It has been claimed that Miguel Abensour (1939-2017) would have been known in France even if he had not written any book, article or essay, just because of the »Critique de la politique« (»Critique of politics«) book series that he launched in 1974 at the Payot publishing house. The series was inaugurated with Horkheimer’s Eclipse of reason; until 2017, it included among its titles books by Adorno, Benjamin, Neumann, the early Habermas and Negt. But this is not the only reason why this rather marginal thinker is known as someone who contributed heavily in passing Frankfurt theorists into France – »a ferryman« (»un passeur«) as some of his friends call him. In the concise accompanying text where he presents the presuppositions and the aims of the critique of politics that the series would serve, Abensour explicitly situates this endeavor »in the wake of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School«. Furthermore, part of his oeuvre consists of insightful interpretations of aspects of critical theory. Also, he brings it into play when tackling problems and questions that might seem quite far removed from the major concerns of its proponents, often in order to reinstate and complicate issues that, from certain points of view, seem resolved or, even worse, inexistent. Abensour is, in other words, a connoisseur and interpreter of critical theory and, simultaneously, someone who elaborates his proper critical project through a constant, sometimes implicit, engagement with it.

»Writing on the political from the side of the dominated«: this citation, figuring in the above-mentioned text, will serve as a guiding thread in order to present the role of critical theory in Abensour’s thought and some of the paths his work opens up for reflecting on critical theory today.

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