

Chapter 1 : The New Dialectic and Marx's &Capital&

Christopher J. Arthur. This book both argues for, and demonstrates, a new turn to dialectic. Marx's Capital was clearly influenced by Hegel's dialectical figures: here, case by case, the significance of these is clarified.

The determination of the concept out of itself [the thing itself must be considered in its relations and in its development]; The contradictory nature of the thing itself the other of itself , the contradictory forces and tendencies in each phenomenon; The union of analysis and synthesis. Lenin develops these in a further series of notes, and appears to argue that "the transition of quantity into quality and vice versa" is an example of the unity and opposition of opposites expressed tentatively as "not only the unity of opposites but the transitions of every determination, quality, feature, side, property into every other [into its opposite? The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute. Hence, Lenin was philosophically positioned between historicist Marxism Labriola and determinist Marxism—a political position close to " social Darwinism " Kautsky. Moreover, late-century discoveries in physics x-rays , electrons , and the beginning of quantum mechanics , philosophically challenged previous conceptions of matter and materialism , thus matter seemed to be disappearing. Lenin was developing the work of Engels, who said that "with each epoch-making discovery, even in the sphere of natural science , materialism has to change its form. The philosophic solution that Lenin and Engels proposed was "dialectical materialism", wherein matter is defined as objective reality, theoretically consistent with new developments occurring in the sciences. In the first chapter "What is Orthodox Marxism? It is not the "belief" in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a "sacred" book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to method. It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth and that its methods can be developed, expanded, and deepened, only along the lines laid down by its founders. He modified many of his formulations of his works and went on to develop a Marxist ontology and played an active role in democratic movements in Hungary in and the s. He and his associates became sharply critical of the formulation of dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union that was exported to those countries under its control. In the s, his associates became known as the Budapest School. As did Louis Althusser , who later defined Marxism and psychoanalysis as "conflictual sciences"; [36] that political factions and revisionism are inherent to Marxist theory and political praxis, because dialectical materialism is the philosophic product of class struggle: For this reason, the task of orthodox Marxism, its victory over Revisionism and utopianism can never mean the defeat, once and for all, of false tendencies. It is an ever-renewed struggle against the insidious effects of bourgeois ideology on the thought of the proletariat. Marxist orthodoxy is no guardian of traditions, it is the eternally vigilant prophet proclaiming the relation between the tasks of the immediate present and the totality of the historical process. Only when the core of existence stands revealed as a social process can existence be seen as the product, albeit the hitherto unconscious product, of human activity. Against said ideology is the primacy of social relations. Existence—and thus the world—is the product of human activity, but this can be seen only by accepting the primacy of social process on individual consciousness. This type of consciousness is an effect of ideological mystification. It was exported to China as the "official" interpretation of Marxism but, in its Soviet formulation, has since then been widely rejected there. As a heuristic in biology and elsewhere[edit] Historian of science Loren Graham has detailed at length the role played by dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union in disciplines as diverse as biology, psychology, chemistry, cybernetics, quantum mechanics, and cosmology. He has concluded that, despite the Lysenko period in genetics and constraints on free inquiry imposed by political authorities, dialectical materialism had a positive influence on the work of many Soviet scientists. They view dialectics as playing a precautionary heuristic role in their work. Dialectical materialism is not, and never has been, a programmatic method for solving particular physical problems. Rather, a dialectical analysis provides an overview and a set of warning signs against particular forms of dogmatism and narrowness of thought. It tells us, "Remember that history may leave an important trace. Remember that being and becoming are dual aspects of nature. Remember that conditions change and that the conditions necessary to the initiation of some process may be destroyed by the process

itself. Remember to pay attention to real objects in time and space and not lose them in utterly idealized abstractions. Remember that the qualitative effects of context and interaction may be lost when phenomena are isolated". And above all else, "Remember that all the other caveats are only reminders and warning signs whose application to different circumstances of the real world is contingent. Thus, the law of "interpenetrating opposites" records the inextricable interdependence of components: They wrote that "history, as Hegel said, moves upward in a spiral of negations", and that "punctuated equilibria is a model for discontinuous tempos of change in the process of speciation and the deployment of species in geological time. Apart from the commonly cited example of water turning to steam with increased temperature, Gould and Eldredge noted another analogy in information theory , "with its jargon of equilibrium, steady state, and homeostasis maintained by negative feedback ", and "extremely rapid transitions that occur with positive feedback ". Nevertheless, they found a readiness for critics to "seize upon" key statements [43] and portray punctuated equilibrium, and exercises associated with it, such as public exhibitions, as a "Marxist plot". There are critics, such as the Marxist Alain Badiou , who dispute the way the concept is interpreted. Nevertheless, he considered the basic aims and principles of dialectical materialism to be in harmony with rational scientific thought.

Chapter 2 : The New Dialectic and Marx's Capital | Historical Materialism

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It purports to be a reflection of the real world created by man. Dialectic would thus be a robust method under which one could examine personal, social, and economic behaviors. Marxist dialectic is the core foundation of the philosophy of dialectical materialism, which forms the basis of the ideas behind historical materialism. 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. 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. 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. In the USSR, under Joseph Stalin, Marxist dialectics became "diamat" short for dialectical materialism, a theory emphasizing the primacy of the material way of life; social "praxis" over all forms of social consciousness; and the secondary, dependent character of the "ideal". The term "dialectical materialism" was coined by the 19th-century social theorist Joseph Dietzgen who used the theory to explain the nature of socialism and social development. The original populariser of Marxism in Russia, Georgi Plekhanov used the terms "dialectical materialism" and "historical materialism" interchangeably. While the first was supposed to be the key method and theory of the philosophy of nature, the second was the Soviet version of the philosophy of history. A dialectical method was fundamental to Marxist politics, e. Soviet academics, notably Evald Ilyenkov and Zaid Orudzhev, continued pursuing unorthodox philosophic study of Marxist dialectics; likewise in the West, notably the philosopher Bertell Ollman at New York University. A very simple process, which is taking place everywhere and every day, which any child can understand as soon as it is stripped of the veil of mystery in which it was enveloped by the old idealist philosophy. Probably the same gentlemen who up to now have decried the transformation of quantity into quality as mysticism and incomprehensible transcendentalism will now declare that it is indeed something quite self-evident, trivial, and commonplace, which they have long employed, and so they have been taught nothing new. But to have formulated for the first time in its universally valid form a general law of development of Nature, society, and thought, will always remain an act of historic importance. In its rational form, it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time, also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary. Nonetheless, Marx and Marxists developed the concept of class struggle to comprehend the dialectical contradictions between mental and manual labor, and between town and country. As the most comprehensive and profound doctrine of development, and the richest in content, Hegelian dialectics was considered by Marx and Engels the greatest achievement of classical German philosophy. But, to acknowledge this fundamental thought in words, and to apply it in reality in detail to each domain of investigation, are two different things. For dialectical philosophy nothing is final, absolute, sacred. It reveals the transitory character of everything and in everything; nothing can endure before it, except the uninterrupted process of becoming and of passing away, of endless ascendancy from the lower to the higher. And dialectical philosophy, itself, is nothing more than the mere reflection of this process in the thinking brain. Dialectical naturalism explores the complex interrelationship between social problems, and the direct consequences they have on the ecological impact of human society. Bookchin offered dialectical naturalism as a contrast to what he saw as the "empyrean, basically antinaturalistic dialectical idealism" of Hegel, and "the wooden, often scientific dialectical materialism of orthodox Marxists". Dialectical theology[edit] Neo-orthodoxy, in Europe also known as theology of crisis and dialectical theology, [47] [48] is an approach to theology in Protestantism that was

developed in the aftermath of the First World War –” It is characterized as a reaction against doctrines of 19th-century liberal theology and a more positive reevaluation of the teachings of the Reformation, much of which had been in decline especially in western Europe since the late 18th century. In the death of Christ humanity is negated and overcome, but this judgment also points forwards to the resurrection in which humanity is reestablished in Christ. Rather it must be seen as its "qualitative definition". Legacy[edit] Dialectics has become central to continental philosophy, but it plays no part in Anglo-American philosophy. In other words, on the continent of Europe, dialectics has entered intellectual culture as what might be called a legitimate part of thought and philosophy, whereas in America and Britain, the dialectic plays no discernible part in the intellectual culture, which instead tends toward positivism. Existentialism, like Marxism, addresses itself to experience in order to discover their concrete syntheses. In, he wrote and delivered a paper entitled "What Is Dialectic? It should remind us that philosophy should not be made a basis for any sort of scientific system and that philosophers should be much more modest in their claims. One task which they can fulfill quite usefully is the study of the critical methods of science " Ibid. A Further Criticism of Relativism", Popper refused to moderate his criticism of the Hegelian dialectic, arguing that it "played a major role in the downfall of the liberal movement in Germany [Logic and dialectic In the past few decades, European and American logicians have attempted to provide mathematical foundations for dialectical logic or argument. Pollock, systems have been built that define well-formedness of arguments, rules governing the process of introducing arguments based on fixed assumptions, and rules for shifting burden.

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The laws of both operate inexorably, and attempts to disregard them can result in serious injury or death. So we become accustomed as a habit of mind to treating them as unchangeable features of the world around us. No one would stand at the top of the staircase and think they could avoid the reality of descending it. Karl Marx Likewise, many people go through their daily life without understanding how capitalist society powerfully shapes their world--without asking the question of why what they produced with their hands and brains during a day on the job should belong, by law, to someone else. But capitalism is unlike gravity in at least one crucial respect. It came after something--and that means it comes before whatever comes next. The dialectical method is a way of thinking about reality that can be a crucial tool for revealing the passing and transitory nature of a social system that at times--perhaps most of the time--appears to be a fact as real and unmovable as the floor at the bottom of the staircase. By contrast, dialectics takes as its starting point that the social world is in a constant state of change and flux--and that capitalism, while it powerfully structures human relationships, is itself the product of human activity that emerges out of the material world, including the natural world. As Karl Marx put it in an afterword to a German edition of the first volume of his masterwork of dialectical analysis Capital: In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesmen, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary. Even at those moments in history when society appears stable and impervious to change, the truth is that it is changing--all the time, though often in imperceptibly small ways. These "molecular" changes eventually pile up and give way to sudden ruptures and transformations--which can take the form of upheavals, wars and revolutions. Writing in , the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky summed up the dialectical method , which was first given systematic expression by the German philosopher Georg Hegel in the early 19th century: Only one must not forget that the concept of "evolution" itself has been completely corrupted and emasculated by university professors and liberal writers to mean peaceful "progress. Dialectic training of the mind, as necessary to a revolutionary fighter as finger exercises to a pianist, demands approaching all problems as processes and not as motionless categories. Whereas vulgar evolutionists, who limit themselves generally to recognizing evolution in only certain spheres, content themselves in all other questions with the banalities of "common sense. When presented as guidelines for a philosophy of change, not as dogmatic precepts true by fiat, the three classical laws of dialectics [formulated by Frederick Engels] embody a holistic vision that views change as interaction among components of complete systems, and sees the components themselves Thus the law of "interpenetrating opposites" records the inextricable interdependence of components; the "transformation of quantity to quality" defends a systems-based view of change that translates incremental inputs into alterations of state; and the "negation of negation" describes the direction given to history because complex systems cannot revert exactly to previous states. A dialectical approach to oppression explains how such oppression is part and parcel of a larger social whole, rather than a static and unchanging fact independent of other social factors. A dialectical inquiry into oppression reveals how systems of oppression are connected to the antagonistic and opposed interests of competing social forces--and are both built up and resisted, in a contest between those who try to impose oppression and those who challenge it. And the dialectical method describes how oppression and the ideas that sustain it interact in turn with the rest of the moving parts of capitalist society as a whole, including not just the economy, but also the media, the family, the criminal justice system and so on. Yet as this example illustrates, a dialectical approach is not necessarily a Marxist one. Many mainstream social scientists working in the fields of sociology, philosophy, anthropology and so on attempt to analyze the world as a social whole. Put another way, everything affects everything. Karl

Marx brought together dialectics and materialism to understand the world as a totality--but as a totality driven by inherent change, conflict and contradictions rooted in the material world, where human activity, including the ideas generated by humans about the world, can also react back on and in turn transform the material underpinnings of society. The aim was to separate the objects under investigation into ever-more specific classifications. One good example is the way of defining biological organisms on the basis of shared characteristics and assigning them to ever more specific categories--domain, kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and finally species. The philosophical underpinning of this pursuit of knowledge was grounded in the empirical method, which guided the scientific inquiry into the interactions conceived of as external to these discrete and now well-defined entities. The law of identity was critical to the project: A thing is always equal to or identical with itself. Or stated in algebraic terms: One corollary of the idea that A is always identical to A is that A can never equal not-A. But the law of identity troubled Hegel. When he surveyed modern philosophy, culture and society, he was struck by the contradictions--the tension between the subject and object, freedom and authority, knowledge and faith. Hegel thought that the standard empirical procedure of breaking things down into their constituent parts, classifying them, and recording their properties was a vital part of the dialectic. This is the first stage of the process. It is only through this process of trying to capture things with "static" terms that contradictions emerge which oblige us to define something by its relations with the totality, rather than simply by its inherent properties. To show their transitory nature, Hegel called these stable points in the process of change "moments. So empirical definitions were not irrelevant. But they were an inadequate way of looking at the world and so in need of a dialectical logic which could account for change. Idealism means that the ideas of society--the sum total of its concepts and knowledge--drive the process of change in the social world. Enter Karl Marx and his materialist account of human society. But Marx provided a material basis for identifying the source of this internal change. Where Hegel saw ideas as the motor force of history, Marx looked at the forces of production--the way humans collectively produce their means of subsistence and reproduce themselves--as the source of internal change, contradiction and conflict. Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: For Hegel, the modern representative state could guarantee the individual rights necessary for general freedom and rationality, which would make it possible for humanity to eventually comprehend the Absolute Spirit. For Marx, the contradictions were based in the material world--at root, a conflict between the main contending classes of capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Therefore, they could only be resolved through social transformation, a revolution that would abolish the antagonistic and the mutually interdependent relation of capitalist and worker. At the same time, his distance from events in France and his sweeping knowledge of history, philosophy, aesthetics and logic allowed him to step back from the crush of living through the historically path-breaking events, and to place them in a longer historical sweep. He was witness to the first working class movement in world history: While Hegel lived in Germany at some distance from the political earthquake that shook France in the late 18th century, Marx was born in Prussia, but also lived in Paris and London. He lived through the revolutions of that spread across Europe, including Prussia. But he was also a witness to the factories and other products of the Industrial Revolution, allowing him to absorb the dramatic and massive economic forces being called into existence by the growth of capitalist industry. Compared to the feudal economy, capitalism was highly dynamic, innovative and efficient. But Marx also showed how capitalist relations of production would eventually come to frustrate the further development of human society. So even as capitalism conjured tremendous economic growth, efficiency and technological innovation, it also resulted in an ever-greater concentration and centralization of the means of production in private hands, the immiseration of the working class, and more destructive and convulsive economic crises. Many social scientists conceive of the world as a totality made up of interacting parts undergoing various transformations, but without giving any special explanatory role to the material world. Instead, they opt for the view that everything affects everything. Trotsky tells in [his autobiography] *My Life* how he at first resisted the unified outlook of historical materialism. He adopted in its stead the theory of "the multiplicity of historical factors," which even today is the most widely accepted theory in social science. His reading of two essays by the Italian Hegelian-Marxist Antonio Labriola convinced him of the

correctness of the views of the historical materialists. They conceived of the various aspects of social activity as an integrated whole, historically evolving in accord with the development of the productive forces and interacting with one another in a living process where the material conditions of life were ultimately decisive. The eclectics of the liberal school, on the other hand, split the diverse aspects of social life into many independent factors, endowed these with superhistorical character, and then "superstitiously interpreted their own activity as the result of the interactions of these independent forces. On the other extreme, there are any number of theories about the social world that are materialist, but reject the dialectical method. Such approaches lead to what Marxists call a mechanical materialism, which is at best one-sided, suggesting that human beings and their behavior are a mostly reflexive reaction to their surroundings. For example, sociobiology and evolutionary psychology seek out biological explanations for various social problems and inequalities. In the fields of sociology and economics, a number of theorists insist on the approach of methodological individualism, which requires that all social phenomena, including structure and change, be explained in terms of individual properties, goals, beliefs and actions. Methodological individualism is the underlying assumption of social theories that rely on game theory to explain how the rational choices of individual actors can explain all the key elements of societies and social change. These mechanical materialist theories end up stressing in a one-sided way how human biology sociobiology or the human drive to maximize material gain and minimize loss or risk methodological individualism are the only way to generate valid insights about the social world. By contrast, the dialectical method--with its stress on the internal contradictions and interpenetrating linkages of the material and the social world--rescues historical materialism from a vulgar economic determinism, which tends to understate the role of history and politics in human societies, instead seeing humans as reacting reflexively to their surroundings, as "naked apes" or inexorably guided by the drive for material gain. According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure--political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. The materialist component of the Marxist method grounds explanation of the social world in the economic underpinnings of society--in the fact that we "must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before [we] can pursue politics, science, art, religion. This is true even when society appears at its most stable and unchanging. This is crucial for understanding how Marxism provides both an explanation of how society works and an understanding of the ways that, under certain circumstances, conscious human activity can transform that society. As Trotsky put it in his autobiography: Marxism considers itself the conscious expression of the unconscious historical process. But the "unconscious" process, in the historico-philosophical sense of the term, not in the psychological, coincides with its conscious expression only at its highest point, when the masses, by sheer elemental pressure, break through the social routine and give victorious expression to the deepest needs of historical development. And at such moments the highest theoretical consciousness of the epoch merges with the immediate action of those oppressed masses who are farthest away from theory. The creative union of the conscious with the unconscious is what one usually calls "inspiration.

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Marx's "Capital" was clearly influenced by Hegel's dialectical figures: here, case by case, the significance of these is clarified. More, it is argued that, instead of the dialectic of the rise and fall of social systems, what is needed is a method of articulating the dialectical relations characterising This book both argues for, and.

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