The German Ideology as a 'book' dates only from the early 1920s and 1930s. The opening 'chapter' 'I. Feuerbach' was facetiously constructed to solve the problem posed by Marx's enigmatic reference in 1859 to 'self-clarification'. This was in autobiographical passages detailing his 'outlook', termed by Engels the 'materialist interpretation of history'. Factual evidence presented here makes this framing untenable. 'The German ideology' manuscript materials of 1845-6 are best studied -- not as a 'smooth text' of the 'last hand' -- but as a 'variant-rich' text that allows access to a 'laboratory' where Marx and Engels were learning to think as they did.

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