



HBIGS Lecture

by

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"Die plump englische Methode muß man natürlich in den Kauf nehmen" - Early Darwinism and its political (Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx) as well as it's Sociobiological Reception among German "Naturforscher" and "Ärzte" before 1900

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Abstract:

It is in a letter to Karl Marx (12 December 1859) that Friedrich Engels mentions Darwin's "On the Origin of the species" for the first time: "Besides, the Darwin I am reading at the moment is excellent. For this part the teleological view had not yet been destroyed. This has happened now. In addition, no attempt has been made so far to prove the historic development in nature to such an extraordinary extent and to such a success. The clumsy English method of course has to be taken into account." No more than a few weeks after its publication on 24 November 1859 Engels studies Darwin's oeuvre and immediately transforms it in a biologicistic manner. In the years to follow Marx and Engels fiercely discuss the new evolutionist theory, especially whether and in which way it could be translated into political arguments of "Klassenkampf". At the same time at the assemblies of "Deutsche Natuforscher und Ärzte" completely different scientific and political quarrels took place. In my paper I will focus on Marx' and Engels' biologicistic discourse on Darwin's theory of evolution and its consequences on the political ideas as well as it's (socio-)bioloical reception among German "Naturforscher" und "Ärzte" before 1900.