

What Is Orthodox Marxism?

The First English Translation of a Marxist Classic

(1919)

From *The New Internationalist*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Summer 1987, pp. 179-197.
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Introduction

George Lukacs, the author of *What Is Orthodox Marxism*, is one of the strangest figures of twentieth century socialism. For he is simultaneously one of the few really creative Marxist minds of his time and a man who has betrayed the ideals of the revolution to the Stalinist regime. The many paradoxes of his life were brought to a fitting climax in October 1956, when, after thirty one years of faithful service to totalitarianism, he emerged as one of the central intellectual leaders of the Hungarian Revolution.

Lukacs was born in Kevortlan in a well-to-do family. As a young man, he was drawn to Kantian philosophy, and a little later to the sociology of Max Weber. Lukacs' reputation developed early. A book of his published when he was in his mid-twenties caught the eye of Thomas Mann and the two developed a personal relationship. Later, according to Jean Divaingnand, this friendship was the source of Mann's portrait of Naphta, the strange theological communist, in the *Magie Mountain*.

During the first War, Lukacs personal world fell to pieces under the strain of the social work. His work of this period, such as *The Theory of the Novel*, is marked by a sort of expressionist despair, and is filled with descriptions of the "unbridgeable abyss" between the "I" and the world. And yet, in 1919, Lukacs participated in the Soviet Hungarian Government of Bela Kun. In this period, he was decisively drawn to Marxism, and though he submitted his convictions to the terrible distortions of Stalinist ideology, this commitment persisted up to the present.

What Is Orthodox Marxism is an essay taken from the collection, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein (History and Class Consciousness)*. These essays, written during the period of the revolutionary wave after World War I, were condemned at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International by the most vociferous as "idealist." At that time, Lukacs made a complete and total submission to the Party. He lived in Moscow for years, and when called upon made sharp "self-criticisms" of himself in the most classic Stalinist fashion (the only review was only some eight or eight years ago the confession of not having been sufficiently aware of contemporary Russian literature).

And yet, even during the period of Lukacs' most abject submission to the Party line, he continued to write brilliant Marxist literary criticism. This was smuggled in past the required statements that Stalin was the most brilliant aesthetian of the epoch, the continuator of the work of Marx, Engels and Lenin. He was, of course, most affected by his Stalinist commitment in his discussion of current writers -- he denounced Franz Mehring, for example, as a "literary Trotskyist," and found the historical novels of the German popular front to be a major turning point in the history of that country's literature.

There is a change book long. In the period before the Hungarian Revolution, Lukacs was one of the central leaders of the intellectual ferment. Indeed, his influence was not confined to Hungary. Wolfgang Hairich, the young German academician who was recently sentenced to jail for his opposition activities was a "Lukacs-artist," and his only literary great in Communist circles in various Communist Parties. Lukacs went into exile along with Imre Nagy. Since then, there have been reports that he is going to support the Kadar regime (mainly in France-Observator), or that he is going to be tried, but there has been no substantiation.

This is not the place to go into an extended criticism of Lukacs' work. Sufficient to say that the ideas in *What Is Marxism* represent a brilliant study of the Marxist dialectic, though modified by a certain tendency toward the more Hegelian aspects of Marxist thought. This latter point raises various difficulties for a translator. Where there is a real ambiguity, I have placed the German word in parenthesis after the English translation of it.

Michael Harrington

Up until now the philosophers have merely interpreted the world in various fashions; today, the point is to change it.

This question, actually a simple one, has become the object of wide discussion, in the bourgeois as well as in the worker's milieu. It has become the scientific fiction to ridicule all pretensions of faith in a Marxist orthodoxy. For there is little agreement in the "socialist" camp as to what constitutes the discussion of Marxism, and what these one can attack, or even reject, without surrendering the title to "orthodox Marxism." As a result, it has come to seem more and more non-scientific to make scientific exegeses of old books as in the tradition of biblical scholarship, books which the modern criticism has "gone beyond." It is considered wrong to seek in these texts, and only there, the source of truth. The tendency is to turn toward the study of the "facts," and this "without any prejudices."

If these two approaches were the real alternatives, then the best response would be a simple smile of pity. But the question isn't as easy as that, and neither has been. Admit for the sake of argument that all of the particular affirmations of Marx have been shown to be factually inaccurate by modern scholarship. A serious Marxist can recognize all this new evidence, reject all of the particular texts of Marx, and yet not be forced for an instant to renounce his Marxist orthodoxy. For orthodox Marxism does not mean an uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx' research; it is not the exegeses of a "sacred book" or "faith" in this or that. In fact, in Marxism, orthodoxy refers solely and exclusively to the question of method. It implies the scientific conviction that the Marxist dialectic is the right method of investigation, and that this method cannot be developed, perfected, or made more profound except in the tradition of its founders. Further, Marxist orthodoxy understands that all attempts to bypass this method, or to "improve" it, necessarily trivialize it and end up in eclecticism.

1

THE MATERIALIST DIALECTIC IS a revolutionary dialectic. This is so crucial for its understanding that, if we want to pose the issue sharply, we must confront this essential point even before we can treat of the dialectic method itself. The problem is that of theory and practice. But we cannot limit it to the sense of Marx's first critique of Hegel that "the theory becomes a material force even when it takes hold among the masses." More than that, we must study each element, each determination of the theory which makes it a vehicle for revolution; we cannot concern ourselves only with the way in which it penetrates the masses. In short, we must develop the practical essence from the point of view of the theory and the relation which it establishes with its object. Otherwise, this "taking hold of the masses" would be an empty idea. It could then be that the masses are moved by a range of motives and are impelled toward various ends -- and that the theory has only an accidental relation to the movement, that it is only the form under which the consciousness of the socially necessary or contingent action develops, and that without the theory the action would be essentially and actually related to the consciousness.

Marx, in the passage quoted from, clearly expressed the conditions under which a relation between theory and practice is possible.

"It is not enough that the thought tends toward reality," he wrote, "the reality itself must move in the direction of the thought." Or, in another context, "it will be demonstrated that the world has had for a long time the dream of a thing which it has failed to realize; it is necessary to check the consciousness of reality made possible by the unity of 'fata' and 'praxis.'" It is only when consciousness coincides with the *desire* course which the historical process must take toward its proper end (an end which is constituted by human freedom, but which does not depend upon arbitrary human freedom, an end which is not an invention of the human spirit), that theory can serve its historic role and make this course actually possible. When one confronts a situation where the exact knowledge of society becomes, for a class, the immediate condition of its self-affirmation in struggle; when, for this class, self-consciousness means simultaneously the accurate consciousness of all conflicts; when this class is, by its consciousness, both the subject and object of consciousness, then the theory is in an immediate, direct and adequate relation with the process of the social revolution, then the unity of theory and practice, that pre-condition of the revolutionary function of the theory, becomes possible.

Such a situation has emerged with the appearance of the proletariat in history. "When the proletariat," writes Marx, "announces the dissolution of the existing social order, it reveals the secret of its proper existence, which itself constitutes the effective dissolution of this social order." The theory which makes this statement is not related to the revolution in a more or less contingent way, it is not bound loosely to, or through a "misunderstanding," rather, it is, in its very essence, nothing more than the thinking expression of the revolutionary process itself. Each stage of this revolution is freed in its own way so as to become, by its generalization, capable, useful, susceptible to development. And just as it is the consciousness of a necessary development, so it becomes at the same time the necessary precondition of the development which must follow.

The clarification of this function of the theory opens up to us a knowledge of its very essence; that is, of the dialectic method. Ignoring this simple and decisive point has introduced a tremendous confusion into the discussion of the dialectic. For whether one criticizes Engels' formulations in *Anti-Dühring* (crucial for the further development of theory), or whether one conceives the book as incomplete, even as inadequate, or considers it as a classic, it must be generally recognized that it is deficient in precisely this aspect. In effect, Engels conceptualizes the dialectic by opposing it to the "metaphysical" conceptualization. He emphasizes with penetration the fact that, in the dialectic method, the rigidity of concepts (and of the objects which correspond to them) is dissolved, that the dialectic is the continuous process of the continuous transformation of one determination into another, resolving contraries which pass into each other. And he argues that, conceptually, the unrelated, rigid causality must be replaced by reciprocal action. But the most essential interaction, the *dialectical relation of subject and object in the process of history*, is not even mentioned, nor is to play in the very center of the methodological consideration where it belongs. Abstracted from this determination the dialectic method, in spite of any affirmation in the last instance of "fluid" concepts, ceased to be a revolutionary method. The difference between the dialectic and "metaphysics" should not then be sought in the fact that all metaphysical studies require the object of investigation to be untouched and unchanging, and that the conception consequently remains "contemplative" (anschauend) and cannot become practical, but in the fact that for the dialectic the central problem is the *transformation of reality*.

If one neglects this central function of the theory, then the advantage of a "fluid" conception becomes problematic, a purely "scientific" affair. The method can be accepted or rejected in accord with the state of science, but without changing one's attitude toward the question of whether reality is changeable or immutable. The imperatibility of reality, its "fata" and "praxis" together, its conformity to a law in the sense of bourgeois, contemplative materialism and its classical elements, this can even be reinforced as it was among those Machians who were adepts at Marxism. The fact that Mach's thought could produce voluntarism -- equally bourgeois -- does not contradict this. Fatalism and voluntarism are only contradictory in a non-dialectic, non-historic perspective. In the dialectic conception of history, these are polarities united by a single bond, they are the simple play of purely intellectual reflections which express the antagonism of the capitalist order and its inability of resolving its own problems on its own terms.

This is why all attempts to deepen the dialectic method in a "critical" manner necessarily end up as a degradation. In effect, the methodological point of departure for the "critical" position consists precisely in separating method and reality, thought and being. In this separation, this point of view sees a valuable progress, the attainment of an authentically scientific science which is opposed to the gross and non-critical method of Marxism. These people are free, of course, to make their point. But then it must be recognized that they are not moving in the direction which leads to the very essence of the dialectic method.

Marx and Engels have expressed this unambiguously. Engels wrote, "By this, the dialectic was reduced to the science of general laws of movement, laws of the exterior world as well as of human thought -- to two series of laws -- identical in substance." And Marx put it even more precisely, "As in all social and historical sciences, one must always realize when considering the movement of economic categories, that the categories express the forms and conditions of existence ... [1] When this sense of the dialectic is obscured, then it necessarily appears as a useless supplement, an ornament to the "sociology" or the "economics" of Marxism. It seems to be an obstacle to the "sober and impartial" study of the "facts" as an empty aestheticism which Marxism does not tolerate. Bernstein has expressed this objection in the most precise and clear fashion, in the name of his "impartially," a concept untouched by any philosophic comprehension. Still he shows us the very real political and economic consequences which he deduces from this desire to liberate method from the "dialectic trap" of Hegelianism; he indicates where the approach leads. For Bernstein demonstrates that all must separate the dialectic from historical materialism if one wishes to originate a serious theory of the opportunities of "evolution" without revolution, of a transition to socialism without struggle.

2

BUT THIS IMMEDIATELY RAISES a question: what is the meaning from the point of view of method of these facts which are so adored in revisionist literature? In what measure can one see in them the factors for the orientation of the revolutionary proletariat? Obviously, all knowledge of reality starts with facts. But then the problem is: what data (and in which methodological context must it be placed), should be considered relevant for our understanding? A narrow empiricism denies that a fact does not really become a fact except in the course of an elaboration according to a method. It finds in each bit of data, in each statistic, in each *factum brutum* of the economic life, an important fact. It does not understand that the simplest enumeration of "facts," an ordering of them completely devoid of commentary, is already an interpretation, that at this stage the facts are already examined from a point of view, a method, that they have been abstracted from the living context in which they were found and introduced into a theory. The opportunists are more refined despite their repugnance to theory. They do not deny all this, but rather base themselves upon the method of natural science, the manner in which it investigates the "pure" fact through observation, abstraction and experimentation, its ability to discover interrelations. And they oppose this as an ideal of knowledge to the violent constructions of the dialectic.

The insidious character of such a method is that capitalism itself, in the course of its development, produces a social structure which meets it halfway. And here, we must have recourse to the dialectic method that we will not be taken in by this social illusion, so that we will be able to go behind the facade and discover the real essence of the matter. The "pure" facts of the natural sciences come into being in the following manner: a phenomenon is transported from life into a context which permits us to study the laws which it obeys without the disturbing intervention of other phenomena (this is done either actually, or in the mind); this procedure is then reinforced by the fact that the phenomena are reduced to their quantitative essence, to their numerical expression and relations. And what the opportunists do not understand is that it is of the very essence of capitalism to produce phenomena in such a way. Marx described a "process of abstraction" from existence in his treatment of labor, but he did not forget to insist vigorously that in this case he was dealing with a characteristic of capitalist society: "Thus, the most general abstractions do not commonly develop except in the course of the richest, most concrete evolution where one feature seems to be jointly possessed by many things, and is common to all of them. Then it ceases to be thought of uniquely, under its particular form." This tendency of capitalist evolution has now developed considerably. The fetishistic character of economic forms, the reification of all human relations, the increasing extension of a division of labor, with an abstract rationality, atomizes the process of production without regard for the human capacities and potentialities of the actual producers, etc., this process transforms the phenomena of society and with them our perceptions of them. Now "isolated" facts appear, there are groups of isolated facts and specific sectors which have their own laws (economic theory, law, etc), and these seem to have paved the way, in their very immediate reality, for this kind of scientific study. Thus, it appears to be "scientific" to raise to the level of science a tendency which is inherent in the facts themselves. But the dialectic insists upon the concrete unity of the whole in opposition to all of these isolated facts and partial systems, it unmask this illusion of appearances which is necessarily produced by capitalism.

The scientific nature of this seemingly scientific method resides in the fact that it does not perceive the *historical character* of the facts which it uses as its basis, indeed that it ignores this historical character. But we do not have simply that source of error which Engels called to our attention. The essence of this source of error is located in the fact that statistics, and the "exact" economic theory which are built upon them, lag behind actual developments. For contemporary history, one will often be forced to treat the most decisive factor as constant, assuming that the economic situation which is found at the beginning of the period continues throughout the period without variation, or else take notice of such changes in this situation as are not of the nature of manifest events that move and are, therefore, quite obvious. [2] But in the fact that capitalist society meets the natural sciences halfway, that it is the social precondition of its exaltation, in this state of affairs, there is something completely problematic. If, then, the internal structure of "facts" and their relations is essentially known in a historic manner, if they are seen as implicated in a process of uninterrupted evolution, we must for the most part be the greatest inactives. It is when the "facts" are perceived under a form of objectivity wherein they are determined by laws which I know with a methodological certainty (or at least, probability) are not valid for these facts? Or is it when I consciously recognize that the consequences of this situation and therefore adopt a critical attitude toward the certitude which I achieved, concentrating upon the moments in which this historic character, this decisive modification, actually manifests itself?

Thus, the historical character of the "facts" which science manifests it perceives in their "purity" is fatal to this illusion. As products of historical evolution, these facts are not only involved in continual change. More than that, they are -- *precisely in the structure of their objectivity -- the product of a specific historic epoch: that of capitalism*. Consequently, a "science" which takes the immediacy of the facts as its basis, which sees this form of their objectivity as the point of departure for scientific conceptualization, places itself simply and dogmatically upon the terrain of capitalist society. Essentially, it accepts uncritically the structure of the object as it is given, and it takes its laws as the immutable fundament of "science."

To move from such "facts" to their true sense of the word, one must penetrate behind the historic conditioning of the facts; one cannot accept them as given and immediate. In short, the facts must be submitted to a historical dialectical treatment, for as Marx has noted, "The finished form which economic relations manifest upon their surface in their actual existence, and consequently the representations of them out of which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to develop a clear idea of them, these are quite different from the inner form which is essential but hidden, they are different from the concept which really corresponds to them." [3] If the facts are to be known accurately, we must understand the difference between their immediate appearance and inner core (*form*) with clarity and precision; we must distinguish between the representation of the fact, and the concept of it. *This distinction is the first pre-condition of scientific study*, which, as Marx pointed out, "would be superfluous if the phenomenal manifestation and the essence of things were immediately identical." Thus, we must go behind the immediate appearance of facts, and discover the core, the essence. In doing so, we will recognize their appearance as the necessary form which their inner core takes -- necessary because of the historic character of facts, because they are posed on the terrain of capitalist society. This double determination which simultaneously understands and goes beyond the immediate fact, this is precisely the dialectical relation.

The internal structure of **Capital** thus causes precisely the greatest difficulty to the superficial reader who uncritically accepts the categories of thought proper to capitalist development. On the one hand the exposition pushes only the capitalist character of the economic forms to its extreme limit and constitutes a perspective in which these categories are pure and describe a society which "corresponds to theory," indeed, a society completely capitalist, composed only of proletarians and capitalists. But on the other hand, as soon as this conception is worked out, as soon as the world of phenomena seems to be crystallized theoretically, this result itself dissolves into a simple appearance, it is seen as a simple inverted selection of a group of facts which are themselves inverted, a selection which is nothing but "the conscious expression of the apparent movement."

Only in this context can one integrate the different facts of social life (in as much as they are elements of a historic becoming) into a *totality*, only in this way does the concept of facts become the knowledge of reality. This knowledge begins with simple determinations which are pure, immediate and natural (to the capitalist world). It goes from them to a knowledge of the concrete totality as the conceptual reproduction of reality. This concrete totality is, of course, never immediately apparent. The concrete is concrete," Marx writes, "because it is the synthesis of many determinations, i.e., the unity of diverse elements"

But at this point, idealism falls into the error of confuting the conceptual reproduction of reality with the structural process of reality itself. For "in our thought, reality appears as a process of synthesis, as a result, and not as a starting point, although it is the real starting point and, therefore, also the starting point of observation and conception." On the other hand, vulgar materialism -- even, as in the case of Bernstein and others, it is most modern in form -- is content to reproduce the most immediate and simple determinations of social life. It feels that it is particularly "exact" in accepting these determinations without any serious analysis, without relating them to the concrete totality, it takes the facts in an abstract isolation and attempts to explain them by abstract scientific laws which are not a part of the concrete totality. "The crudity and shortcomings of this conception," wrote Marx, "lie in the tendency to see but an accidental, reflexive connection in that which is really an organic unity." [4]

The conceptual grossness and emptiness of such an approach is located, above all, in the fact that it obscures the historic and transitory character of capitalist society. In it, its determinations appear as timeless and eternal categories common to all social orders. This was apparent in its most obvious form in bourgeois economics, but vulgar Marxism soon took the same path. The dialectic method, with its methodological dominance of the totality over the particular aspect and as a result, a part no longer found its conception and reality in the whole, but, on the contrary, the whole was eliminated from investigation as an unscientific element (or was reduced to a simple "idea," to a sum of the parts). And it was destroyed, this one, the reflexive relations of isolated elements appeared to be the external law of all human society. Marx' formulation that "the relations of production of a given society form a whole" is, in opposition to this approach, the methodological point of departure; it is the key to the historical understanding of social relations. All isolated and partial categories can be conceived (in their isolation) as having always been present during the evolution of human society, (if one doesn't find them in a particular social form, then that is the exception that proves the rule). But the real stages of social evolution are unclear and ambiguous when they are viewed as changes which take place among isolated, partial elements. And it is most clear when seen in terms of the *change in function* of the various elements in the whole process of history, in the alterations of their relations to the totality of society.

3

THIS DIALECTICAL CONCEPTION OF reality seems to be far distant from the immediate reality, it appears to construct its relations in a non-scientific fashion. Yet it is, in fact, the only method of conceptually knowing and reproducing reality.

The concrete totality is thus the fundamental category of reality. [5] The correctness of this perspective becomes apparent when we place the real, material substratum of our method -- capitalist society with its internal antagonism between the forces and the production -- in the very center of our study. The method of the natural sciences, the ideal method of all reflexive science, does not recognize contradiction and antagonism in its object. If it nevertheless encounters a contradiction between different theories, it conceives this situation as a consequence of the incompleteness of knowledge which has been achieved.

Thus, theories which seem to be in contradiction are thought to have the limits of their validity established by that fact, and they are modified and subsumed under more general theories in which these contradictions decisively disappear. But in the case of the social reality, these contradictions are not a result of insufficient scientific comprehension. *They belong, rather to the very essence of reality, to the essence of capitalist society*. And they will not be saluted under the mythology of the totality so as to suppress the contradiction. On the contrary, they will be understood as a necessary development out of the antagonistic capitalist order of production.

Thus, when theory (taken as the knowledge of the whole) opens up the way to the resolution of the contradictions, it does so by showing real tendencies of social development which must actually resolve these contradictions which emerge in the course of social evolution.

In this perspective, the opposition between the "critical" method (or vulgar materialism, Machism, etc.) is a social problem. The method of the natural sciences can only serve the progress of science when it is applied to nature. But used to understand the evolution of society, it is an instrument of the ideological struggle of the bourgeoisie. It is vital for the bourgeoisie to conceive of its own order of production in terms of categories which have a timeless validity; it must see capitalism as destined to an eternal existence because of the laws of nature and reason. Conversely, it judges the contradictions which are inevitably imposed upon it through as surface facts and not as phenomena which belong to the very essence of capitalism.

The method of classical economy is a product of this ideological function of bourgeois thought. And its limitations as a scientific approach are a consequence of the social reality, of the antagonistic character of capitalist production. If a thinker of the stature of a Ricardo denied the "necessity of the expansion of the market corresponding to the augmentation of production and the increase of capital," he did so (unconsciously, to be sure) in order to free recognizing the necessity of crises. For these crises reveal in the most obvious and fundamental fashion the basic antagonism of capitalist production and the fact that "the bourgeois mode of production implies a limitation of the free development of the productive forces." But then Ricardo's error or good faith became the consciously misleading analysis of bourgeois society put forward by the vulgar economists.

Vulgar Marxism comes to the very same pass -- whether it was trying to eliminate the dialectic method from proletarian science in a systematic fashion, or was affirming the dialectic "critically." Thus, to cite a grotesque case, Max Adler attempted to separate the dialectic as method, as the movement of thought, from the dialectic of being, from the dialectic of fact. At the very summit of his "critique," he comes up with the dialectic in its own as it is "a matter of positive science," which "one thinks of in the first place when one speaks of a real dialectic in Marxism." Then he terms this dialectic more accurately as an "antagonism," which simply demonstrates that an opposition exists between the egoistic interest of the individual and the social forms in which he finds himself. [6] By this stroke, the objective economic antagonism which expresses itself in the class struggle is dissolved into a conflict between the *individual and society*. On such a basis, one cannot understand the necessity of the emergence, internal problems and decline of capitalist society. The end result is, willfully, a Kantian philosophy of history. And conversely, this approach makes the structure of bourgeois society universal, the form of society in general, because the central problem which Marx Adler attacks, that of the "dialectic, or rather the antagonism," is none other than a typical ideological form of the capitalist social order. Thus it matters little in the final analysis whether the eternalization of capitalism takes place in Marx' terms of or of philosophy, whether it is done naively and with innocence or with extreme critical refinement.

In this perspective, the objection that one cannot understand method means that history loses its intelligibility. This doesn't imply, of course, that an exact description of certain personalities, or historic epochs, is impossible outside of the dialectic method. It does mean that destruction of the dialectic method as a unitary process without the dialectic method. (This impossibility is expressed in bourgeois science. On the one hand, there are abstract and ideological constructions of historical development of the type of Spence or August Comte -- whose internal contradictions have been exposed by modern bourgeois historians, particularly by Rickert. And on the other hand, there are the exegeses of a "philosophy of history" whose very relation to historical reality appears as a methodologically insoluble problem.)

This opposition between a particular aspect of history and history conceived as a unitary process is not a simple matter of differing scope, as for example it is in the case of the difference between particular and universal history. Rather it involves methodological contradiction, it counterposes points of view. The problem of the unity understanding of the historic process is necessarily posed at the very center of the study of each epoch, of each partial sector of history, etc. And it is here that the decisive importance of the dialectic conception of reality reveals itself for we see that it is possible to describe a historical event with essential accuracy without being able to understand the event as it actually happened, without comprehending its real function in the historic whole, in the unity of the historic process. A typical example of such a development is that of Stenonald's treatment of the problem of crises in the history of the evolution of tendencies of production. He calls it a distribution, he makes a penetrating critique of capital. And yet, he is ultimately stranded. For he remains nevertheless a prisoner of capitalist objectivity and must conceive of the permanent tendencies as independent of each other. He does not understand that the relations of distribution are ideal but the relations of production *sub specie aeternae*. And thus, he is the victim of the same fate which overtook the false dialectic of Proudhon: "he transcends the different partial elements of society into so many manifestations in themselves."

WE REPEAT: THE CATEGORY of totality does not suppress the constituent elements and dissolve them into an undifferentiated unity, into an identity. The manifest form of their independence, of their autonomy (an autonomy which they possess in the order of capitalist production) will seem to be a pure appearance only if they are not conceived dialectically, as the dynamic moments of a whole which is, itself, equally dialectic and dynamic.

"The result which we move toward," wrote Marx, "is not that way that production, exchange and consumption are identical, but rather that they are the members which form a totality, the difference at the center of a unity -- a certain form of production thus determines certain forms of consumption, distribution and exchange and certain mutual relations between these different aspects. -- There is a reciprocal influence between these different aspects at the same time as the problem is one of an organic totality."

But then, we cannot stop at the category of reciprocal action. For one can think of reciprocal action as the simple, reciprocal causal action of two objects which are otherwise unchangeable, and not advance a single step toward the understanding of social reality. This is the case with the univocal causality of vulgar materialism (or the functional relations of Machism, etc.) There is, for example, a reciprocal exchange when a billiard ball at rest is pushed by another ball into movement. The first is placed in movement; the second modifies its direction because of the contact, etc. -- But the reciprocal action of which we speak goes far beyond such a case, beyond that which takes place between objects which are otherwise unchanging. And to do so, we must speak in its relation to the whole. This relation to the whole becomes the determination which conditions the form of objectivity of each object, and every relevant and essential change manifest itself in terms of a change in relation to the whole and, through this, as a change in the form of objectivity itself. [6]

Marx made this point in many places. Let me cite only one of the best known texts:

"A Negro is a Negro, but only under certain conditions does he become a slave. A machine to weave cotton is a machine to weave cotton; but only under certain conditions is it Capital. Separated from these conditions, it is as little capital as gold is, in itself, money or sugar is the price of sugar."

Consequently, the forms of objectivity of all social phenomena change constantly. The intelligibility of an object develops in terms of the object's function in the whole, and only the conception of totality makes it possible for us to comprehend this *reality as a social process*. It is only in this context that the fetishistic forms necessarily engendered by capitalism dissolve and become the more appearances which they are (even though they are necessary appearances). Thus, the objective relation of fetishistic forms "conform to law," develops necessarily within capitalist society and conceals the real relation between objects. These relations we now understand as the necessary representation of the real because those who participate in capitalist production. They are, then, an object of understanding, but known only under fetishistic forms; they reveal, not the capitalist order itself, but the ideology of the dominant class.

Only when this veil of fetishistic categories has been ripped aside can one come to a historical understanding. For the function of these fetishistic forms is to make capitalist society appear as super-historic, and a real knowledge of the objective character of phenomena, a knowledge of their historic character and actual function in the totality of society, forms an undivided act of the understanding. But the pseudo-scientific method shatters this unity. Thus, the distinction between constant and variable capital, crucial for economics, became possible through the dialectic method. Classical economics was unable to go beyond the distinction between fixed and circulating capital. This was not accidental for

"variable capital is nothing but a particular form of the historic appearance of the means of subsistence, that is of the labor which the worker requires for his maintenance and reproduction and which he must produce and reproduce in all systems of social production. This labor is only returned to the worker under the form of payment for his labor, while his own product is always alienated from him under the form of capital ... The commodity form of the product and the money form of the sale hid this transaction."

Thus, the fetishistic forms hide relationships, they envelop all of capitalist phenomena so as to mask their transitory, historic character. This is possible because the forms of objectivity under which capitalist society necessarily and immediately appears to the man living in it to conceal economic categories, their own essence as a form of objectivity, the fact that it is a category expressing relations between men. Consequently, the forms of objectivity appear as things and as relations between things. And at the same time that the dialectic unmasks the eternal appearance of these categories, it also reveals their "reflexed" character in order to open up the way to a knowledge of reality. Economics, writes Engels in his *Commentary on the Critique of Political Economy*, "does not treat of things, but of the relations between persons and, in the last instances, between classes; but these relations are always *found to things and appear as things*."

It is in this context that the total character of the dialectic method manifests itself as a knowledge of the reality of historic process. It might seem that this dialectic relation of part to whole is a simple reflexive determination in which the actual categories of social reality are no more present than in bourgeois economics. It might seem that the superiority of dialectics over bourgeois economics is only methodological. But the real difference is more profound, it is a matter of principle. Each economic category reveals a determined relation between men at a specific level of historic evolution, a relation which is made conscious and developed as an idea. Consequently, the movement of human society itself can be known in its inner connection with the totality of the whole, in the result of freedom of the individual and the relations and escape their control. The categories of bourgeois economics are, however, dialectic and dynamic in a double sense. They are in a vital interaction with one another as "purified elements" categories and aid us to understand the various actions of social evolution. But also, since they have their origins in human relations, since they function in the process of the transformation of human reality, they lay bare the process of evolution in the reciprocal action which they themselves have with the actual substratum of their operation.

This is to say that the production and reproduction of a specific economic reality which science must understand necessarily transforms itself in the course of the production and reproduction of a given, whole society (transcending "pure" economics, but without invoking any transcendental force). Marx often insisted upon this point. For example:

"The capitalist process of production considered in its continuity, or as a process of reproduction, does not only produce merchandise, or even surplus value; it produces and reproduces the social relation between capitalist and employee."

TO POSE ONE'S SELF, TO PRODUCE and reproduce one's self -- this is, precisely, what reality consists of. Hegel recognized this, expressing it concepts, as Marx did, but abstractly, in a way that could lead to misunderstanding. "That which is real is necessary in itself," he wrote in the **Philosophy of Right**. "Necessity here means that the totality is divided into the distinctions of concepts, and that this division reveals a solid, resistant determination (*nichtstündend*), but not a deadly solidity; it reveals that which continually reconstitutes itself in the midst of dissolution." But here, even as we remark the closeness of historical materialism and Hegel's philosophy -- both conceiving theory as the self-knowledge of reality -- we must be concerned with the decisive difference between the two theories. This is found in the treatment of the problem of reality and the unity of the historic process.

Marx reproached Hegel (and even more his successors who turned back to Fichte and Kant) for not having really surmounted the duality of thought and being, of theory and practice, of subject and object. He argued that Hegel had not gone beyond Kant on this decisive point, that his dialectic was a simple appearance and not the actual, interior dialectic of the historic process. He held that Hegel's knowledge of reality was in the subject and not the self-acknowledgment of matter, as in society. "Already in Hegel's case," the crucial section of his critique notes, "the absolute spirit has its content in the masses, but its expression is restricted to philosophy. This is why philosophy seems to be the organ through which the absolute spirit makes history, emerging into consciousness after the unfolding of the movement, after the fact. The participation of philosophy in history is thus limited to a consciousness after the event, for the absolute spirit accomplishes the real movement unconsciously. Thus, philosophy comes *post festum*. Thus, Hegel does not allow the "absolute spirit," as absolute spirit, to make history, except in appearance. For in effect, the absolute spirit does not become conscious of itself as creator of the world until after the event, and its *actum* of history only exists in the consciousness, in the opinion and representation of the philosophers, in the speculative imagination. This conceptual mythology was definitively eliminated by the critical activity of the young Marx.

It is not accidental that Marx arrived at his own view in the course of opposing a movement which was already recoiling from Hegel, which was going back to Kant. This movement seized upon all of the obscurities and internal ambiguities of Hegel in order to eliminate all the revolutionary elements from his thought; it harmonized the vestiges of the contemplative duality of thought and being, the conceptual mythology, with the completely reactionary philosophy of Germany at that time. By becoming a part of the program of the progressive in the Hegelian method, Marx not only separated himself from these successors of Hegel -- he created a schism in the Hegelian philosophy. For Marx took the historic tendency which he found in Hegel to its limits. He transformed all social phenomena, all aspects of social man, into historic problems, he showed the real substratum of historic evolution and developed a fertile method in the doing.

Marx applied the measure which he had discovered and methodically developed to the Hegelian philosophy, and he found it wanting. Indeed, the myth-making vestiges of "eternal values" which it eliminated from the dialectic were similar to the philosophic elements which Hegel himself fought ceaselessly throughout his life, and against which he had marshalled his entire philosophy-making, with its power and concrete reality, its dialectic and history. In this context, the Marxist critique of Hegel is thus the direct continuation of Hegel's own critique of Kant and Fichte. [7]

Thus, the dialectic method of Marx is the continuation of that which Hegel sought but did not attain. While, on the other hand, the dead body of the Hegelian texts has become the prey of the philologists and makers of systems.

But the point of rupture between Marx and Hegel is the question of reality. Hegel was unable to see the real motor force of history. In part, this was the case because these forces were not sufficiently visible during the period of the genesis of his philosophy. Consequently, he did not recognize that the people and their consciousness were the effective forces of historic development; he did not see the real substratum of all social evolution; he was not able to understand a world-historical role to the proletariat, it is not because they consider the proletariat god-like. Far from it. Because the abstraction of humanity from itself is achieved in the fully-formed proletariat; because the paroxysms of the most inhuman of all the conditions of life are subsumed in the life of the proletariat; because in this existence, man is not the object but theoretically conscious of his fact and is impelled by the imperious, unavoidable and immediate misery -- the practical condition of this necessity -- to revolt against this inhumanity; because of this the proletariat can and must necessarily liberate itself. But it cannot liberate itself without surpassing its proper conditions of life. And it cannot end its proper conditions of life without ending all the inhuman conditions of the society around it."

Thus, the methodological essence of historical materialism cannot be separated from the "practical-critical activity" of the proletariat. The two are aspects of the same evolutionary process of society. Consequently, its knowledge is reality which is at the center of the dialectic method separated from the point of view of the practical. To raise, as the "Austro-Marxists" do, the question of methodologically separating the pure science of Marxism from its social reality is to pose a false problem. For the Marxist method, the dialectical materialist knowledge of reality is only possible from the actual point of view, from the vantage point of class struggle. To abandon this point of view is to leave just as to reach this point of view is to enter directly into the struggle of the proletariat.

Historical materialism thus emerges as a natural, "immediate, natural" principle of the proletariat, and the total knowledge of reality is made possible by this class point of view. But this does not mean that this knowledge, and the methodology behind it, is innate or inherent to the proletariat as a class (and even less so to the proletarian individual). On the contrary. Certainly the proletariat is the knowing subject, but not in the Kantian sense where the subject is defined as that which can never become an object. The proletariat is not an impartial spectator of the historic process. It is not merely a passive, active and passive, part of the whole. The increase and development of its knowledge, on the one hand, and its increase and becoming as a class in the course of history on the other, are but two sides of the same real process. This is not simply because the class itself does not become "formed into a class" except through incessant struggle beginning with the spontaneous designation of immediate acts (the destruction of machines is a simple example of these beginnings). More than that, the consciousness of social reality achieved by the proletariat, its understanding of its proper position as a class and its historic vocation -- the method of the materialist conception of history -- are also the products of this same process of evolution which historical materialism comprehends adequately and in its reality for the first time in history.

In this context, the revisionist separation of the movement from the final goal represents a regression to

