883, is given below:

- 1st German edition, 1867, with only one thousand copies printed and which was, according to the French researcher Maximilien Rubel, expensive at the time (3.5 thalers-- about what a worker earned in one week). It took five years to sell out⁴;
- 1st Russian edition, March 1872, three thousand copies printed, with one thousand sold within two months⁵;
- 2nd German edition, initially published in nine installments from July 1872 through March 1873, and then as a book in May 1873, with a printing of three thousand copies;
- 1st French edition, first published in 44 installments, with eight pages each, sold in sets of five, from August 1872 through May 1875, and then as a single work with a printing of ten thousand copies, the largest up until then. (cf. Rubel, 1968, pp. 102 and 106)

Therefore, the French edition of *Capital* was the last edition on which Marx himself worked. He revised it fully, rewrote it, and monitored its publication step-by-step.

Apropos, it is important to stress that one of the first to acknowledge the decisive importance of the French edition was Raya Dunayevskaya (1958). In fact, she referred to it as the “crucial, famous, irreversible French edition, 1872” (Dunayevskaya, 1978,

³ I occasionally mention Brazilian editions because this text was originally written in Portuguese, in Brazil.

⁴ An interesting story about this edition: Marx said that the success in disseminating the work was, in principle, more due to the excitement generated about it than actual critical readings, which would require more time. Engels thus suggested that they publish reviews of the book in newspapers, under pseudonyms or anonymously, with a critical tone, from a bourgeois or reactionary point of view. Marx provided Kugelmann and Engels, who would perform the task, with the tenor of the critiques to be published: that they should write that the author of the work had carried out a beautiful objective analysis, but that the conclusions arrived at based on the analysis were fanciful and tendentious (Rubel, 1968, pp. 104–107).

⁵ Now a story about the Russian edition: the censors allowed the work to be published because they were convinced that it would not be intellectually accessible to the people. They only censored publication of the author's picture (Marx, 2010 (a) V. 44, pp. 398-400 and 578, for example).

p. 23). Dunayevskaya emphasized that “Marx had informed us in the Afterword to the French edition of *Capital* (28 April 1875) that it ‘possesses a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers familiar with German.’” (Dunayevskaya, 1982, p. 146). The philosopher also analyzed, in-depth, changes in the commodity-form concept and law of capital centralization and concentration, among others (see Dunayevskaya, 1978; 1958, p. 99-100; 1982, p. 146).⁶

II. Engels’s Reservations Regarding the French Edition

Marx intended to make changes to the 3rd and 4th German editions based on the French edition. However, he died before he could publish them. Engels took on the task of continuing the endeavor and took responsibility for the decisions regarding incorporating or discarding the changes made, and how to incorporate them.

In this case, Engels had serious reservations regarding the French translation and especially concerning the plan to use it as a basis for subsequent translations or German editions of Volume I. He had expressed his reservations since the publication of the 1st edition, but Marx was alive and controlled publication of the work at that time, so Engels’s opinions did not affect the outcome. After Marx’s death, however, Engels’s remaining reservations affected the text of the work, as we will see in the next section.

Now we will review his critical comments.

In February 1868 (2/2/1868), when Marx was having trouble finding a German to French translator, Engels already predicted his approach to the problem when he jokingly wrote to Marx:

It is really your fault; if you write strictly dialectically for German science, then afterwards, when it comes to the translations, particularly the French, you fall into evil hands. (Engels, 2010a, V. 42, p. 534)

In another letter, after reading part of the French translation, Engels criticized it even more strongly: he attacks not only the translation, but also the French language used at that time, which would rob Marx’s text of its “vigor and vitality and life.” On November 29, 1873, he cautions Marx as follows:

Dear Moor, [...] Yesterday I read the chapter on factory legislation in the French translation. With all due respect for the skill with which this chapter has been rendered into elegant French, I still felt regret at what had been lost from the beautiful chapter. Its vigour and vitality and life have gone to the devil. The chance for an ordinary writer to express himself with a certain elegance has been purchased by castrating the language. It is becoming increasingly impossible to think originally in the strait-jacket of modern

⁶ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Kevin B. Anderson for indicating to me the texts and chapters that Dunayevskaya wrote about the French edition of *Capital*, reading this article very carefully, and also for the exchange of ideas.

French. Everything striking or vital is removed if only by the need, which has become essential almost everywhere, to bow to the dictates of a pedantic formal logic and change round the sentences. I would think it a great mistake to take the French version as a model for the English translation. In English the power of expression in the original does not need to be toned down; whatever has inevitably to be sacrificed in the genuinely dialectical passages can be made up in others by the greater energy and brevity of the English language. (Engels, 2010a, v. 44, pp. 540–541)

Engels's assertion that the French language of that era — and recall, it was the language of Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Balzac (1799–1850) and others — would supposedly neuter the written word and, worse, make original thought impossible, by restricting it with a straitjacket -- was extreme⁷. Engels thought this would end up removing what was pleasing about the German text and destroy its liveliness. For these reasons, he felt that the translation into French would result in a sacrifice of the German text, especially in what he described as the "genuinely dialectic passages." This is why he thought the French edition should not be the basis for other translations.

Shortly afterwards, without responding at length to Engels's warning, Marx succinctly objected in a letter of November 14, 1873:

DEAR FRED, [...] Now that you are taking a look at the French translation of *Capital*, I would be grateful if you could persevere with it. I think you will find that some passages are superior to the German. (Marx, 2010a, v. 44, p. 543)⁸

In his reply of December 5, 1873, Engels gave in partially. His derogatory opinion of the French language, specifically, did not change, but at that time, he accepted that the parts of the French edition that Marx had revised were better. He then said that passages in French could even be superior, due to Marx's revisions, despite the supposed limitations of the language.

Dear Moor, [...] Up to now I find that what you have *revised* is indeed better than the German, but neither French nor German has anything to do with that. (Engels, 2010a, v. 44, p. 545)

In fact, Engels's view of the French edition was so deep-rooted that it survived Marx's death (March 14, 1883). Recall that Engels published the 3rd and 4th German editions of Volume I after the author's death. He declared on June 29, 1883:

⁷ The idea that a language can put a straitjacket on thought, restricting it, blocking its development, is Engels's idea, as we will see. Marx, however, did not think this way. In this regard, a passage written by Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), in which he attributes the possibility of expressing oneself freely or in an original manner in a language much more to the individual who consciously employs it than to the properties inherent in the language itself: "...a beginner who has learnt a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can freely express himself in it only when he finds his way in it without recalling the old and forgets his native tongue in the use of the new" (Marx, 1972, p. 10).

⁸ Recall that Marx wrote in French: for example, his work *Misère de la Philosophie- Réponse à la Philosophie de la Misère de M. Proudhon* (1847) and his *Discours sur la question du libre-échange* (1848). He later began to also write in English, such as *The Civil War in France* (1871) and hundreds of newspaper articles.

The 3rd edition of *Capital* is causing me a tremendous amount of work. We have one copy in which Marx follows the French edition when indicating the emendations and additions to be made, but all the detailed work remains to be done. I have got as far as 'Accumulation', but here it is a case of revising almost completely the entire theoretical section. On top of that, there is the responsibility. For to some extent, the French translation lacks the depth of the German text; Marx would never have written in German in that way. (Engels, 2010a, Vol. 47, p. 42)

Here, it is clear that Engels's partial concession in his correspondence with Marx was an isolated example of his general attitude, since he once again states that both the French language of the period and Marx's French edition were the objects of his criticism. The straitjacket of the French language affected not only J. Roy, but also Marx. How could the French edition be unscathed given the defects of a language that supposedly neutered the written word and restricted thoughts with a straitjacket, destroying the vigor, vitality and life of the text? Indeed, based on these assumptions, Engels could not accept that the French text had the same depth as the German text.

Not coincidentally, on June 7, 1893, Engels suggested the following regarding an Italian translation: "The translation from the French edition alone wouldn't be perfect as the Italian suits more the philosophic style of the author" (Engels, 2010a, V. 50, p. 151)⁹. However, the French version, prepared by Marx himself, is seen by this third party (Engels) as being less appropriate for the German "philosophical style" of Marx, since the "author's philosophical style" did not suit French.

Engels reaffirmed the position he had expressed in his letters publicly, in the prefaces to Volume I that he published after Marx's death (the prefaces to the 3rd German edition, the English edition, and the 4th German edition). These texts, in terms of the aspect analyzed here, clearly differ from what Marx wrote in the Afterword to the 2nd German edition and in the Note to the Reader of the French edition, made public during his life, with precedence (as we will see later).

⁹ Shortly afterwards, however, in a July 12, 1893 letter to Filippo Turati, when reading the French into Italian translation of the work, Engels, in a contradictory way but persisting in his negative opinion of the French language (which he claimed provided less freedom of expression than Italian), stated: "I have compared some passages, particularly in the 1st and penultimate chapters (general tendency of capitalist accumulation). As you say, it is translated entirely from the French text, which continues to be more popular than the German. The passages I compared were translated fairly accurately, which is not very difficult given that the two languages are so closely related, and the greater freedom of movement offered by Italian in comparison to French" (Engels, 2010a, V. 50, p. 161). The observation that it is easier to carry out a precise translation when two languages are similar should be noted, since Marx said something similar regarding the Romance languages (addressed later in this article). Indeed, this observation, if applicable to translation from French to Italian, could be extended to Portuguese, since they all come from the same Latin root. Note also the comment in the quote to the effect that that Marx's French edition was more popular than the German edition edited by Engels.

In Engels's first preface to Volume I (the preface to the 3rd German edition, of November 7, 1883), he wrote that the changes he made to the text were based on two main sources: an annotated copy of the German edition and an annotated copy of the French edition. Engels also implied that Marx's notes in the annotated versions were incorporated fully, not just partially:

It was Marx's original intention to re-write a great part of the text of the first volume, to formulate many theoretical points more exactly, to insert new ones, and to bring historical and statistical materials up to date. But his ailing condition and the urgent need to do the final editing of the second volume induced him to give up this scheme. **Only the most necessary alterations were to be made, only the insertions which the French edition (*Le Capital*, par Karl Marx, Paris, Lachâtre, 1873) already contained were to be put in.**

Among the books left by Marx there was a German copy which he himself had corrected here and there and provided with references to the French edition; also a French copy in which he had indicated the exact passages to be used. **These alterations and additions are confined, with few exceptions, to Part Seven of the book, entitled 'The Process of Accumulation of Capital'.** Here the previous text followed the original draft more closely than elsewhere, while the preceding sections had been gone over more thoroughly. The style was therefore more vivacious, more of a single cast, but also more careless, studded with Anglicisms and in parts unclear; there were gaps here and there in the presentation of arguments, some important particulars being merely alluded to.

With regard to the style, Marx had himself thoroughly revised several subsections and had thereby indicated to me here, as well as in numerous oral suggestions, the length to which I could go in eliminating English technical terms and other Anglicisms. **Marx would in any event have gone over the additions and supplementary texts and have replaced the smooth French with his own terse German; I had to be satisfied, when transferring them, with bringing them into maximum harmony with the original text.**

Thus not a single word was changed in this third edition without my firm conviction that the author would have altered it himself (Engels in Marx, 1982, pp. 106-107, emphasis mine)

This passage indicates that Engels deemed the alterations to the content incorporated into the French edition to be of limited scope. He further assumed that, when incorporating the new content from the French text into the German edition, Marx would have reworked these new supplements and additions written in French, in addition to replacing the "smooth French" with his "own terse German."

Later, in the Preface to the English edition of November 5, 1886, Engels recounts that:

It was understood that I should compare the MS. with the original work, and suggest such alterations as I might deem advisable. [...] The third German edition, which has been made the basis of our work throughout, was prepared by me, in 1883, with the assistance of notes left by the author, indicating the passages of the second edition to be replaced by designated passages from the French text published in 1873 [*Le Capital*, par Karl Marx.

Traduction de M. J. Roy, entièrement révisée par l'auteur, Paris, Lachâtre. This translation, especially in the latter part of the book, contains considerable alterations in and additions to the text of the second German edition.] The alterations thus effected in the text of the second edition generally coincided with changes prescribed by Marx in a set of MS. instructions for an English translation that was planned, about ten years ago, in America, but abandoned chiefly for want of a fit and proper translator. This MS. was placed at our disposal by our old friend Mr F. A. Sorge of Hoboken, N.J. It designates some further interpolations from the French edition; but, being so many years older than the final instructions for the third edition, I did not consider myself at liberty to make use of it otherwise than sparingly, and chiefly in cases where it helped us over difficulties. In the same way, **the French text has been referred to in most of the difficult passages, as an indicator of what the author himself was prepared to sacrifice wherever something of the full import of the original had to be sacrificed in the rendering.** (Engels in Marx, 1982, pp. 109-110, emphasis mine)

We thus see the value Engels attributed to the French edition. The usefulness of the considerable alterations and additions, recognized by Engels in the footnote, is indicated in the body of the text: they showed to what extent the translation could sacrifice "something of the full import of the original". Now, this says the following: i) that the French edition would be useful to indicate a limit on the extent to which the translation could be allowed to be unfaithful to the meaning of the "original text," evidently implying that the translation did not have the same status as the original; ii) that Engels did not view the French edition as an "original text" written by Marx, but rather as a mere translation. Engels's stance follows his prior critical comments in letters; he thus continued to be against what the author clearly stated, both in letters and, publicly, in the French edition itself, especially in his Note to the Reader (as we will see).

The impression, mentioned earlier, that all of the recommendations contained in the copies annotated by Marx had been implemented in the third German edition is reversed in the Preface to the fourth German Edition of June 25, 1890. Indeed, Engels reveals that further reference to Marx's annotated editions led to new additions, as shown here:

The fourth edition required that I should establish in final form, as nearly as possible, both text and footnotes. The following brief explanation will show how I have fulfilled this task.
After again comparing the French edition and Marx's manuscript remarks I have made some further additions to the German text from that translation [that is, the French edition]. They are on p. 130 (3. ed., p. 88), p. 517-19 (3. ed., p. 509-10), p. 610-13 (3.ed., p. 600), p. 655-7 (3. ed., p. 644) and in note 79 on p. 660 (3.ed., p. 648). Similarly, following the precedents of the French and English editions, I added to the text (4. ed., p. 519-25) the long note on mine workers (3.ed., p. 509-15). The other, minor modifications are purely technical in nature. (Marx, 1982, p. 114, emphasis and underlining mine)

As we can see, in the so-called "final form" of the work, as in Engels's other prefaces, he does not mention the scientific value of the French edition, independent of the original, which Marx publicly claimed (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 348); he did not even mention the author's express recommendation to German readers to consult the French edition (see below).

Therefore, Engels's approach resulted in many new formulations — that Marx developed and added to the French text with his own hands — being excluded from the posthumous editions. The editors of MEGA²¹⁰, notes researcher Kevin Anderson, collected the parts Engels left out of the 4th German edition in a 60-page appendix to the work (Anderson, 2010, p. 174). Even passages that Marx had expressly indicated should be included in future editions were not included by Engels in subsequent German editions (Anderson, 2010, p. 273), notably in the fourth German edition, which, it is important to recall, he described as the "final form, as nearly as possible" (Engels in Marx, 1982, p. 114). As Michael Heinrich states:

Volume one, in the most widespread fourth edition from 1890, is a mix of the second German edition of 1872 and the French edition of 1872–75. **Engels included some, but not all, of the changes to the French translation**, with the result that volume one nowadays exists in a form that Marx never knew. (Heinrich, 2018, p. 21, emphasis mine)¹¹

Thus, there is no doubt that Engels had the best intentions, but in this case the editor appropriated the work as if he were the author. If Engels, in the preface to Volume II of *Capital*, emphasized that the work was "exclusively the work of its author, not of its editor",¹² then he himself, when dealing with the French edition of Volume I, was inconsistent. Engels's improper treatment of the French edition is emphatically highlighted by Kevin Anderson, who asserts:

¹⁰ MEGA is a project to publish all original versions of the complete works of Marx and Engels, which includes the different editions of *Capital*. For information on MEGA, see Heinrich (2018) and Anderson (2010, pp. 247–252).

¹¹ As Michael Heinrich recalls, "[...] we just have different text documents. To decide which variant of a text is better is not an editorial but an interpretational task..." (Heinrich, 2018, p. 19). In fact, it is essential to differentiate between the tasks of the editor and of the interpreter, and between these and the author's own terrain. In a situation like this in which there is more than one edition of a work, an interpreter may have a preference for one of them, but this, while possible and legitimate, is by no means necessary. Indeed, why would it be necessary to prefer one over another or decide which is the best, if combining them and allowing them to shed light on each other could be more fruitful? Now, this is not a choice like that made by the mythical Paris... What an editor should really not do is let his personal preferences and interpretive choices affect the text, resulting in confusion regarding the different roles, and implying an improper, silent metamorphosis from editor to author.

¹² " It was no easy task to prepare the second book of *Capital* for publication, and do it in a way that on the one hand would make it a connected and as far as possible complete work, and on the other would represent exclusively the work of its author, not of its editor. " (Engels in Marx, 2010a, V. 36, p. 05).

The most generous thing that could be said of Engels as editor of volume I of *Capital* is that he left us an incomplete edition, which he put forward as the definitive one. Nonetheless, in the preface to the fourth German edition of 1890, he writes that he had established 'in final form, as nearly as possible, both text and footnotes' [...] Nonetheless, Engels left out Marx's preface and postface to the French edition [...] A stronger criticism of Engels could be made, however, based on the notion that Marx wanted the French edition to be the standard for subsequent editions and translations, at least after the sixth chapter" (Anderson, 2010, p. 176) "Getting a full text of volume one of *Capital* is part of a far larger problem: separating Marx's work from that of post-Marx Marxists, beginning with Engels."¹³ (Anderson, 1997, p. 136)

III. Examples of Changes

We will see, by way of illustration, a concise selection of the changes made by Marx in the French edition that were not reproduced in the later German editions edited by Engels. References to passages in this fourth German edition will be made based on the translation into English by Ben Fowkes.

The first change, in the title, is worth mentioning. In all of the editions prior to the French, the work is entitled *Das Kapital - Kritik der politischen Oekonomie* [Capital: A critique of political economy]. A critique of political economy is, thus, the subtitle of the first and second German editions and the first Russian edition (Rubel, 1968, p. 102). This subtitle was maintained by Engels for the third and fourth German editions. However, in the first English edition, prepared by Engels in 1886, it was significantly modified. The title and subtitle became: "Capital. A critical analysis of capitalist production" (Marx, 1990, p. 03). So, *political economy* was eliminated and *analysis* and *capitalist production* were added, with *critical* becoming an attribute of *analysis*. And as for the French edition? Marx eliminated the subtitle in the French edition altogether. Of all the versions, it had the most concise title: "Le Capital." Thus, the differences are easy to see as early as the cover.

An appropriate hypothesis to explain Marx's change in the title is that he did not intend for his work to appear to be a critique of just a theory, of a set of ideas, as it criticized a specific mode of production of material life: the capitalist mode of production. In other words, he did not intend for it to be a strict criticism of the "discipline" of political economy, but rather of social life governed by capital.

¹³ While one should not adopt a posture of reverential fear, overlooking any improprieties, one should also not adopt a Manichean view of the situation, singling out Engels as the "bad guy" in the editorial history of *Capital* (Grespan, 2018, p. 55). It was Engels who made possible the publication of the remaining volumes of the work (gathering and editing thousands of handwritten manuscripts), which he did with great effort and personal sacrifice, including forgoing his own work. It is simply a matter of distinguishing Engels from Marx, of understanding that the same cannot be said of both and that they are not "the same person," they do not constitute "a single entity" (Anderson, 1983, p. 79).

Marx also totally restructured the text. There are changes in the organization of chapters and sections, in paragraph breaks (generally more paragraphs) and in sentences (sometimes broken up, sometimes joined). As for the content, there are countless additions and reworkings and, sometimes, even subtractions. In short, in terms of form and content (so to speak) there are additions, subtractions, divisions and transformations.

We can see a change in the division of chapters and sections. The German edition has seven sections broken up into 25 chapters; in French, there are eight sections with 33 chapters.

Chapters 4 and 24 of the German edition were modified. In the German edition, Chapter 4 (The Transformation of Money into Capital) is divided into three items: 1. The General Formula for Capital, 2. Contradictions in the General Formula, 3. The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power. In the French edition, each of these items became a chapter: Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Thus, one chapter was transformed into three. The same procedure was applied to Chapter 24 (So-Called Primitive Accumulation), as Marx converted each of its items into chapters of their own. One chapter was transformed into seven.

In terms of sections, there are seven in the German edition and eight in the French. The change affected the seventh and last section of the German edition (The Process of Accumulation of Capital), which was broken into two in the French edition (the seventh, *Accumulation du Capital*, and the eighth, *L'accumulation primitive*).

Regarding the content of the text, we will discuss one change in the Preface, — which was noted by Kevin Anderson, who examined its repercussions (2010, p. 176-178) — another in the chapter on the labor process, and later on a deletion.

In the Preface to the first German edition, Marx wrote: "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, **to the less developed**, the image of its own future" (Marx, 1982, p. 91, emphasis mine). Marx modified even the text in the Preface to the first German edition, and the passage was changed in an important way. The final wording in the French edition was: "The most industrially developed country only shows **those that follow it on the industrial ladder** the image of their own future" (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 10; emphasis mine)¹⁴. Engels did not incorporate or indicate this alteration.

A second change appears in item 1, The Labour Process, in Chapter 5, The Labour Process and the Valorization Process (which in the French edition is located in item I, *Production de valeurs d'usage*, Chapter 7, *Production de valeurs d'usage et production de la plus-value*¹⁵). In German, when listing the three simple elements of the labor process

¹⁴ "Le pays le plus développé industriellement ne fait que montrer **à ceux qui le suivent sur l'échelle industrielle** l'image de leur propre avenir" (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 10; emphasis mine).

¹⁵ In addition to mentioning the opposing positions of Marx and Engels regarding the French edition, Grespan also analyzes the translation of this central concept in Marx's thinking: "First, I will comment

(which are work, the instruments of work and the object on which work is performed), Marx said that work is "**purposeful activity**, that is work itself" (Marx, 1982, p. 284, emphasis mine). However, in the French edition Marx says: "**personal activity of man**, or work itself"¹⁶ (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 77; emphasis mine). This is another change that was neither incorporated nor indicated by Engels.

The last change we will point out is Marx's suppression (already noted by Maximilien Rubel) of a well-known passage in the German edition, which consists of a digression on the formal, real subsumption of labor and of industry to capital, on the extraction of surplus value in hybrid forms and on the appearance of equality between the absolute and relative methods of production of surplus value. This passage of about 40 lines was thus excluded from *Chapitre XVI, Plus-value-absolue et plus-value relative*, from *Cinquième section, Recherches ultérieures sur la production de la plus-value*, of the French edition. The suppression begins with "It [Marx is discussing the production of relative surplus value] therefore requires a specifically capitalist mode of production [...]" and continues until "if we keep in mind the movement of surplus-value, this semblance of identity [between absolute and relative surplus value] vanishes", totaling almost an entire page of text¹⁷ (cf. Marx, 1982, pp. 645–646; Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 220; Rubel in Marx, 2008, p. 1007; Marx, 2017, pp. 578–579;).

on the importance of the disagreement between Marx and Engels about the French edition of 1872 of *Capital*, Volume I. As Roth mentioned, Marx wanted the French translation to be used as a basis for the translations to all other languages, and was therefore very much dedicated to its careful revision, even rewriting some parts, or writing new ones. This is very important today, when new editions of *Capital* propose to change traditional translations for key concepts, like 'surplus-value'."

"It is well known that, until the 1970s, there was little dispute in France about using Joseph Roy's translation, which was revised and authorised by Marx himself. However, the new translation coordinated by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, published by Éditions Sociales in 1983, recommended replacing 'plus-value' with *survaleur* as the best equivalent for the German *Mehrwert*, in order to keep the root *valeur* the same as in the German *Wert*. This in turn inspired Pedro Scaron, the new translator of *Capital* into Spanish, to replace the old *plusvalía* with *plusvalor* (in the Mexican edition published by Siglo XXI). And the new third translation of *Capital* in Brazil also prefers *mais-valor* to *mais-valia*. Yet Marx left the expression *plus-value* in the first French edition. It was correctly translated as *valia*, not as *valor* in Spanish and Portuguese, indicating that the issue was not as decisive as the new translators claim" (Grespan, 2018, p. 49). Regarding the connection between the translation of Pedro Scaron and the Mexican edition by Siglo XXI, Horacio Tarcus, via private communication, told us that: "In fact, Scaron's translation was prepared and published first in Buenos Aires, shortly before the military coup. It was then reprinted in Mexico and Madrid since, until 1984, it could not be published in Argentina." Tarcus's work ("*La biblia del proletariado. Traductores y editores de El Capital*") will soon be published in Brazil. I wish to thank Tarcus for his precise observation and Lincoln Secco for acting as intermediary.

¹⁶ "**activité personnelle de l'homme**, ou travail proprement dit" (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 77; emphasis mine).

¹⁷ The full text of the passage is: "It therefore requires a specifically capitalist mode of production, a mode of production which, along with its methods, means and conditions, arises and develops spontaneously on the basis of the formal subsumption [Subsumption] of labour under capital. This formal subsumption is then replaced by a real subsumption.

Thus, the changes begin with the title and spread to the topics, chapters and sections, spreading to cover the entire text¹⁸.

IV. The Publishing Adventure

We will now address this "extraordinary editorial adventure" (Gaudin, 2018, p. 37)¹⁹ during the process of preparing the French edition²⁰. Let us continue with the words of the agents themselves: here the letters exchanged between Marx and Engels,

It will be sufficient if we merely refer to certain hybrid forms, in which although surplus labour is not extorted by direct compulsion from the producer, the producer has not yet become formally subordinate to capital. In these forms, capital has not yet acquired a direct control over the labour process. Alongside the independent producers, who carry on their handicrafts or their agriculture in the inherited, traditional way, there steps the usurer or merchant with his usurer's capital or merchant's capital, which feeds on them like a parasite. The predominance of this form of exploitation in a society excludes the capitalist mode of production, although it may form the transition to capitalism, as in the later Middle Ages. Finally, as in the case of modern 'domestic industry', certain hybrid forms are reproduced here and there against the background of large-scale industry, though their physiognomy is totally changed.

A merely formal subsumption of labour under capital suffices for the production of absolute surplus-value. It is enough, for example, that handicraftsmen who previously worked on their own account, or as apprentices of a master, should become wage-labourers under the direct control of a capitalist. But we have seen how methods of producing relative surplus-value are, at the same time, methods of producing absolute surplus-value. Indeed, the unrestricted prolongation of the working day turned out to be a very characteristic product of large-scale industry. The specifically capitalist mode of production ceases in general to be a mere means of producing relative surplus-value as soon as it has conquered an entire branch of production; this tendency is still more powerful when it has conquered all the important branches of production. It then becomes the universal, socially predominant form of the production process. It only continues to act as a special method of producing relative surplus-value in two respects: first, in so far as it seizes upon industries previously only formally subordinate to capital, that is, in so far as it continues to proselytize, and second, in so far as the industries already taken over continue to be revolutionized by changes in the methods of production.

From one standpoint the distinction between absolute and relative surplus-value appears to be illusory. Relative surplus-value is absolute, because it requires the absolute prolongation of the working day beyond the labour-time necessary to the existence of the worker himself. Absolute surplus-value is relative, because it requires a development of the productivity of labour which will allow the necessary labour-time to be restricted to a portion of the working day. But if we keep in mind the movement of surplus-value, this semblance of identity vanishes" (Marx, 1982, pp. 645-646).

¹⁸ Other modifications to the text are indicated, and their profound theoretical repercussions are examined, by (among others) Kevin Anderson and Regina Roth (who also addresses some editorial interventions by Engels that focused on the content of the text of the other volumes of the work).

¹⁹ "*aventure éditoriale exceptionnelle*" (Gaudin, 2018, p. 37).

²⁰ The winding path of this "publishing adventure," with all its obstacles, is described in detail by François Gaudin (2018 and 2019), who justifiably calls it exceptional and singular.

Marx and his son-in-law Paul Lafargue, Marx and his daughters, and Marx and his publisher, Maurice Lachâtre.²¹

But first recall that the translation of Volume I to other languages was already an object of Marx's attention even before its first publication in 1867. In correspondence with Engels and other recipients, the issue was brought up at least as early as 1865. It is beyond doubt that Marx's intention was that, as a general rule, the readers would read the work in their own language without needing to consult another edition in a foreign language; later we will see the only exception: the German-speaking reader would need to read the French edition.

Marx paid special attention to the French public. As soon as he went to Hamburg to deliver Volume I to his publisher (for the first German edition), he expressed the wish that it next be published in French, in Paris. He wrote to his correspondent (Ludwig Büchner), on May 1, 1867:

The reason I am writing to you personally is this: I should like to have the thing published in French as well, in Paris, after its publication in Germany. I cannot go there myself, at least not without risk, as I have been expelled from France, first under Louis Philippe and a second time under Louis Bonaparte (*President*), and finally I have been ceaselessly attacking Mr Louis during my exile in London. I cannot therefore go personally to seek out a translator. [Marx then asks his correspondent to recommend someone appropriate for the job, since he would not have time to do it himself, and at the end adds:] I consider it to be of the greatest importance to emancipate the French from the erroneous views under which Proudhon with his idealised petty bourgeoisie has buried them. [...] I am constantly confronted with Proudhonism's most repugnant consequences. (Marx, 2010. V. 42, p. 368)

The search for an appropriate translator continued until 1872. In the meantime, several translators were considered or even began translating the text (without completing it): Élie Reclus, Moses Hess, Joseph Card and Charles Keller.

Keller, for example, even sent Marx a manuscript with the translation of Chapter II of Volume I of *Capital* (which is The Process of Exchange in German and *Des Échanges* in French). On October 18, 1869, Marx returned the manuscript plus his corrections and commented the following to his son-in-law Paul Lafargue and his daughter Laura (who were serving as intermediaries with Keller):

²¹ The letters are valuable points of reference and allow us to follow Marx's daily work and compose a faithful picture of the environment in which he lived and worked. We see, along with the development of theoretical ideas, his efforts to disseminate his work, his political and administrative activities at the International Working Men's Association, his financial difficulties, in addition to family matters (in the period studied, they include the marriage of a daughter and the early loss of a grandchild), and personal matters (such as recurring mentions of health problems: insomnia, eye inflammation, cough, headaches, etc.). Marx's own life seems to have confirmed what he wrote in the handwritten letter published in the French edition (see below): "There is no royal road to science..." (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 07).

My dear Paul and Laura,

I send you to-day the manuscript of Mr Keller [...]

Tell Mr Keller that he shall go on. On the whole, I am satisfied with his translation, although it lacks elegance and is done in too negligent a way.

He will do best to send me every chapter *through you*. As to chapter IV I shall subdivide it. [...]

In German we use the word 'Process' (procès) for economical movements, as you say chemical procès, *si je ne me trompe pas*. He translates by 'phenomena' which is nonsense. If he can find no other word, he must always translate by 'mouvement' or something analogous. (Marx, 2010a, V. 43, p. 359–360)

We have three comments on this letter.

First, it describes what Marx expected from a translation. That it be elegant, careful and rigorous with respect to the concepts used. Unlike Engels, Marx in no way assumes an alleged inescapable need to sacrifice the meaning of the original.

Second, he announces a change in the structure of Volume I. Here we already see his intention to subdivide Chapter IV in the French edition, which he effectively did, demonstrating that the changes he made to the work were not random, but planned.

Third, regarding the concept of "process" (whose meaning was said to be similar to that of "movement" in the letter cited), Marx adds a footnote in the French edition, which was not reproduced by Engels in the fourth German edition. This addition was made in the highly important item "The Labour Process" inserted into the Chapter "The Labour Process and the Valorization Process" in the passage in which he writes about the "[...] simple elements of the labour process..." and inserts the following footnote:

In German, Arbeits-Process (labor process). The word 'procès' [process], which expresses a development considered in the entirety of its real conditions, has long belonged to the scientific language of all Europe. In France it was first introduced in a timid way in its Latin form: processus. Then it slipped, stripped of this pedantic disguise, into books on chemistry, physiology, etc., and into some works on metaphysics. In the end, it will obtain its naturalization papers. We note in passing that the Germans, like the French, in everyday language, use the word 'procès' [process] in its legal sense. (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 77)²²

²² "En allemand Arbeits-Process (Procès de travail). Le mot «procès» qui exprime un développement considéré dans l'ensemble de ses conditions réelles, appartient depuis longtemps à la langue scientifique de toute l'Europe. En France on l'a d'abord introduit d'une manière timide sous sa forme latine - processus. Puis il s'est glissé, dépouillé de ce déguisement pédantesque, dans les livres de chimie, physiologie, etc., et dans quelques œuvres de métaphysique. Il finira par obtenir ses lettres de grande naturalisation. Remarquons en passant que les Allemands, comme les Français, dans le langage ordinaire, emploient le mot «procès» dans son sens juridique." (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 77). This note does not appear in the following editions: Marx, 2017, p. 256; Marx, 2002, p. 212; Marx, 1996, p. 298; Marx, 1982, p. 284.

So, what does process mean to Marx? It is a development considered in the set of its real conditions. We therefore have here an important addition in terms of content. This addition may even help explain the change of the designation at the beginning of the table of contents of Volume I: in the German edition it is "The Process of Production of Capital"; in the French it is "*Développement de la Production Capitaliste*."

Let us return to the route that leads to the publication of the first French edition. It was in late 1871 or early 1872 that Marx decided against having Keller translate the text. The notice that he would delay translating the work because he first had to finish the translation of a medical book was apparently the last straw (cf. Marx in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 77).

Shortly thereafter, with the help of Marx's daughter, Laura, and son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, a publisher was found: Maurice Lachâtre. Lafargue comments to Engels that "it is thanks to a refugee from the Commune [Lachâtre], seduced by Laura, that we managed to find this *rara avis*: a publisher" (in Gaudin, 2018, p. 23)²³. Lachâtre, Paul and Laura were staying on the same floor of the *Hôtel de France*, in San Sebastián, as exiles, after the defeat of the Paris Commune (Lachâtre in Bouffard et al. p. 85).

The agreement with the publisher was signed on February 13, 1872.²⁴ Marx thought it essential that it be a cheap, popular edition; he thus insisted on a provision in the agreement that required that Lachâtre publish an edition accessible to "the smallest pockets" (Gaudin, 2019, p. 179)²⁵. For Marx, it was extremely important that the work be financially accessible to the working class.

²³ "c'est grâce à un réfugié de la Commune [Lachâtre] séduit par Laura que nous sommes parvenus à trouver cette *rara avis*: un éditeur" (in Gaudin, 2018, p. 23).

²⁴ After the National Library of France showed no interest in archiving and making the originals of the letters exchanged between Marx and Lachâtre and others involved in printing the work in Paris available to the public, both the letters and the original agreement for publication of the work were auctioned in 2018 (Gaudin, 2019, p. 10). The letters were sold for 160,000 euros; the contract for 121,600 euros (see: <https://www.barnebys.fr/blog/le-capital-de-karl-marx-pulverise-les-encheres>). François Gaudin should be lauded for having transcribed and preserved for the public copies of these unpublished documents (Gaudin, 2019).

²⁵ "des plus petites bourses" (Gaudin, 2019, p. 179).

Entre les Soussignés,

M^r Karl Marx, homme de lettres, demeurant à Londres, N^o 1 Moilland
 Sarah Road, N. W.
 et M^{rs} Maurice La Châtre et C^{ie}, éditeurs, Boulevard de Sebastopol N^o 38, à Paris.

Il a été dit et convenu ce qui suit

M^r Karl Marx a offert à M^{rs} Maurice La Châtre et C^{ie} qui l'acceptent, de se
 charger de la publication en français de son ouvrage *Le Capital* à l'exception
 de tous autres éditeurs.

L'auteur exige que l'édition de son livre soit expressément sous une forme et à un
 prix qui mettent l'ouvrage à la portée des plus petites bourses; il a adopté le format,
 la justification et le prix des livraisons de l'histoire des Papes, par Maurice La Châtre,
 à 2 colonnes et a dix continues la livraison de huit pages de texte.

L'auteur se réserve le choix du traducteur, en lui attribuant une rémunération de cinq
 continues à quatre continues par ligne, et au maximum une rémunération de quinze
 cents francs pour la traduction entière de l'ouvrage, qui seront payés par les éditeurs.

M^{rs} Maurice La Châtre et C^{ie} se chargent de tous les frais de la publication. Moyennant
 1^o une participation en espèces d'une somme de deux mille francs qui leur sera remise
 à Paris par les soins de M^r Karl Marx quinze jours après demande. 2^o et le
 droit de faire un tirage à dix mille exemplaires ou plusieurs tirages s'élevant à ce chiffre;
 les passes doubles en plus, sans droits à payer à l'auteur.

A partir du dixième mille, M^{rs} Maurice La Châtre et C^{ie} payeront à M^r Karl
 Marx ou à ses ayants-droits un droit de demi continue par livraison au comptant, au
 moment ou s'effectuera le tirage, les passes doubles déduites, suivant l'usage.

Il sera mis à la disposition de l'auteur cent exemplaires de chaque livraison ou cent
 exemplaires brochés, selon les convenances, à titre gratuit, pour être distribués par ses soins à la
 presse française ou étrangère ou à des groupes d'ouvriers et d'ouvrières.

Fait double entre les parties qui ont signé après lecture le 13 février
 1872. Karl Marx. Approuvé l'écrivain ci-dessus.
 Maurice La Châtre & C^{ie}

The agreement signed by Karl Marx and Maurice Lachâtre, dated February 13, 1872. Source: Gaudin, 2019, p. 179.

With the help of Charles Longuet (who soon became Marx's son-in-law), a translator was finally found: Marx chose Joseph Roy, who was instructed to translate from the manuscripts of the second German edition that would be sent to him (Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 283 and 327; Gaudin, 2019, p. 81). The fact that Marx thought that he had succeeded in translating Feuerbach into French was decisive in his selection.

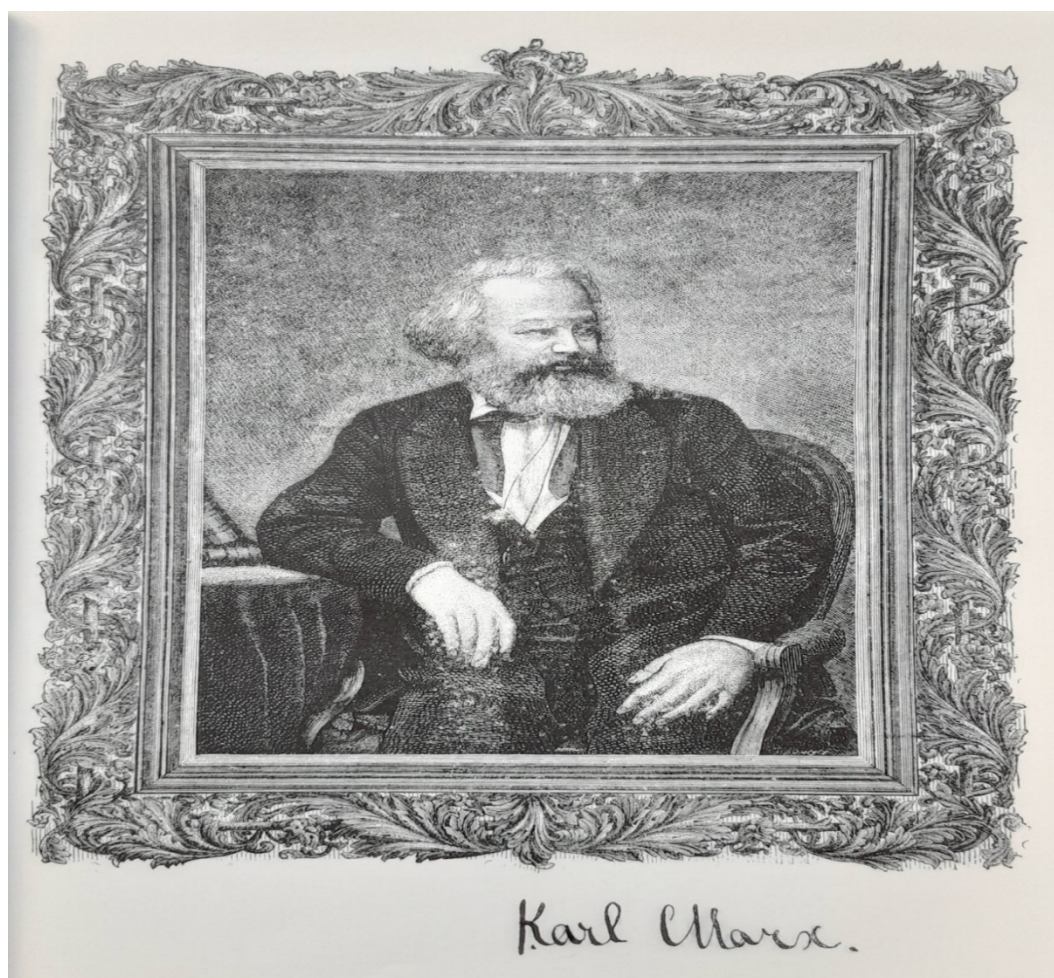
Marx's dialog with his publisher and his translator was never simple. One reason was their distance from the place of publication and from each other: the author was in London; the translator, in Bordeaux; the publisher, first in San Sebastián, then in Belgium and, later, in Switzerland; and the work was published in Paris. Writing to Marx on February 17, 1872, Lachâtre vividly describes this unique situation:

Dear Sir and Illustrious Philosopher,

[...]A singular destiny presides over the creation of this book, since its translation into French is a true creation!

The author is banned and lives amidst of the fog of the Thames; the publisher is also banned, and miraculously escaped from three gangs of assassins sent to shoot him on the infernal day that was May 24th [1871, during the defeat Paris Commune]. The person who introduced us, your son-in-law, also banned, driven by the winds of persecution, followed by your beloved daughter and by the poor, dear child whose poor health causes you all such worries... (Lachâtre in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 75-76)²⁶

The distance between the agents involved in the process of translation, revision, and publication of the book was also later highlighted by Marx at the end of the French edition in a discussion of a list of errata-the presence of which he explained in the following terms: The distance of the author, the translator and the publisher from the printing house



²⁶ “Monsieur et Illustre philosophe,

[...] Singulière destinée que celle qui préside à la création de ce livre, car sa traduction en français est une véritable création! L’auteur est proscrit e vit au milieu des brouillards de la Tamise; l’éditeur est proscrit également, échappé comme par miracle à trois bandes d’assassins envoyés pour le fusiller dans l’infamale journée du 24 mai. Celui qui nous a mis en rapport, votre gendre, proscrit aussi, poussé par tous les vents de la persécution, suivi par votre fille bien-aimée et par le pauvre et cher enfant dont la chétive santé vous cause à tous tant d’inquiétudes...” (Lachâtre in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 75-76).

has made the final corrections of *Capital* quite difficult. Certain mistakes have therefore crept into the work, which the reader will easily rectify. The list of errata applies to the first section of the book, with some exceptions (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 351)²⁷

The portrait of Marx that was published in the book, by the painter Adolphe Dervaux. Source: Marx, 2018, p. 05.

However, the distance between those involved was not the only obstacle. The demands of the publisher, Maurice Lachâtre, annoyed Marx, and the overly literal translation of Joseph Roy, towards whom Marx was more sympathetic, resulted in a lot of extra work.

The conflicts with the publisher were varied: the insistence on the publication of a portrait of Marx (which, as we see above, did appear in the French edition - Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 347 and 578, for example), the continual delays in the publication of the installments of the work (which worsened when Lachâtre's company suffered State intervention, with the appointment of a judicial administrator who sought to postpone the publication of the installments, which made Marx even consider suing the latter), and the failure to send the installments already printed to the translator, so that he could check the changes made and adapt the translation of the installments that would follow. But above all, we will highlight the discussion regarding the contents of a letter of reply signed by Lachâtre that would appear in the first installment and in the complete book, since it contributes to illuminating how Marx thought about questions of method.

Given the intention to publish the work in periodic installments, it had been agreed that Marx would write a letter to be published in facsimile, serving as a “preface” in the author's own hand, and this would be (and was) followed by a response, in the form of a second letter, from Lachâtre. Not only the presence of a response written by Lachâtre, but also its contents, annoyed Marx. He therefore had to propose changes so that Lachâtre would not lead readers to erroneous judgments about his work and his way of thinking.

First, however, let us see view the letter that Marx wrote on March 18, 1872, to be published as a preface:

To citizen Maurice La Châtre

Dear Citizen,

I applaud your idea of publishing the translation of *Capital* as a serial. In this form the book will be more accessible to the working class, a consideration which to me outweighs everything else.

That is the good side of your suggestion, but here is the reverse of the medal: the method of analysis which I have employed, and which had not previously been applied to economic subjects, makes the reading of the first chapters rather arduous, and it is to be feared that the French public, always impatient to come to a conclusion, eager to know the connection between general principles and the immediate questions that have aroused their

²⁷ “L'éloignement de l'auteur, du traducteur et de l'éditeur du lieu d'impression ont rendu la correction définitive du *Capital* assez difficile. Il s'est donc glissé dans le cours de l'ouvrage certaines fautes que le lecteur rectifiera sans peine. La liste d'errata ne concerne, sauf quelques exceptions, que la première section du livre.” (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 351)

passions, may be disheartened because they will be unable to move on at once.

That is a disadvantage I am powerless to overcome, unless it be by forewarning and forearming those readers who zealously seek the truth. There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.

Believe me, dear citizen,

Your devoted,
Karl Marx

(Marx, 1982, p. 104)²⁸

²⁸ “Londres 18 Mars 1872.

Au citoyen Maurice La Châtre.

Cher citoyen,

J'applaudis à votre idée de publier la traduction de «Das Kapital» en livraisons périodiques. Sous cette forme l'ouvrage sera plus accessible à la classe ouvrière et pour moi cette considération l'emporte sur toute autre.

Voilà le beau côté de votre médaille, mais en voici le revers: La méthode d'analyse que j'ai employée et qui n'avait pas encore été appliquée aux sujets économiques, rend assez ardue la lecture des premiers chapitres, et il est à craindre que le public français toujours impatient de conclure, avide de connaître le rapport des principes généraux avec les questions immédiates qui le passionnent, ne se rebute parce qu'il n'aura pu tout d'abord passer outre.

C'est là un désavantage contre lequel je ne puis rien si ce n'est toutefois prévenir et prémunir les lecteurs soucieux de vérité. Il n'y a pas de route royale pour la science et ceux-là seulement ont chance d'arriver à ses sommets lumineux qui ne craignent pas de se fatiguer à gravir ses sentiers escarpés.

Recevez, cher citoyen, l'assurance de mes sentiments dévoués.

Karl Marx.” (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 07)

Londres 18 Mars 1872.

Cyprien Denon
Remerciement

Au citoyen Maurice La Chatre.

Cher citoyen,

J'applaudis à votre idée de publier la traduction de *Das Kapital* en livraisons périodiques. Sous cette forme l'ouvrage sera plus accessible à la classe ouvrière et pour moi cette considération l'emporte sur toute autre.

Voilà le beau côté de votre médaille, mais en voici le revers: la méthode d'analyse que j'ai employée et qui n'avait pas encore été appliquée aux sujets économiques, est assez ardue la lecture des premiers chapitres, et il y a à craindre que le public français toujours impatient de conclure, averti de connaître le rapport des principes généraux avec les questions immédiates qui le passionnent, ne se rebute parcequ'il n'aura pu tout d'abord passer outre.

C'est là un désavantage contre lequel je ne puis rien si ce n'est toutefois prévenir et prémunir les lecteurs soucieux de vérité. Il y a pas de route royale pour la science et ceux qui seulement ont chance d'arriver à ses sommets lumineux qui ne craignent pas de se fatiguer à gravir ses sentiers escarpés.

Recevez, cher citoyen, l'assurance de mes sentiments dévoués.

Karl Marx.

The original letter written by Marx. Source: Gaudin, 2019, p. 90.

Two conclusions follow from Marx's preface: the first is that the main targets of the work were the working classes; the second is that Marx was aware of the fact that the work contained difficulties, especially the beginning, due to the method employed to address the topic; he emphatically encouraged the reader to nevertheless face and overcome the obstacles along the way.

We will now return to the dialog regarding the contents of the publisher's response.

Marx wrote to Lachâtre to indicate what information should be contained in his response and clarified some aspects of the work, on March 7, 1872:

It will be useful to say (on your side) in the first installment that the translation is based on the manuscript of the second German edition, which will not begin to be published for a few weeks yet.

Confidentially, my German publisher is imitating you by publishing the second edition in periodic installments.

I hope that the book does not result in your further persecution. The method is totally different from that employed by French and other socialists. I do not take general ideas such as equality etc. as my point of departure. Rather, I begin with an objective analysis of economic relations as they are and that is why the revolutionary spirit of the book is revealed only gradually. On the contrary, what I fear is that the dryness of the initial analyses will put off the French reader. (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 85)²⁹

Then, after reading the draft of the response written by Lachâtre, Marx points out an error and proposes a correction on March 20, 1872:

In the last corrected paragraph, the following words appear: 'will not give up reading because of the exposition of our analytical methods'.

There is a misunderstanding here. I do not present my method, rather I apply it from the start. However, its application, beginning in the first chapters, to the analysis of 'commodities', 'value' and 'money' is, by its nature, a little difficult to follow.

However, this can be easily changed to: 'will not give up reading because of the application of our analytical methods to the introductory concepts of political economy which, by their very nature, are quite abstract', or something like that, and thus we would have finished with the preliminaries. (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 97)³⁰

The following day, March 21, 1872, Marx vented to Lafargue:

²⁹ “Il sera utile de dire (de vôtre côté) dans la première livraison que la traduction est faite d’après le manuscrit de la deuxième édition allemande dont la publication ne commencera que dans quelques semaines.

Entre nous. Mon éditeur allemand vous imite en publiant la deuxième édition en livraisons périodiques.

J’espère que le livre ne vous vaudra de nouvelles persécutions. La méthode est tout-à-fait [sic] différente de celle appliquée par les socialistes français et autres. Je ne prends pas pour mon point de départ des idées générales comme l’égalité etc., mais je commence, au contraire, par l’analyse objective des rapports économiques tels qu’ils sont et c’est pour cela que l’esprit révolutionnaire du livre ne se révèle que graduellement. Ce que je crains, au contraire, c’est que l’aridité des premières analyses ne rebute le lecteur français.” (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 85).

³⁰ “Dans le dernier paragraphe rectifié il y a ces mots ‘ne se laisseront pas arrêter dans leur lecture par l’exposition de nos méthodes analytiques’.

Il y a ici un malentendu. Je n’expose pas ma méthode, mais je l’applique dès le commencement, mais son application, dans les premiers chapitres, à l’analyse de la ‘marchandise’, ‘la valeur’, ‘l’argent’ est par la nature de la chose elle-même un peu difficile à suivre.

Mais c’est facile de changer: ‘ne se laisseront pas arrêter dans leur lecture par l’application de notre méthode analytique aux premières notions de l’économie politique qui par leur nature même sont très abstraites’ ou - quelque chose comme ça - nous aurions avec cela fini avec les préliminaires.” (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 97).

“La Châtre is an abominable charlatan. He wastes time on absurd things (such as his letter in response to my handwritten letter to readers, which I had to ask him to change.” (Marx in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 80)³¹

Below is the final version of the response to be published, sent by Lachâtre to Marx on “*dimanche matin*” (Sunday morning), March 24, 1872, (Lachâtre in Bouffard et al., 2018, pp. 81-82), and it was published as is in the French edition (Marx, 1872–1875, p. 08):

DEAR PROFESSOR,³²

Your book "LE CAPITAL" has attracted so much sympathy among the working classes in GERMANY that it is natural that a French publisher would have the idea of giving his country a translation of this masterful work.

RUSSIA preceded FRANCE, it is true, in publishing this important work; but our country will be fortunate enough to have a translation based on the manuscript of the second German edition, even before its appearance in GERMANY, and revised by the author.

FRANCE will be able to claim that it made the greatest contribution to the introduction of others to your doctrines, because it will be our text that will be used for all the translations of the book in ENGLAND, ITALY, SPAIN, and AMERICA, everywhere men of progress meet, eager to learn and keen to spread the principles that must govern modern societies in the old and the new world.

The method of publication that we have chosen, installments costing TEN CENTIMES, will have the advantage of allowing a greater number of our friends to obtain your book, the poor who can only pay for science with an obol; your goal will be achieved: to make your work accessible to all.

As for your fear of seeing the readers stop because of the dryness of the economic topics treated in the first chapters, the future will show us if it was justified.

We must hope that those who subscribe to your work, whose main objective is to study economic doctrines, will not give up reading because of the application of your analytical methods; everyone will understand that the first chapters of a book on political economy must be devoted to abstract reasoning, the necessary preliminary to the burning questions that fascinate the mind, and that one can only arrive gradually at the solution of the social problems treated in the following chapters; I am convinced that all readers will want to follow you until the conclusion of your magnificent theories.

Please accept, dear professor, the assurance of my highest regard.

MAURICE LACHATRE (Lachâtre in Marx, 1872–1875, p. 8)³³

³¹ “La Châtre est un charlatan abominable. Il fait perdre le temps par des choses absurdes (p. ex. sa lettre en réponse à mon autographe dont j’étais obligé à lui proposer des changements).” (Marx in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 80)

³² “Maître” is literally master, a word that has narrower connotations in English for a French term that can indicate respect for teaching and learning. We have therefore translate it somewhat loosely as “professor.”

³³ *CHER MAÎTRE,*

Votre livre «LE CAPITAL» vous a attiré tant de sympathies parmi les classes ouvrières, en ALLEMAGNE, qu’il était naturel qu’un éditeur français eût l’idée de donner à son pays la traduction de cette œuvre magistrale.

La RUSSIE a devancé la FRANCE, il est vrai, pour la reproduction de cet ouvrage important; mais notre pays aura l’heureuse fortune de posséder la traduction faite sur le manuscrit de la deuxième édition allemande, avant même son apparition en ALLEMAGNE, et révisée par l’auteur.

La FRANCE pourra revendiquer la plus large part dans l’initiation des autres peuples à vos doctrines, car ce sera notre texte qui servira pour toutes les traductions qui seront faites du livre, en ANGLETERRE, en ITALIE, en ESPAGNE, en

Note, then, that Marx objected only to the last paragraph of the letter, when he stressed that he did not expound on his method in the work, but rather applied it. Lachâtre then accepted Marx's objection and changed that passage as requested. Hence, the rest of the letter and, mainly, Lachâtre's categorical assertion that it would be the French edition that would serve as a reference for future translations, was not the object of any complaints, suggesting that Marx agreed with what was said.

Now that we have discussed the often-contentious relationship between the author and the publisher, let us turn to the more sympathetic relationship that developed between the author and the translator. A shared distaste for the publisher, mentions of difficulties in the translation and publication process, and problems in receiving the printed installments, delays in translation by Roy (who got married while working on the translation, after facing family difficulties - Roy in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 83) are some of the issues addressed in Roy's correspondence with Marx. We highlight here comments related to the translation and publication of the work.

For example, in a letter from Roy to Marx³⁴, written on March 14, 1872, in order to describe the difficulties he faced in translating the work, he reflects on the differences between German and the Romance languages as follows:

It is not that the translation presents serious difficulties, but it does have a series of small ones that halt us at each step. First of all, French, due to its Latin roots, has many words that are not analogs to the eyes or ears, although the meaning expressed by them is analogous. As a result, the relationships between ideas are not found in the language and, from this point of view, German is much superior. You know this as well as or better than I; but, despite your perfect knowledge of our language, perhaps you do not sense as strongly as we do another difficulty which is not easily overcome. In a work such as yours, the same words are necessarily repeated very often. This repetition sounds infinitely worse to the

AMÉRIQUE, partout enfin où se rencontreront des hommes de progrès, avides de connaître et désireux de propager les principes qui doivent régir les sociétés modernes dans l'ancien et le nouveau monde.

Le mode de publication que nous avons adopté, par livraisons à DIX CENTIMES, aura cet avantage, de permettre à un plus grand nombre de nos amis de se procurer votre livre, les pauvres ne pouvant payer la science qu'avec l'obole; votre but se trouvera atteint: rendre votre œuvre accessible à tous.

Quant à la crainte que vous manifestez de voir les lecteurs s'arrêter devant l'aridité des matières économiques traitées dans les premiers chapitres, l'avenir nous apprendra si elle était fondée.

Nous devons espérer que les personnes qui s'abonneront à votre ouvrage, ayant pour objet principal l'étude des doctrines économiques, ne se laisseront pas arrêter dans leur lecture par l'application de vos méthodes analytiques; chacun comprendra que les premiers chapitres d'un livre d'économie politique doivent être consacrés à des raisonnements abstraits, préliminaires obligés des questions brûlantes qui passionnent les esprits, et qu'on ne peut arriver que graduellement à la solution des problèmes sociaux traités dans les chapitres suivants; tous les lecteurs voudront vous suivre, - c'est ma conviction, - jusqu'à la conclusion de vos magnifiques théories.

Veuillez agréer, cher maître, l'assurance de toutes mes sympathies.

MAURICE LACHATRE" (Lachâtre in Marx, 1872–1875, p. 8).

³⁴ Unfortunately, Marx's responses to Roy's letters seem to have been lost (cf. Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 79).

French ear than to the German, because we cannot place the words where we want so easily. (Roy in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 78–79)³⁵

In addition to providing evidence that the distinctions between different so-called "linguistic groups" were, even if incidentally, a topic of conversation between the author and the translator, this letter indicates that repetition of the same words was the aspect that seemed to most bother Roy. However, Marx's main concern was different: he thought that excessive literalness was the main problem with the translation. However, at first he did not notice this; in fact, when Marx received the first texts translated by Roy (from chapter I), he described Roy (in a letter to Lafargue of 3/21/72) as "a marvellous translator" (3/21/1872; Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 347), and even as "perfect"³⁶. Soon thereafter, however, he began to recognize this problem emerging, even though he continued to praise the work of Roy, saying that: "He translates easy passages too literally, but shows his strength in difficult ones" (5/1/1872, Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 100)³⁷.

Thus, despite a very favorable first impression of Roy's work, as the translated manuscripts reached his hands, more and more of Marx's time was spent revising the translation. In addition to revising the content of the text and the translation, Marx also had to correct the proofs of the installments and, lastly, check whether the published installment matched the corrected text. The procedure was approximately as follows: Marx sent the source text to Roy, who translated it and returned it to Marx, who revised the translation and sent it to Lachâtre's office in Paris. A proof was then printed and sent to Marx and Lachâtre for corrections. They returned the corrected proof so that a second proof could be created, which was sent back to both. This was repeated until there were no more corrections and Marx approved publication of the installment (see, for example: Lachâtre in Bouffard et al. p. 78). All of this was in addition to correction of the proofs of the second German edition until mid-1873.

Revising the French gave Marx "the devil of a job" (6/21/72 - Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 399), even more than if he "had to do it without the translator" (12/21/1872-

³⁵ "Ce n'est pas que la traduction présente de graves difficultés, mais elle en présente une foule de petites qui arrêtent à chaque pas. D'abord le français en raison de sa provenance du latin contient une foule de mots sans analogie pour l'oreille et pour l'œil bien que le sens qu'ils expriment soit analogue. Il en résulte que les rapports entre les idées ne se retrouvent pas dans le langage et à ce point de vue l'allemand est bien supérieur. Vous savez cela aussi bien et mieux que moi; mais, malgré votre parfaite connaissance de notre langue, vous ne sentez peut-être pas aussi bien que nous une autre difficulté dont on ne triomphe pas facilement. Dans un ouvrage comme le vôtre les mêmes mots sont nécessairement très souvent répétés. Cette répétition choque l'oreille en français infiniment plus qu'en allemand, parce qu'on ne peut les placer aussi facilement où l'on veut." (Roy in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 78–79).

³⁶ "Roy (6, rue Condillac Bordeaux) is a perfect translator. He has already sent the manuscript of the first chapter (I had sent him, in Paris, the manuscript of the second German edition)" (Marx in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 80). "Roy (6, rue Condillac Bordeaux) est un traducteur parfait. Il a déjà envoyé le manuscrit du premier chapitre (je lui avais envoyé le manuscrit de la deuxième édition allemande à Paris)."

³⁷ "Il traduit trop littéralement dans les passages faciles, mais il montre sa force dans les choses difficiles" (5/1/1872, Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 100). Like a number of others preserved by Gaudin, this letter is not in the Marx-Engels *Collected Works* [(2010 (a))]

Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 460). Marx worked on it daily, until 3 am, practically without leaving his room, according to his daughters Eleanor and Jenny (Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 576 and 584). Disgruntled, he complained: “I often have to re-write [the proofs] completely to make matters clear to the French” (May 23, 1872 - Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 377). The translation had been done “too literally” and that forced him to rewrite most of it (5/27/72 and 5/28/1872- Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 379 and 385).

The excess of literalness when transposing from German to French — Marx's only criticism of the translation — was even recognized by Roy, who on May 2, 1872, wrote to Marx:

[...] The translation is perhaps too faithful, I mean, sometimes it is not different enough from your text, to incorporate the genius of our language, however I believe that reading it will not lead to any difficulties beyond those inherent in the material. (Roy in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 83–84)³⁸

Thus, if we combine what Marx said with what Roy said on this issue, we can say that a translation that is too literal is one that does not suit the nature of the target language because it does not differ sufficiently from the source text.

But how could Roy change his manner of translating too literally if he was not receiving the installments after Marx's review? This is what Marx demanded of Lachâtre (and his representatives) on March 29, 1873: he wanted the installments to be sent to Roy after the final printing (which until then had not occurred), since “it was only by studying the printed booklets that he could be led to change his translation methods” (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, pp. 134 and 135)³⁹.

All of the obstacles that stood in the way of the publication of the French edition — conflicts with the publisher, interruptions in publication for a variety of reasons, a translation that was too literal — explain why Marx referred to all this as “The painful experience I suffered because of the translation of *Capital* into French” (11/6/1876-Marx in Bouffard, 2018, p. 98)⁴⁰.

Given the above, it is no accident that, once the French edition was published, Marx stressed that it is a translation “entirely revised by the author” (“*entièrement révisée par l'auteur*”), as well as reaffirming, in letters, more than once, that the description on the title page is “by no means [...] a mere phrase” (for example Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 399), but rather an accurate description of what transpired.

³⁸ “[...] *La traduction est peut-être trop fidèle, je veux dire, ne s'écarte pas assez quelquefois de votre texte, conformément au génie de notre langue, cependant je crois que la lecture n'en présentera pas plus de difficultés que la matière ne le comporte.*” (Roy in Bouffard et al., 2018, p. 83–84).

³⁹ “*ce n'était que pour l'étude des fascicules imprimés qu'il aurait été amené à changer sa méthode de traduction*” (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, pp. 134 and 135).

⁴⁰ “*l'expérience douloureuse que j'ai subie pour la traduction française du Capital*” (11/6/1876-Marx in Bouffard, 2018, p. 98).

V. Marx and the importance of the French edition

Marx stated several times that the French edition had an independent scientific value compared to the German edition, even pointing out some sections in which the former was superior to the latter. This occurred both during the publishing process and after publication; both privately (in letters) and publicly (in the Afterword of the second German edition and in the Note to the Reader of the French edition).

For example, in a letter written March 7, 1877, Marx drew Engels's attention to two passages in *Le Capital* that discuss important points: the ideas of productive labor and how to view physiocrats. He cited the passages in the French edition, with the following justification: "I quote them from the *French* edition because they are less vague here than in the German original" (Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 208).

When he discussed possible translations into other languages (the subject of the next section), he also praised the French edition: "in which I have included a good deal of new matter and greatly improved my presentation of much else" (Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 276, de 9/27/1877). He even added that, in prefaces to future translations, it should be noted that "[the French edition] came out later and was revised by me" (Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 276 and 283, dated 9/27/1877 and 10/19/1877).

It is thus not surprising that, during revision of the translation — and the consequent complete rewriting of the text — Marx emphatically said to Lachâtre:

It is not, as you appear to imagine, merely a question of details and of minor corrections of style; rather I had, indeed am still having, to do virtually the whole thing over again. Once condemned to this thankless task I added here and there some important new developments, which will give the French edition—as I shall incidentally point out in the afterword — a value not possessed by the German original (7/23/74 – Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 25–26).

What Marx says here is that he practically did the "whole thing over again". And what could be this whole thing if not rewriting the volume, the only volume of his magnum opus published during his lifetime? And not only were small or stylistic things redone; there were also large changes including redevelopment of the scientific content of the work. He describes here the scientific value of the French edition, "not possessed by the German original."

And as Marx had already announced, once again demonstrating that he proceeded in a planned manner, this was reaffirmed at the end of the book, in the Note to the Reader (*Avis au Lecteur*), in which he stated:

Mr J. Roy set himself the task of producing a version that would be as exact and even literal as possible, and has scrupulously fulfilled it. But his very scrupulousness has compelled me to modify his text, with a view to rendering it more intelligible to the reader. These alterations, introduced from day to day, as the book was published in parts, were not made with equal care and were bound to result in a lack of harmony in style. Having once undertaken this work of revision, I was led to apply it also to the basic original text (the second German edition), to simplify some

arguments, to complete others, to give additional historical or statistical material, to add critical suggestions, etc. Hence, whatever the literary defects of this French edition may be, it possesses a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers familiar with German [...]

Karl Marx

London, 28 April 1875 (Marx, 1982, p. 105)⁴¹

He simplified and completed arguments, included historical materials and statistics, added critical insights and other changes — all of these alterations to the French text were then to be incorporated into the next German edition. Once again Marx mentions the independence and scientific value of the French edition in relation to the German edition — it demands that even those familiar with the German language consult the French edition (if they want to follow the author's recommendation). And he also refers to possible literary imperfections and disagreements in style, which reaffirms his statement regarding the French version's independent scientific value in relation to the German original, since Marx does not refer to scientific imperfections, or scientific disagreements, but exclusively to literary and stylistic ones.

What he wrote in the Note to the Reader is even more important given that Marx kept it in the work against the express wishes of Lachâtre, who asked Marx to delete it because he thought the author was anticipating criticism (Gaudin, 2018, p. 35). We can see in this letter of June 11, 1875 how Lachâtre disapproved of Marx's conduct:

It is regrettable, in my opinion, that you have written a note to the reader to draw their attention to the defects in the translation of Mr. Roy, and that you have called attention to errors in the errata, indicating that there are many others. You do the critics' work in advance and denigrate [*dénigrez*] your own book. In my opinion, this warning and the note regarding the errata should both be eliminated. Besides, there is no purpose for them, readers never take the trouble to look at

⁴¹ “M.J. Roy s'était engagé à donner une traduction aussi exacte et même littérale que possible; il a scrupuleusement rempli sa tâche. Mais ses scrupules mêmes m'ont obligé à modifier la rédaction, dans le but de la rendre plus accessible au lecteur. Ces remaniements faits au jour le jour, puisque le livre se publiait par livraisons, ont été exécutés avec une attention inégale et ont dû produire des discordances de style.

Ayant une fois entrepris ce travail de révision, j'ai été conduit à l'appliquer aussi au fond du texte original (la seconde édition allemande), à simplifier quelques développements, à en compléter d'autres, à donner des matériaux historiques ou statistiques additionnels, à ajouter des aperçus critiques, etc. Quelles que soient donc les imperfections littéraires de cette édition française, elle possède une valeur scientifique indépendante de l'original et doit être consultée même par les lecteurs familiers avec la langue allemande.

[...]

Karl Marx

Londres, 28 avril 1875

(Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 348)

them. This deletion would save you a page [...] (Marx in Gaudin, 2019, p. 160)⁴².

This divergence between Marx and Lachâtre not only clearly marked a difference in attitude regarding intellectual honesty and fidelity to the truth⁴³; it also shows, once again, Marx's convictions concerning the unique value of the French edition.

Nevertheless, the Note to the Reader (and the handwritten letter) were not reproduced in the fourth German edition edited by Engels (Anderson, 2010, p. 176). Thus, the only public, express recommendation that Marx made to the *reader* to consult an edition of the work in another language — addressed only to those who are familiar with the German language — was that they should then consult the French edition. As can be seen, Marx did not recommend that French readers consult the German edition of the work. This all supports the autonomy of the French edition of the work.

If the emphasis in the Note to the Reader, its public nature, and the fact that Marx refused to delete it were not sufficient, there is also the agreement with what he had already stated, publicly, in the Afterword to the second German edition of January 24, 1873:

I find now, on revising the French translation which is appearing in Paris, that several parts of the German original stand in need of a rather thorough re-working, while other parts require rather heavy stylistic editing, and still others require the painstaking elimination of occasional slips. But there was no time for that. For I was informed only in the autumn of 1871, when in the midst of other urgent work, that the book was sold out and the printing of the second edition was to begin in January 1872 (Marx, 1982, pp. 94-95, emphasis mine)

The next German edition was to be modified based on the French edition, which would serve as the basis for the former. The changes intended would affect the scientific content and even the style of the German: reworking of several parts, revision

⁴² “Il est regrettable, selon moi, que vous ayez fait un avis aux lecteurs pour appeler leur attention sur les défauts de la traduction de M. Roy, et que vous ayez relevé les fautes dans les errata, en indiquant qu’il y en avait bien d’autres. Vous faites à l’avance la besogne des critiques et vous dénigrez votre propre livre. À mon avis, il faudrait également faire disparaître cet avertissement et la note concernant les errata. Du reste cela n’a pas d’objet, les lecteurs ne prenant jamais la peine de les consulter. Cette suppression vous ferait gagner une page [...]” (Lachâtre in Gaudin, 2019, p. 160).

⁴³ In a collaboration between Eleanor Marx and John Swinton (which will be touched upon further on), she mentions that Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Charles Darwin (1809–1882), though very different — “one leading the quiet life of the scientific discoverer, the other the stormy life of the revolutionist” — had a striking quality in common: they were “both always true to themselves and to their work” (Eleanor in Garlin, 1976, p. 22). In this same article, moreover, she notes the interesting coincidence that the books *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, by Marx, and *The Origin of Species*, by Darwin, were both published in the same year (1859), and each initiated a revolution within its own scientific scope: Darwin's in the natural sciences; Marx's in political economy. On the characterization of *Capital* as a “scientific revolution,” see Heinrich, 2018, p. 18.

of the style and elimination of slips. Rework, revise, suppress, simplify, complete, add: these are some of the many verbs that Marx uses to describe the effects that the French edition would have on the German edition.

Marx comments that there was not enough time to carry out this task for the second German edition; he planned, however, to do so for subsequent German editions. While Marx was adamant that the German edition needed to be modified, the same cannot be said regarding the French edition: indeed, there is nothing indicating that he intended to alter the French edition itself — his silence on this topic speaks for itself.

In view of the above, when comparing the positions of Marx and Engels, it is easy to see that the French edition did not have the same significance for Engels that it had for Marx. While Engels had a negative opinion of the French edition and used it mainly as a reference of the extent to which the author was willing to go when he had to sacrifice the original meaning in translation, Marx — whose words should be given a weight that corresponds to the authority of the sole author — judged it favorably, attested to its independent scientific value, and maintained that it should be used as a basis for later translations. And one must not forget, as Engels himself stated, that Marx “weighed every word” that he wrote (5/22/1883- Engels, 2010a, V. 47, p. 26); that his writing showed the “unparalleled conscientiousness and strict self-criticism with which he endeavoured to elaborate his great economic discoveries to the point of utmost completion before he published them.” (Engels in Marx, 2010a, V. 36, p. 06).

VI. Marx and the translations after the French edition

Even before publication of the French edition was complete, Marx decided on its role in terms of later translations; in fact, it was already indicated as the basis for the translations to come, which is not at all surprising, since even the original German edition was to be modified based on it.

The value of the French edition was already indicated in a letter dated May 28, 1872 that Marx wrote to his Russian translator, Nikolai Danielson. After praising the translation of Volume I into Russian — “masterly” — and reiterating his criticism of the excessive literalness of the French translation, Marx then declared that the French edition would be the edition that would be much easier to translate into the other Romance languages and into English:

Although the French edition—the translation is by Mr Roy, the translator of Feuerbach—has been prepared by a great expert in both languages, he has often translated too literally. I have therefore found myself compelled to re-write whole passages in French, to make them palatable to the French public. **It will be all the easier later on to translate the book from French into English and the Romance languages.** (Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 385, emphasis mine).

It is legitimate to assume that this special status is based on two characteristics.

One is the influence of French culture at that time (and because of French's position as an international language). Eleanor Marx mentions this when reflecting on a possible translation into English, writing from London to the translator Nikolai Danielson on January 23, 1872:

I am in great hopes that when once a French edition of *Das Kapital* has appeared, an English one will soon follow—the English ape everything the French do, only when a thing comes from *Paris* does it meet with success here. (Eleanor in Marx, 2010a, V. 44, p. 576)

The second reason, applicable to the Romance languages, is linguistic kinship. Well, the fact that Marx referred to "Romance languages" (called "Latin languages" by Roy) already indicates that the fact that these languages pertained to a common "family" was a consideration in some sense. Indeed, we have seen that differences between German and this group of languages were discussed in exchanges between the author and translator, which reinforces the argument. Based on this, translations into Italian, Spanish and Portuguese should be made based on the French text. In fact, linguistic similarity leads along this more familiar path.

However, the central reasons justifying and, moreover, requiring translation from the French are two-fold: the declared independent scientific value of the French edition and the fact that it was the last worked on by the author himself.

We saw in the previous section how Marx attested, with no room for doubt, the independent scientific value of the French edition, i.e., in relation to the original German edition. Now we will focus on the other aspect: the fact that it was the last version only Marx worked on.

Given that the French edition was, of all the editions published, the last seen, revised, and handled by Marx, that it was the last published during his lifetime, and that it was intended by Marx to be the basis for alterations of the second German edition in order to produce the third and fourth German editions, it is clear that, of all the editions, the *last version* of Volume I of *Capital* as written by Marx was the French edition. This characteristic is not shared by the second German edition, nor the third or fourth. Recall that, when we refer to the third and fourth German editions, they are not the work solely of Marx, but rather partially represent the work of Engels, who served as posthumous editor.

Thus, strengthening the argument developed here, the last complete, public scientific revision of Volume I performed by the author was of the *French edition*. In fact, we see that Marx stated that any literary imperfections — which readers (and not editors) could correct — did not affect any scientific aspect of the revised work. That is, he did not relinquish his conviction concerning its independent scientific value, nor indicate a need to revise its content, and never alluded to the possibility of a second, revised or reformulated French edition.

However, Marx died before he could finish revising the German edition. Shortly before his death in 1883, he received news that the second German edition was

about to sell out. At that time, Marx suffered from serious health problems and also wanted to finish Volume II “as soon as possible,” especially so that he could inscribe a dedication for his recently deceased wife. Given this, his plan was as follows: to quickly send a third edition, with a reduced printing volume (one thousand copies, instead of the three thousand that the publisher wanted) and “only the fewest possible alterations and additions”; once these thousand copies were exhausted, he would prepare the fourth edition, in which he would “change the book in the way I should have done at present under different circumstances.” That is what he wrote to Danielson on November 15, 1881 (Marx, V. 46, 2010, p. 161).

And if that were not enough, there is yet another public and quite direct indication that the French edition would be the basis for future translations; it is in the final part of the text of Lachâtre's response letter, which, as we have seen, was the object of Marx's close attention and even intervention. Was it not Lachâtre who said: “it will be our text that will be used for all the translations of the book in ENGLAND, ITALY, SPAIN, and AMERICA, everywhere men of progress meet” (Lachâtre in Marx, 1872–1875, p. 8)⁴⁴? And Marx agreed with what was said.

Having thus illustrated the premise that the French edition would serve as a necessary foundation for later translations, let us move on to the letters in which Marx addressed recommendations to *translators*⁴⁵ (in particular, for translations into Russian, English and Italian); in them, he prescribes procedures for translations, procedures that concern how the translator would treat the material, namely which editions of the work he should use as the source text and how the text of each edition should be incorporated into the translation.

First, when discussing a second Russian edition of Volume I of *Capital*, (the previous one had been translated from the first German edition), Marx wrote the following to Danielson on November 15, 1878:

In regard to the second edition of *Capital*, I beg to remark:

1) I wish that the *divisions into chapters*—and the same holds good for the *subdivisions*—be made according to the French edition.

2) That the translator compare always carefully the second German edition with the French one, since the latter contains many important changes and additions (though, it is true, I was also sometimes obliged—principally in the first chapter—to ‘*aplatir*’ [smooth out]⁴⁶ the matter in its French version). [...]

[The] English crisis which I predicted on p. 351 of the French edition, note—has at last come to a head during the past few weeks. Some of my friends—theoreticians and businessmen—had asked me to omit that note

⁴⁴ “*car ce sera notre texte qui servira pour toutes les traductions qui seront faites du livre, en ANGLETERRE, en ITALIE, en ESPAGNE, en AMÉRIQUE, partout enfin où se rencontreront des hommes de progrès...*” (Lachâtre in Marx, 1872–1875, p. 8).

⁴⁵ We have already read the words he wrote for *readers* of the work, both in the Afterword of the second German edition and in the handwritten letter and note to the reader in the French edition.

⁴⁶ The Marx-Engels *Collected Works* tendentiously translates “*aplatir*” as “simplify,” which seems to be a distortion of Marx’s meaning in the direction of a disparagement of the French edition.

because they thought it unfounded. So convinced were they that the crises in the north and south of America and those in Germany and Austria were bound, as it were, to 'cancel out' the English crisis. (Marx, 2010a, V. 45, pp. 343-344)

We see that Marx continued to emphasize the critical importance of comparison with the French edition, which had alterations and additions that did not appear in the German edition. He also commented incidentally that, sometimes and especially in the first chapter, he had had to smooth out the text somewhat, removing some details and curves. As for the structure of the book, namely its division and subdivision into sections and chapters, he wanted the structure of the French edition (the last edition he had revised) to be followed. Note that the divisions and subdivisions of the Brazilian editions follow Engels's 1890 fourth German edition which, in turn, is not in accordance with this recommendation by Marx. Curiously, in the 1886 English edition, Engels respected the structure of Marx's French edition.

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Paris. — Imp. H. Noirot, 22, rue de l'Abbaye

The table of contents of the first French edition. Source: Marx, 2018, p. 352.

With regard to the note mentioned by Marx, he inserted it into the extracts of the “Afterword to the second German edition” that was included in the French edition. Marx, therefore, modified even the original afterword of the second German edition in the French edition. This addition, in the form of a footnote, is missing in the Brazilian editions, since they were translated from Engels’s fourth German edition (see: Marx,

Boitempo, 2017, p. 91; Marx, *Civilização Brasileira*, 2002, p. 29; Marx, *Nova Cultural*, 1996, p. 141). It is also absent in Engels's English edition (cf. Marx, 1990, p. 27). Marx even stresses that he kept the note against the recommendations of friends who read the work. It is one more element that shows the rigor of this edition.

Let us transcribe the contents of this important note:

The afterword of the second German edition is dated January 24, 1873, and it was not until sometime after its publication that the crisis predicted there broke out in Austria, the United States and Germany. Many people mistakenly believe that the general crisis was anticipated, so to speak, by these violent, but partial, explosions. On the contrary, it is heading towards its apogee. England will be the center of the explosion, and the repercussions will be felt throughout the worldwide market. (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 351)⁴⁷

Returning to the dialog with Danielson, on November 28, 1878, shortly after reviewing the work once again, Marx suggests:

Last week I was prevented from looking at the *Capital*. I have now done so, and find that—save the changes which the translator must make by comparing the second German edition with the French one—only a very few alterations are necessary, which you will find later on in this letter.

*The two first sections** ('Commodities and Money' and 'The Transformation of Money into Capital') *are to be translated exclusively from the *German text...* (Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 346)

Here, Marx reiterates to Danielson the need to make changes by comparing the work with the French translation, which remained explicitly indispensable; he only adds the caveat that the first two sections of Volume I should be translated directly from the German⁴⁸.

⁴⁷ “*La postface de la deuxième édition allemande est datée du 24 janvier 1873, et ce n'est que quelque temps après sa publication que la crise qui y a été prédite éclata dans l'Autriche, les États-Unis et l'Allemagne. Beaucoup de gens croient à tort que la crise générale a été escomptée pour ainsi dire par ces explosions violentes, mais partielles. Au contraire, elle tend à son apogée. L'Angleterre sera le siège de l'explosion centrale, dont le contre-coup se fera sentir sur le marché universel.*” (Marx, 1872–1875 and 2018, p. 351)

⁴⁸ This caveat must be understood within its context, so it must be noted that: i) it addressed only a possible second Russian edition, the first having been translated in a “masterly” way from the German edition; ii) it was not made publicly, but in a private context and, as far as we know, it was not repeated; iii) in the letter to Sorge of September 27, 1877 (discussed below), in which he recommended that the English-speaking translator carry out a careful comparison of editions, Marx naturally praised a translation into Italian based exclusively on the French text.

Thus, it would certainly not be appropriate to extend this specific recommendation by Marx (who was specifically addressing a second Russian edition) to any other context, in which an allegedly definitive version would require translation of the first two sections only from German, and the rest (about 4/5 of Volume I) by comparison with the first French edition. This would result in an undesirable mixing of contributions from Marx's posthumous interpreters and editors and the text written by Marx himself, resulting in the creation of another text, which would no longer be the author's.

And how did Marx proceed in relation to a possible English translation? We will begin with what he said to Sorge on September 27, 1877:

[...]The French edition consumed so much of my time that I myself shall not again collaborate *in any way* on a translation. [...] He [Adolph Douai, the translator then being considered] must without fail, when translating, compare the 2nd German edition with the *French edition* in which I have included a good deal of new matter and greatly improved my presentation of much else. There are two things I shall be sending you *in the course of this week*:

1. *A copy of the French edition for Douai.*

2. *A list of places where the French edition shouldn't be compared with the German, but the French text be used as the only basis.*

In *Naples* Mr *Uriele Cavagnari* is preparing the *Italian* edition of *Capital* (from the French edition); he is having the book printed at his own expense and is going to sell it at cost price. Good man!

(Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 276–277)

The French edition is once again referred to in a positive way by Marx, who stresses that he included several topics and improved the explanations; in other words, he made it better in both content and form. The translation into English, not yet published at that time, was to be carried out by comparing the French edition with the second German edition, and there were some places in which only the French edition should be used as the source text. Here, Marx did not state that in some places only the German edition should be used as the sole source text.

He also referred to a planned Italian edition, which would be translated only from the French edition. He was eloquently silent on any possible need for reference to the German edition. It should also be recalled that he had already said that translation from French into other Latin languages would be “much easier.” And Marx again emphasized the need for an inexpensive edition.

Returning to the method to be employed when translating the text into English, in a new letter to Sorge on October 19, 1877, Marx wrote:

At the same time as this letter, I am sending you the enclosed manuscript for *Douai*, in case he is doing the translation of *Capital*. The manuscript contains, besides a few alterations to the German text, indications as to where the latter is to be replaced by the *French edition*. In the copy of the French edition intended for Douai, also dispatched to your address today, the abovementioned passages in the manuscript are marked. I found the work much more time-consuming than I had thought, added to which I had a nasty bout of influenza and have not quite got over it yet.

In case of publication, Douai must say in the foreword that, besides the 2nd German edition, he has used the French edition which came out later and was revised by me... (Marx, 2010a, V. 45, p. 282–283)

Here we see that the translator was instructed to carefully compare the editions, incorporate some changes made to the German text of the 2nd edition, and also translate only from the French text in certain places, instead of the German. The translator was also instructed to note in the preface that, in addition to the second

German edition, the French edition was also used, citing two of its characteristics: that it was later and that it was completely revised by the author.

If the words of the author in letters and in the published work itself (in the preface, afterword, handwritten letter, Note to the Reader, and in the body of the text) were not enough, John Swinton, a journalist based in the United States, published a report of his meeting with Marx in August 1880, in Ramsgate (a coastal city in Southeast England, about 120 kilometers from London). This publication also serves to show Marx's esteem for the French edition. Two documents arose from this meeting.

The first is the account originally published on the front page of the *New York Sun*, on September 6, 1880, and then reprinted in the brochure *John Swinton's Travels; current views and notes of forty days in France and England* (Garlin, pp. 14 and 40-42; Swinton, 1880, pp. 41-45). In this, the journalist, who had an abolitionist past and became a defender of the cause of American workers, and was also considered a powerful orator⁴⁹, describes his meeting with Marx and his family in a section entitled: "The Man of the Earthquakes — Karl Marx." He talked to Marx, among other things, about the lack of an English translation of his magnum opus, described in the report as a field of seeds for many crops to come. Swinton then states the following:

By the way, in referring to his *Capital*, he said that anyone who might desire to read it would find the French translation superior in many ways to the German original. (Swinton, 1880, p. 43)

We know that Marx approved of what Swinton wrote, since he wrote him afterwards to thank him for the "friendly article in *The Sun*" and told him that on that same day, November 4, 1880, he had sent him "a copy of the French edition of the *Capital*" (Marx, 2010a, V. 46, p. 40)⁵⁰.

Later, Swinton again recalled the remarkable meeting he had had with Marx. This was due to a dispute that Engels had with an unauthorized translator of the work, who called himself John Broadhouse⁵¹ and was publishing, in parts, a translation that

⁴⁹ In a ceremony a few days after Marx's death in New York, which brought together thousands of people, with speakers holding forth in many different languages, Swinton, who was one of the speakers, extolled Marx as someone who gave to others: "in giving all to mankind, Karl Marx gave that which was more than aught else when he gave himself" (Garlin, 1976, pp. 19–20).

⁵⁰ Marx also asked for Swinton's help in denouncing Bismarck's anti-socialist laws in the US press, as well as in organizing fund-raising campaigns to ensure the continuity of the activities of workers' organizations, so that they could keep their newspapers and secret messengers alive and support affected families. He also told his correspondent that it was only after sending the book that he learned that his daughter Eleanor had cut his portrait out of the edition, as she thought it was a mere caricature, so Marx promised to send a photo instead. Swinton thanked him for the book and said that he would "keep it as a treasure through life", and the photo was also sent. (Marx, 2010a, V. 46, p. 41, 93 and 485).

⁵¹ In his notes for a global editorial history of *Capital*, historian Lincoln Secco explains that: "In 1885 Henry Mayers Hyndman, under the pseudonym John Broadhouse, translated some chapters of *Capital* (*To-day, the London Society Monthly*) leading to a response from Engels ... "(Secco, 2002, p. 10). Engels's response was given in an article published in November of the same year, entitled "How Not to Translate

Engels considered poor, since the translator had “an imperfect knowledge of German, with a feeble command of English.” Swinton then wrote, on November 29, 1885, in *John Swinton's Paper*:

This squabble recalls to my mind the remarks made to me about the translation of Capital by Karl Marx himself, when I spent an afternoon with him at the English town of Ramsgate five years ago. Asking him why it had not been put in English, as it had been put in French and Russian, from the original German, he replied that a proposition for an English translation had come to him from New York, and then he went on to make other remarks that ought to be of interest to both Broadhouse and Engels. He said that his German text was often obscure and that it would be found exceedingly difficult to turn it into English. "But look at the translation into French," he said as he presented me with a copy of the Paris edition of "*Le Capital*." "That," he continued, "is far clearer, and the style better than the German original. It is from this that the translation into English ought to be made, and I wish you would say so to any one in New York who may try to put the book into English. I really took great pain in revising this French translation which was made by J. Roy; I went over every word of the French manuscript and much of the language and many of the passages so hard to turn from German into English can be easily translated from the French version. When it is put into English," he repeated, "let the French version be used."

These are the words of Karl Marx himself which are now for the first time put in print. (Swinton in Garlin, 1976, p. 43)

Swinton's observations are clearly consistent with Marx's views on the French edition, stressing its value, the effort invested in it, the detailed revision carried out, and the value of using it as a foundation for later translations.

VII. Conclusion

In view of the above, we shall summarize and state the main, uncontroversial points—namely that Marx attributed independent scientific value to the French edition, that new developments were inserted into the French edition, changes were made and the explanations in many more passages were improved, that the French edition was the last and was completely revised by him, that Engels did not incorporate into the fourth German edition many additions, changes, and reformulations in the French edition (the last one Marx was solely responsible for), that there is no indication that Marx had planned content changes in the French edition or mentioned the need

Marx.” In a harsh critique, Engels strongly denounced his lack of knowledge of German and English, his lack of courage, and his complete ignorance of the meaning of serious scientific work on the part of the supposed translator (Engels, 2010, V. 26, p. 335-340).

for a new French edition, that Marx indicated the need for the German text to be modified following the alterations in the French edition and not the contrary, that Marx spent a lot of time and energy preparing the French edition, and that the French edition occupies an autonomous place in the works of Marx.

But the conclusion resulting from all of this discussion must have practical consequences; in fact, it leads to two proposals, which justify the path taken here.

The first and most important conclusion is that a translation of the last version of Marx's magnum opus should be undertaken from French to Portuguese for Brazilian and all Lusophone readers.⁵² For the same reason, a direct translation from the French text into English should be made for English-language readers, which does not appear to have been done so far. This edition should respect a critical concern of Marx, so important that it was a contractual clause, namely that it be accessible to those with "small pockets," inexpensive, at cost. This last condition, said Marx, was the most important.

Now, how could a monetary obstacle be unfairly imposed on a book whose readers would be mainly from the working classes? Without possessing the book, without being able to have it at hand, there can be no comprehension of the theory, since the path of reading, study, and debate is closed; because the possibility of treading the steep path of science is forbidden to many, imposing an insurmountable material obstacle already at the entrance. But when the book is at hand, the means are available. The potential, suitable means for the weapons of criticism, once appropriated, become a material force, thus linking the orientation of knowledge to the passion of indignation (Marx said that the "essential pathos [of criticism] is indignation" - Marx, 2010b, pp. 147 and 151). The need for knowledge is again seen as essential by Marx in the *Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association*, when he alludes to the numerical superiority of the "working classes": "One element of success they [the working classes] possess—numbers; but numbers weigh only in the balance, if united by combination and led by knowledge" (Marx, 2010a, V. 20, p. 12). From this, it can be said that, according to Marx, there are three "elements of success" of the working classes: one, which is given objectively, is numerical superiority. The other two, which require construction, are union by combination (which we could also call association), and direction by knowledge.

Note that the effort proposed here in no way minimizes the valuable work already done to translate the fourth German edition, but aligns with it without taking precedence over it or replacing it.

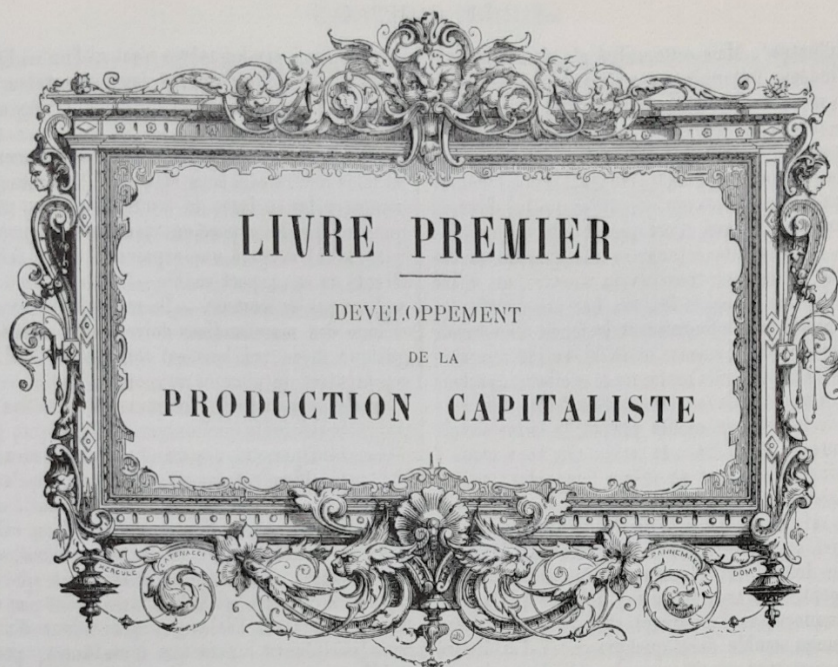
Second, there is nothing to prevent us from reproducing here in Brazil (and the same may apply to English-speaking countries) something similar to the critical effort

⁵² A partial translation into Portuguese was made from the French edition by J. Teixeira Martins and Vital Moreira in 1973, in Portugal, and published the following year by Editora Centelha. This edition, which is difficult to find in Brazil, only contains the translation of the first six chapters (the first two sections).

of MEGA²⁵³ by publishing translations accompanied by critical apparatuses that address the other editions of *Capital* that Marx himself prepared (the first and second German editions, in addition to the French) or that he explicitly oversaw (the Russian), as well as those edited by Engels (the third and fourth German editions and the English edition), which would allow the specialized reader to access valuable material that would allow them to follow and understand the modifications that each of them, author and editor, made to the work, by checking the additions, deletions, and changes in each line-by-line, including identifying what was done by Marx and what was done by Engels.

This is what is proposed here.

⁵³ As Michael Heinrich notes: “Each MEGA² volume consists of two books: one with the texts and the second (the apparatus) with variants, a list of editorial corrections, registers and explanations [...] For example, volume one of *Capital* is presented in six different volumes, including all editions provided by Marx (the first two German editions and the French translation, which he corrected) and Engels (the third and fourth German edition, where Engels included parts of the emendations of the French translation, and the first English translation, which he corrected)...” (Heinrich, 2018, p. 19).



LA MARCHANDISE

I

Les deux facteurs de la marchandise : Valeur d'usage et valeur d'échange ou valeur proprement dite
(Substance de la valeur. Grandeur de la valeur).

La richesse des sociétés dans lesquelles règne le mode de production capitaliste s'annonce comme une « immense accumulation de marchandises »¹. L'analyse de la marchandise, forme élémentaire de cette richesse, sera par conséquent le point de départ de nos recherches.

La marchandise est d'abord un objet extérieur, une chose qui par ses propriétés satisfait des besoins humains de n'importe quelle espèce. Que ces besoins aient pour origine l'estomac ou la fantaisie, leur nature ne change rien à l'affaire². Il ne s'agit pas non plus ici de savoir comment ces besoins sont satisfaits, soit immédiatement, si l'objet est un

moyen de subsistance, soit par une voie détournée, si c'est un moyen de production.

Chaque chose utile, comme le fer, le papier, etc., peut être considérée sous un double point de vue, celui de la qualité et celui de la quantité. Chacune est un ensemble de propriétés diverses et peut par conséquent être utile par différents côtés. Découvrir ces côtés divers et en même temps les divers usages des choses est une œuvre de l'histoire³. Telle est la découverte de mesures sociales pour la quantité des choses utiles. La diversité de ces mesures des marchandises a pour origine en partie la nature variée des objets à mesurer, en partie la convention.

L'utilité d'une chose fait de cette chose une va-

1. Karl Marx : « Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie. » Berlin, 1859, p. 4.

2. « Le désir implique le besoin ; c'est l'appétit de l'esprit, lequel lui est aussi naturel que la faim l'est au corps. C'est de là que la plupart des choses tirent leur valeur. » Nicholas Barbon : « A discourse on coining the new money lighter, in answer to Mr. Locke's considerations, etc. » London, 1696, p. 2 et 3.

3. « Les choses ont une vertu intrinsèque (*virtue*, telle est chez Barbon la désignation spécifique pour *valeur d'usage*) qui en tout lieu ont la même qualité, comme l'aimant par exemple attire le fer (l. c. p. 16). La propriété qu'a l'aimant d'attirer le fer ne devient utile que lorsque par son moyen on eût découvert la polarité magnétique ».

The first page of Volume I. Source: Marx, 2018, p. 13.

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***Rodrigo Maiolini Rebello Pinho** has a master's degree in History from the Pontifical Catholic University in São Paulo.

Translated by Naomi J. Sutcliffe de Moraes.