

Hegel, Marx and Mises!

THE HEGELIAN BASIS OF
DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

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INTRODUCTION

A revival of interest in the writings of Karl Marx is sweeping the non-Communist world today. As Sydney Hook puts it, this "second coming of Marx" is manifested not so much among the proletariat as among the "professoriat."¹ Yet this phenomenon justifies taking a new look at some of the doctrines associated with Marx, if only for the attention they are given in academia.

One of the most important but least understood theories of Marxism is the concept of dialectical materialism. According to this doctrine, socialism is inevitable because history invariably follows a triadic path: An historical configuration identifiable as a "thesis" will inevitably "contradict" or "negate" itself, leading to a second stage identifiable as an "antithesis." The antithesis generates another contradiction, and a higher historical stage or "synthesis" emerges.

In Chapter XXXII of the first volume of Capital, Marx defines the three stages as first, petty production by proprietors who do their own labor; second, capitalist production with wage labor in increasingly centralized enterprises; and third, socialist production after the workers expropriate the capitalists:

The capitalist mode of appropriation, the result of the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist

¹Sydney Hook, Revolution, Reform and Social Justice: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Marxism. (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp. 1-2.

private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of the proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a law of Nature, its own negation. It is the negation of negation.¹

In his widely read booklet Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, Engels contrasted his and Marx's "scientific socialism," which is based on the dialectical recognition of the inevitability of socialism, with the "utopian socialism" of earlier authors, which soft-headed merely argues ^d that socialism ^{would} ~~will~~ be more productive or more just than capitalism.² To Engels, the "utopian" question of whether socialism is desirable ^{was} ~~is~~ secondary to the "scientific" question of whether it is inevitable.

This belief in the dialectical--and therefore scientific--inevitability of socialism is essential to many Marxists. On the twentieth anniversary of Marx's death, Rosa Luxemburg wrote,

If in spite of all the violence of its enemies, the contemporary workers' movement marches triumphantly forward with its head high, that is due above all to its tranquil understanding of the ordered objective historic development, its understanding of the fact that 'capitalistic production creates with the necessity of a natural process its own negation--namely, the expropriation of the expropriators, the socialist revolution.' In this understanding the workers' movement sees the firm guarantee of its ultimate victory,

¹Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. I: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production. (New York: International Publishers, 1967; translated from the third German edition of 1884, first edition 1867), p. 763.

²Frederick Engels, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, reprinted in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, edited by Lewis S. Feuer. (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 68-111. This booklet was excerpted from the first (1876) edition of Engels' "Anti-Duhring."

and from this source it derives not only its zeal, but its patience, not only strength for action, but also courageous restraint and endurance.¹

To Trotsky, denying dialectical materialism was tantamount to denying Marx altogether.² Many modern Marxists, confronted with the stubborn persistence of capitalism (and the prematurity of the Bolshevik revolution), have dropped references to the dialectical inevitability of socialism. Yet we can still read in a widely read establishment Economics journal that "The Hegelian dialectic... is the only known method for the total abstraction of a historical event..." and that "the wisdom of Marxism...does not lie in its ideological attacks on capitalist institutions but in its dialectical comprehension of capitalism."³

In view of the current rebirth of interest in Marx, it is important to examine this concept of dialectical materialism, and to inquire into the scientific basis of its validity.⁴

THE HEGELIAN DIALECTIC

Marx and Engels readily admitted that their dialectical concept of history originated with Hegel:

¹cl903, quoted in Max Eastman, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

²Ibid., 277.

³Thomas T. Sekine, "Uno-Riron: A Japanese Contribution to Marxian Political Economy," Journal of Economic Literature 13 (September 1975), 847-877, at 859 and 874.

⁴ This study was inspired by the remarks of Ludwig von Mises, in particular his Human Action: A Treatise on Economics, new revised edition, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1963, pp 72-74.

This new German philosophy culminated in the Hegelian system. In this system--and herein is its great merit--for the first time the whole world, natural, historical, intellectual, is represented as a process, i.e., as in constant motion, change, transformation, development; and the attempt is made to trace out the internal connection that make a continuous whole of all this movement and development. From this point of view the history of mankind no longer appeared as a wild whirl of senseless deeds of violence, all equally condemnable at the judgment seat of mature philosophic reason and best forgotten as soon as possible, but as the process of evolution of man himself. It was now the task of the intellect to follow the gradual march of this process through all its devious ways, and to trace out the inner law running through all its apparently accidental phenomena.

That the Hegelian system did not solve the problem propounded is here immaterial. Its epoch-making merit was that it propounded the problem.¹

Yet they argued that Hegel had the historical dialectic backwards:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought... The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.²

What is this Hegelian dialectic that Marx and Engels transformed? The dictionary definition of dialectics ^{is} ~~as~~ any systematic reasoning, exposition, or argument, especially in literature,

¹Engels, Socialism, Utopian and Scientific, op. cit., p. 86.

²Karl Marx, 1873 preface to Capital, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

that juxtaposes opposed or contradictory ideas and usually seeks to resolve their conflict."¹ The emphasis on dialectics goes back to Fichte and Kant and the Greeks before Hegel.

The basic idea of dialectical logic is that any category A can equally ~~be~~ regarded as that which is not not-A. The category A can therefore be completely defined by specifying what is not A. Looking at A in this manner may actually give us a higher understanding of what A is. For example, an individual who wants to understand what science is would do well to start by reading a book like Martin Gardner's Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science, even though it is about what science is not.

Careless or unscrupulous practitioners might misuse the dialectic and the "principle of negation" to argue that A and not-A are not just mutually delimiting, but actually one and the same thing. For all his obscurity, Hegel never takes this inadmissible position, nor does Marx, or Engels. It is interesting to note then Lenin and Trotsky, on the other hand, were not above this position.² However, it has nothing to do with the merits or demerits of dialectical logic and the historical dialectic *themselves*.

¹Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1963).

²Quoted in Max Eastman, Marxism: Is It Science. (New York: Norton, 1940), pp. 44-45 and 287.

Perhaps the most important application of dialectical logic is the mathematician's ^{workhorse} ~~standby~~, the proof ^{by} ~~of~~ contradiction. In order to prove a theorem or "thesis," one negates it to obtain what might be called its "antithesis." If it can be demonstrated that this antithesis leads to a contradiction, one has completed the deductive proof or "synthesis" of the hypothesized theorem. (In the nomenclature of classical Greek geometry, "synthesis" refers to deductive proof from known prior theorems or postulates, in contrast with "analysis," which ^{works backward from} ~~starts~~ ~~with~~ an unproven theorem and asks what intermediate lemmas would be convenient for its proof.) While it is true that the theorem is logically entailed in the axioms one started with, its synthesis leaves one on a higher plane of understanding than that on which one started. Such a proof by contradiction is ^{evidently} ~~apparent~~ ~~ly~~ what Hegel had in mind when he set up his famous triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, though any sequence A, not-A, and not-not-A is also triadic.

^{In his Science of Logic}
 Hegel ^{identified} ~~regarded~~ this dialectical method as the only valid mode of reasoning:

The one and only thing for securing scientific progress (and for quite simple insight into which, it is essential to strive)--is knowledge of the logical precept that Negation is just as much Affirmation as Negation, or that what is self-contradictory resolves itself not into nullity, into abstract Nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of its particular content, that such negation is not an all-embracing Negation, but is the ^enegation of a definite somewhat which abolishes itself, and thus is in essence that from which it results--which is indeed a

a tautology, for otherwise it would be something immediate and not a result. Since what results, the negation, is a definite negation, it has content. It is a new concept, but a higher, richer concept than that which preceded; for it has been enriched by the negation or opposite of that preceding concept, and thus contains it, but contains also more than it, and is the unity of it and its opposite. . .

I could not of course imagine that the Method which in this System of Logic I have followed--or rather which this System follows of itself--is not capable of much improvement, or much elaboration in detail, but at the same time I know that it is the only true Method. . . . It is clear that no expositions can be regarded as scientific which do not follow the course of this Method, and which are not conformable to its simple rhythm, for that is the course of the thing itself.¹

One does not have to agree with this affirmation, or even be able to follow it,² in order to concede that the dialectical method can be a useful way of thinking or arguing.

THE HISTORICAL DIALECTIC

Dialectics as we have presented it above is a logical process, a thought process. Perhaps the historian would do well to make use of it by emphasizing conflicts in history and their resolution. But why does Hegel expect historical evolution itself to follow such a triadic process, independently of the mind of the historian?

¹Hegel, Science of Logic, translated by W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1929), Vol. I, p. 65. (First published in German 1812-1816.)

²John Stuart Mill "found by actual experience... that conversancy with [Hegel] tends to deprave one's intellect." Quoted by F.A. Hayek, The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies on the Abuse of Reason (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1952), p. 195.

Hegel is remarkably clear on this point. One wonders how embarrassed the "professorian" practitioners of dialectical materialism would be if they understood Hegel's point of view. Indeed, it is hard to find a better illustration of Lord Acton's remark, that "few discoveries are more irritating than those which expose the pedigree of ideas."

In the introductory chapter of his Philosophy of History, Hegel explains himself. The entire argument swings on his pious belief in Christianity as a revealed religion:

In the Christian religion God has revealed Himself--that is, he has given us to understand what He is; so that He is no longer a concealed or secret existence. And this possibility of knowing Him, thus afforded us, renders such knowledge a duty. God wishes no narrow-hearted souls or empty heads for his children; but those whose spirit is of itself indeed, poor, but rich in the knowledge of Him; and who regard this knowledge of God as the only valuable possession.¹

According to Hegel, the ~~state~~^{state} upon which God has chosen to reveal himself is the course of history:

It was for awhile the fashion to profess admiration for the wisdom of God, as displayed in animals, plants, and isolated occurrences. But, if it be allowed that Providence manifests itself in such objects and forms of existence, why not also in Universal History? This is deemed too great a matter to be thus regarded. But Divine Wisdom, i.e., Reason, is one and the same in the great as in the little; and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise his wisdom on the grand scale.²

¹George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Philosophy of History, translated by J. Sibree. (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 15.

In short, "God governs the world; the actual working of his government--the carrying out of his plan-- is the History of the World."¹

The particular divine attribute God reveals to us in the course of history is, according to Hegel, his rational thought process:

The only Thought which Philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of History, is the simple conception of Reason; that Reason is the Sovereign of the World; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process. . . We have next to notice the rise of this idea--that Reason directs the World--in connection with a further application of it, well known to us--in the form, viz., of the religious truth, that the world is not abandoned to chance and external contingent causes, but that a Providence controls it. . . The truth, then, that a Providence (that of God) presides over the events of the World--consorts with the proposition in question; for Divine Providence is Wisdom, endowed with an infinite Power, which realizes its aim, viz., the absolute rational design of the world. . .²

By equating the Divine Will with Reason, Hegel neatly skirts a problem that must disturb many who simultaneously believe in the omnipotence of God and the infallibility of logic. Logic tells that if A contradicts B, either A or B must be false. But what if God in ~~His~~ omnipotence wanted both A and B to be true, even though they are contradictory? To Hegel this merely proves that logic is a divine ordinance: Either A or B must be false, so that must be the way God wants it!

Hegel was obsessed with dialectical thinking, both broadly

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²Ibid., pp. 9-13.

and narrowly construed. He even went so far as to lay out the table of contents of his Science of Logic in triads of concepts, and in triads of these triads, and even in triads of triads of triads.¹ And he apparently also believed that God's thoughts are likewise entirely dialectical. An unkind critic might argue here that Hegel was anthropomorphizing, by building an Hegelian God in his own image. However, from Hegel's point of view, he was merely himself aspiring to perfection by adopting what surely must be God's style of thinking.

In any event, Hegel believed that God's thoughts are laid out in dialectical triads of theses, antitheses and synthesis, and moreover, that God reveals these triads to us in the course of history. Now it "is commanded in holy Scripture as the highest duty--that we should not merely love, but know God."² Therefore the philosopher's job is to set about on a sort of cosmic Easter egg hunt, searching out the contradictions and negations of negations God has hidden the course of history for us to find. Hegel never explicitly says so, but it is not implausible that the Geist (usually translated as "Spirit") whose development Hegel traces through history is none other than the heiliger Geist or Holy ^{Spirit} ~~Ghost~~ of the Christian Trinity.

¹Uno, according to Sekine, loc. cit., pp. 862-866, undertook in his Principles to restate Marx's Capital in terms of Hegel's Logic, which explains why it is (with a single exception, whose dialectical purity we must challenge!) organized in three parts, each containing three chapters divided into three sections composed of three sub-sections apiece.

²Hegel, Philosophy of History, op. cit., p. 14.

Somehow Hegel received the further revelation that "the State is the Divine Idea as it exists on Earth,"¹ so that the stages of the historical dialectic have their embodiment in different forms of political organization. In the remainder of his Philosophy of History, he traces this development, which he summarizes as follows:

The East knew and to the present day knows only that One is Free; the Greek and Roman world, that some are free; the German World knows that All are free. The first political form therefore which we observe in History, is Despotism, the second Democracy and Aristocracy, the third Monarchy.²

That the whole course of history has simply been a buildup for ^{the Prussian} monarchy as found in "the last stage in History, our world, our own time,"³ must have been vary flattering to Hegel's sovereign and employer, Friedrich Wilhelm III.

One must admire Hegel for his imagination. However, anyone who understands Hegel's grandiose concept, and who is not completely in the grip of the will to believe, must concede that the historical dialectic is an entirely crackpot notion. Many people share Hegel's belief in an almighty God who could, and might actually be inclined to, govern the course of history. But even they have no reason to believe that God is an Hegelian dialectician, let alone that the State is "the shape which the

¹Ibid., p. 39.

²Ibid., p. 104.

³Ibid., p. 442.

perfect embodiment of Spirit assumes."¹ History is an open-ended subject, so that any historian necessarily leaves most of the full story. There is no trick to sifting out and calling attention to events and sequences of events that will fit into any Procrustean bed some philosopher cares to design. But it is sheer sophistry to ~~claim~~^{claim} that the pattern was present all along in objective history, rather than imposed upon it by the philosopher-historian. And it is nonsense to claim that an as yet incomplete pattern demonstrates the inevitability of its completion.

To make the absurdity of the historical dialectic apparent, let us imagine that Hegel had been a sports fan instead of a logician, and that for some reason he regarded American football as the Highest Form of Physical Culture, instead of dialectical logic as the Only True Method. He would then have had God revealing himself to us through an Historical Game Plan that would inevitably follow a tetradic path of first, second, third and fourth downs, instead of an Historical Dialectic that inevitably follows a triadic path of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. He might even have thrown in an occasional Divine Punt, represented below on earth by a dramatic reversal of historical trends.

THE MARXIAN DIALECTIC

Marx and Engels claimed to have purged the historical dialectic

¹Ibid., p. 17.

of Hegel's ^{religious} ~~mystical~~ orientation, and to have made it acceptable from an atheistic, materialistic point of view, by looking for it in the history of the material mode of production instead of in the history of political organization, and by insisting that instead of the mind imposing its dialectical structure on history, history imposes its dialectical structure on the mind.

What Marx and Engels failed to realize ^{is} ~~is~~ that Hegel's argument was theological on two separate levels: First, the notion that history is dialectical is theological, and second, the notion that this dialectic is manifested in political organization is also theological. Merely substituting the material mode of production for Hegel's spiritualistic bureaucracies does not make the historical dialectic materialistic. The dialectical necessity of socialism, as believed in by millions of Marxists around the globe, is therefore just as preposterous as Hegel's claim that the Prussian monarchy was the inevitable and most perfect stage of history.

Now a theory is not necessarily untenable just because it is arrived at by an untenable argument. For example, Kepler believed that God must have ordained simple laws of planetary motion, and on that basis set out to find those laws. Yet one doesn't have to believe in God in order to accept as valid the laws Kepler discovered. There might similarly be non-theological reasons for thinking that history is dialectical and socialism dialectically necessary. But no such reasons have ever been given by Marxists.

One Marxist who ⁵ should have addressed this issue is Herbert Marcuse, whose Reason and Revolution is an extended defense of Hegel, dialectical logic, and the historical dialectic, especially as they relate to Marx.¹ Amazingly, he does not even raise the issue of why history should be dialectical. He quotes extensively from the introductory chapter of Hegel's Philosophy of History, without so much as mentioning Hegel's revelation about God's purpose, let alone giving any reasons why someone who did not accept this revelation might nevertheless share Hegel's conclusion. Apparently Marcuse took those passages for inconsequential religious homilies that could be passed by with blinders on, and thus enabled himself to neglect that they form the entire foundation of Hegel's dialectical philosophy of history.

Max Eastman stands out alone as a Marxist who dared to question dialectical materialism. He quickly came to the conclusion that the dialectical inevitability of socialism was so much "Hegelian higher nonsense,"² and that such "loose thinking" and "wish-fulfillment" constituted not "scientific socialism," but rather a superstitious religion not much different from the traditional religions Marx despised. Like traditional religion, dialectical materialism promises the faithful masses "pie in the

¹Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960; originally 1941), pp. vii-xiv, 224-248, 312-322.

²Eastman, op. cit., p. 206.

sky" and the knowledge that they are part of a great universal purpose, to console them for their deprivations in this world. The history of the Bolshevik revolution, he argues, proves that socialism will come about only through the determined efforts of partisans who are convinced of its desirability, and not through the mystical workings of historical inevitability. When Eastman made his views known, his thitherto friend Trotsky refused to read his book and roundly disowned him in print for his heresies.¹

One shortcoming of Eastman's book is that it is not, if we may be permitted to use the term, sufficiently dialectical, in that he has little appreciation for the appeal of the ideas he rejects. He dismisses the entire concept of dialectical logic.² We have shown above that the dialectical concept is perfectly logical, and is often indispensable to logical inquiry, particularly mathematical proofs. It may not be the end-all of logic as Hegel claimed, but it certainly is legitimate. Even the historical dialectic, half-baked though it may be, is a well-thought-out concept. One does not have to agree with Hegel's train of thought in order to follow it and understand why the historical dialectic makes sense to Hegel.

Eastman does accept Marx's economic arguments concerning the undesirability of capitalism, and has adopted the positivistic

¹Ibid., p. 357.

²Ibid., pp. 139, 294. Compare Sydney Hook, Reason, Social Myths and Democracy (New York: Humanities Press, 1940), Ch. 9-11.

misconceptions/ that only the methods of the natural sciences are truly scientific and appropriate for the social sciences.¹ Nevertheless, his book is essential to an understanding of early Soviet political history, and his influence probably explains a large part of the difference in character between American and Western European Marxism since World War II.

OTHER MARXIST DOCTRINES

The body of Marxism does not, in spite of the claims of some of its adherents, stand or fall with dialectical materialism. Marx made many economic arguments against capitalism, concerning the exploitation of labor and the alleged tendencies towards increasing concentration, a declining rate of profit, and ever greater impoverishment of the workers. Some of these ideas even suggest the economic (as contrasted with the dialectical) inevitability of the collapse of capitalism. Indeed, in a neglected passage in Anti-Duhring, Engels actually points out that in Chapter XXXII of Capital Marx does not really use the dialectical method, ^{that} they had for twenty years been touting. After quoting Marx at length, he writes,

And now I ask the reader: where are the dialectical frills and mazes and intellectual arabesques; where the mixed and misconceived ideas as a result of which everything is all one in the end; where the dialectical

¹See F.A. Hayek, op. cit. Marcuse, op. cit., wrongly claims that the "negative" dialectical method is the legitimate alternative to positivism.

miracles for his faithful followers; where the mysterious dialectical rubbish and the contortions based on the Hegelian Logos doctrine, without which Marx, according to Herr Duhring, is quite unable to accomplish his development?

It is only . . . after Marx has completed his proof on the basis of historical and economic facts that he proceeds

In characterising the process as the negation of the negation, therefore, Marx does not dream of attempting to prove by this that the process was historically necessary. On the contrary: after he has proved from history that in fact the process has partially already occurred, and partially must occur in the future, he then also characterises it as a process which develops in accordance with a definite dialectical law. That is all.¹

What is this statement but a wholesale renunciation of the entire dialectical method that Engels, perhaps even more than Marx, ~~stands~~^{stood} for? Most amazing is that Engels takes this position in the very book from which the booklet Socialism, Utopian and Scientific was excerpted!

These economic arguments against capitalism and for its likely overthrow by the workers (if they recognize where their interests lie) stand or fall on their own merits, and dialectical materialism should not be allowed to obscure the issues. Many of these arguments have been attacked at one time or another, often by the so-called "Austrian School" of economics, which for a hundred years has been unique in neo-classical economics for having taken Marxist doctrines seriously. The labor theory of value with which Marx launches Volume 1 of Capital was the first

¹Frederick Engels, Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science, also known as "Anti-Duhring" (New York: International Publishers, 1939), pp. 146-147. Translation by Emile Burns of the third edition of 1894, similar to the first edition of 1878.

to be challenged,¹ soon to be followed by the exploitation theory of interest on capital which is based on it.²

Confidence in the dialectical inevitability of socialism led Marx and his followers to neglect the problem of how a socialist system would work; history could be counted on to take care of the details. Thus dialectical materialism indirectly left socialism wide open to the challenge raised by the Austrian Ludwig von Mises in his 1920 book Socialism.³ His argument concerning the impossibility of calculation under socialism has been refined by Hayek to read that central planning, while possible, cannot take into account anywhere near the amount of information that is utilized for everyone's benefit under the universal planning of a market order.⁴ More recently, Rothbard has effectively extended the Mises-Hayek argument on economic calculation under socialism to challenge Marx's doctrine

¹See J. Huston McCulloch, "The Austrian Theory of the Marginal Use and of Ordinal Marginal Utility," ~~forthcoming~~, Zeitschrift für Nationalökonomie, December, 1977, ~~MS pp. 17-18~~, for a restatement of this argument.
37:249-280,

²Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, Capital and Interest, Vol. I: History and Critique of Interest Theories (South Holland, Ill.: Libertarian Press, 1959; first German edition 1884), Ch. 12.

³This argument is summarized in Chapter 26 of Mises' Human Action, third edition (Chicago: Regnery, 1966), where it is accompanied, on pp. 705-710 by his reply to Lange's notion of a market socialism.

⁴F. A. Hayek, Law, Legislation and Liberty, Vol. I: Rules and Order (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 11-15.

of the inevitability of greater and greater concentration of industry under capitalism.¹

Marx's psychological doctrine of the alienation of labor, although it derives from Hegel,² is not related to the historical dialectic, and therefore may be judged independently from it. Note, however, that Hook argues that this now-fashionable doctrine does not in fact represent Marx's considered opinion, since Marx never saw fit to publish his youthful Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts, in which he puts forward the idea.³ It does seem to be related to the Christian concept of alienation from God.

Dialectical materialism is distinct from another Marxist idea that is often called historical materialism. This is the doctrine that one's ideology is dictated by one's class interests. The two ideas are often associated with one another, because in turning on its head Hegel's theory that the universal Idea determines the course of history, Marx and Engels thought it appropriate instead to argue that the (triadic) history of the material mode of production determines ideology. This deterministic aspect of what is sometimes lumped together as "dialectical materialism" has much more plausibility than the historical

¹Murray Rothbard, Man, Economy and State (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1970), pp. 585-586.

²Marcuse, op. cit., pp. 273-295.

³Hook, op. cit., pp. 31-45.

dialectic. Clearly some peoples' ideologies are colored by what they perceive as their class interest. However, Mises, in his relatively recent work Theory and History,¹ has shown that this doctrine ~~cannot~~^{must not} be taken as literally valid.

Although the dialectical method is universally associated with Marx, Engels seems to have been its real promoter. Apart from his 1873 Preface to Capital, Marx actually makes very little reference to it. Engels, on the other hand, cannot say enough about Marx's mastery of this wonderful method.² It is as if throughout the 1850's, 60's and 70's, Marx merely humored his friend (and perhaps more importantly, patron, if we may indulge in the materialistic interpretation of ideology) by paying occasional lip service to dialectics, while actually concentrating on his real interests, namely economics and sociology. In time, however, even Engels apparently lost interest in the dialectical method. By 1878, he acknowledged that it was not really relevant to Marx's system, as ~~we have~~ noted above. And after devoting ten years to his Dialectics of Nature, he cast the unfinished manuscript aside in 1882, never to be published until well after his death.

¹Ludwig von Mises, Theory and History: An Interpretation of Social and Economic Evolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 73-180.

²See for example, his 1859 review, in "Das Volk" of London, of Marx's Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie, reprinted in Karl Marx, Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie (Zurick: Ring-Verlag, 1934), pp. 191-202. On p. 199, he speaks on how Marx has extracted the kernel of truth from the shell in which Hegel has enclosed the historical dialectic, an analogy echoed by Marx in 1873.

A clue to the real function of "dialectical materialism" in Soviet Russia under Lenin and Stalin was expressed by Lenin. To him, the dialectic

includes in itself, so to speak, partisanship, obliging a man in every appraisal of events directly, frankly and openly to take his stand with a definite social group.¹

In other words, it served as a shibboleth, a sort of verbal ritual, participation in which distinguishes friends from enemies. Similarly in National Socialist Germany, language lost its literal meaning. What was relevant was not the content of what one said, but rather whether one parroted the approved slogans. This perversion of words and ideas characteristic of totalitarianism is important because it "compels subject and conquered to use the symbols of the masters and conquerors."² Viewed in this light, there was sinister method to Stalin's apparent madness of purging scientists who refused to bow down before his effigy of the "dialectical method."

Some contemporary professorian Marxists toss the term "dialectics" around to mean little more than "give and take."³ In the case of Maoists, it may simply be an acceptably Marxist term for what was referred to in China before the Cultural Revolution as the tension and contrast between "yin and yang." But today

¹Quoted in Eastman, op. cit., p. 50.

²Heinz Paechter, "The Spirit and Structure of Nazi Language," p. 5, in Paechter, Nazi-Deutsch: A Glossary of Contemporary German Usage (New York: Ungar, 1944), pp. 5-15.

³See e.g. John G. Gurley, Challengers to Capitalism: Marx, Lenin, and Mao (San Francisco: San Francisco Book Company, 1976).

it also serves as a rhetorical weapon of last resort for those who have run out of economic arguments against capitalism. The fact that no one understands why conjuring this deity constitutes the ultimate "scientific" proof of the inevitability of socialism makes it all the more invulnerable a smoke screen to hide behind. It is time that this nonsense be exposed once and for all.