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# Dialectical Materialism & Communism

By  
L. RUDAS

3d.

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

**A**T this moment the publication of a pamphlet on "Dialectical Materialism and Communism" is of particular value, when the world crisis, reflected in a world-wide ideological ferment, is compelling attention to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism.

L. Rudas, well-known before the war as a prominent exponent of Marxism, and now for many years a worker in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in Moscow has undertaken the clarifying of recent controversies over Dialectical Materialism that appeared in the LABOUR MONTHLY in 1933. In addition to the articles which appeared in two issues of the LABOUR MONTHLY the author has now added a third section on Historical Materialism so that the present pamphlet is entitled to be treated as more than a reprint.

Not only does this pamphlet clear up the type of difficulty often found by those who are beginning the study of Marxism (a difficulty created as a rule by an upbringing in undialectical ways of thought and in the divorce of theory from practice): but it gives a clear lead in "the struggle to change the world."

# DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND COMMUNISM

*Being a Final Rejoinder by L. Rudas in the  
Discussion on Dialectical Materialism  
which took place in the "Labour  
Monthly"<sup>1</sup> in  
1933*

## I.

**S**INCE the time of Huxley, materialism has not been discussed in England; it was officially considered to be dead. The "victory" of reactionary philosophy over materialism at that time was achieved without very great difficulty. Even Huxley himself could not summon up the courage to be a thorough-going materialist or openly to proclaim his adherence to materialism; he preferred, under the pressure of "public opinion," to seek a way out through the "shamefaced materialism" of agnosticism. Nor were there in England other adherents of materialist philosophy who could have made a resolute defence of the latter. Even the "Socialists" were anything but materialists. Engels indeed wrote a special preface to his pamphlet on "The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science," particularly intended for the British working class, in which he laid bare the causes why the British ruling class gave itself up to idealism and religion and in which he called upon the British proletariat to return to the glorious traditions of English materialism. Engels' words, however, had to remain without effect so long as there was no revolutionary working class party in England which could take up the struggle decisively against both the old economic order and its *conception of the world*, and proclaim openly and fearlessly its adherence to dialectical materialism.

<sup>1</sup>See LABOUR MONTHLY, Vol. XV., for the original article of Mr. E. F. Carritt opening the discussion (May, 1933, pp. 324-330, and June, 1933, pp. 383-392). The discussion was continued in the following numbers: July, 1933, by P. A. Sloan, L. Thomas and Professor H. Levy (pp. 441-458); August, 1933, by J. M. Hay and T. A. Jackson (pp. 503-512). Reference can also usefully be made to a previous discussion on this subject arising out of a review of Professor L. Hogben's book, *The Nature of Living Matter*, entitled "A Hesitant Materialist" by Clemens Dutt, which appeared in the October, 1932, issue (pp. 649-651). An article embodying a criticism of this review by Professor Hogben was printed in the January, 1933 (pp. 40-46), issue entitled "Materialism and the Concept of Behaviour," and was replied to by Clemens Dutt in the February issue (pp. 84-96) under the title of "Dialectical Materialism and Natural Science." Copies of all these issues can be obtained from the Manager, The LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John Street, W.C.1, price 6d. each (7d. post free).

At the present time, materialism finds a determined and logical champion in England, as in the other parts of the world where the Communist movement is carrying on the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. This has essentially altered the fighting front in the struggle of idealism against materialism, especially since in the Soviet Union, *i.e.*, in one of the largest and most powerful states of the world, dialectical materialism exercises not only unrestricted theoretical dominance but also celebrates new triumphs every day in the practical construction of Socialism. On the other hand, in the capitalist world, the official triumph of idealist philosophy becomes converted into a very palpable defeat; not only is capitalism writhing in the most horrible world crisis, which makes its instability obvious to all, but bourgeois ideology along with idealist philosophy more and more throws off the surface appearance of scientific character and reveals itself without disguise for that which in basis it always was, *viz.*, reactionary mysticism which more and more fears and *hinders* the progress of science.

Under these circumstances it is no wonder that individual thinkers, who are beginning to be tired of capitalism and its reactionary ideology and whose attention has been drawn by the revolutionary Communist movement to the possibility of a higher economic and social order, should adopt a sympathetic attitude to Communism and also begin to take its ideology, dialectical materialism, into consideration.

But as it is one thing to sympathise with Communism and another thing to *fight* for Communism in the ranks of the Party of the revolutionary proletariat, so it is one thing to be tired of idealism and sympathetic towards materialism and another thing to *understand* the latter. But these two things are very closely connected. The pre-requisite for understanding dialectical materialism is a decisive break with the traditional mode of thought, the *revolutionising of thinking*, and also sooner or later enrolment in the ranks of the revolutionary Party.

The intellectual, who does not come to the theory of dialectical materialism by way of revolutionary practice but from the ordinary school philosophies, looks for a "System" of dialectical materialism. He is accustomed to study philosophical systems, Kantianism, Hegelianism, &c. Marxism-Leninism is for him also a "system" alongside of the others. "Where," he asks, "have Marx and Lenin given an exposition of their 'system'; show it to me so that I can study it. I find only 'scattered pronouncements' in Marx." To a Russian bourgeois sociologist, who asked the same question, Lenin replied with a counter-question, "Where has Marx *not* expounded dialectical materialism?" *Dialectical materialism is no "system,"* and whoever seeks such a "system" in Marx, Engels or Lenin, will seek in vain. A "system" is always something finite, limited, transitory, a too narrow framework for the infinite dialectical movement of the world, and even in the case of the great

philosophies it was always their "system" which most quickly became out of date; what remained of them was always the dialectical content which was often hidden in their work in spite of the "system."

There is not a single work of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin, there is not a single real step taken by the revolutionary movement, in which one cannot study dialectical materialism. And indeed it is chiefly here that it can be studied and must be studied. That is not to say that dialectical materialism cannot or ought not to be specially expounded because it is, as Mr. Carritt considers, a "Protean theory." It has already been classically expounded by Engels and Lenin—even if in polemic against hostile philosophical tendencies. Whoever, however, wants to understand dialectical materialism must study the *whole* of Marxism-Leninism and then combine this theoretical study with practical participation in the revolutionary proletarian movement. Materialist dialectics is a revolutionary theory and not an abstract philosophising. It is not merely a new interpretation of the world, for it considers as its chief task the transformation of the world.

This close connection of materialist dialectics with revolutionary practice is bound up with another difficulty encountered by the intellectual in the study of dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism is only recognised and expounded by Marxist revolutionaries. Official philosophy takes no notice of it and not even the names of Marx and Engels are mentioned in any philosophical text books. The really great revolutionary geniuses were, in the first place, Marx, Engels and Lenin—they expounded dialectical materialism in truly *adequate* fashion. Plekhanov and even Bukharin were not in a position to give an unexceptionable exposition of dialectical materialism, in the last resort also because they did not have an unexceptionable line in politics. Plekhanov finally betrayed the revolution, Bukharin fell into opportunism. If now Mr. Carritt reproaches us with recognising only the expositions of Marx, Engels and Lenin as unexceptionable and that we "swear by the word of the master" (Mr. Carritt even puts it in Latin: *ipsi dixerunt*) and comes to the conclusion that Communists suffer from a narrow dogmatism, then every sensible man will see that in the above state of affairs, Communists could not behave otherwise without doing the greatest damage to the revolutionary movement by blunting precisely the sharpest weapon of revolutionary struggle.

The *revolutionary essence* of dialectical materialism, its unity with the revolutionary practice, with the revolutionary movement, of the modern proletariat, is however, *in every respect*, the key to the understanding of this theory. It is not for nothing that Marx laid the greatest emphasis on this in his "*Theses on Feuerbach*." But it is just this which in the long run prevents Mr. Carritt, in spite of all good will, from correctly appreciating our philosophy. He does not understand why dialectical

materialism and Communism must be connected. He says :

Finding myself in sympathy with the objective of Communists (though not usually with their strategy and tactics), I am disturbed to hear, both from many Communists and from many of their bitterest opponents, that Communism is inseparable from a philosophy which I find hard to understand and, so far as I understand it, impossible on philosophical grounds to accept. This article is an attempt to get clear what I understand that philosophy to be, my difficulties in accepting it and my reasons for thinking that it has no necessary connection with the economic or social doctrines of Communism. (LABOUR MONTHLY, May, 1933, p. 324).

In another place he expresses himself still "more provocatively" :

Dialectical materialism looks like vitalism applied to physics and to society as well as to life. . . . It applies a vitalist method outside biology. But this solution is not satisfactory. And if Marxists could achieve, as of course they cannot, that there should be no Communists who did not believe this solution as it stands (intelligently believe of course), they might as well tie a millstone round the neck of Communism and throw it overboard. Nor do I see any reason why anybody who accepted the solution should accept Communism. (LABOUR MONTHLY, June, 1933, p. 391).

And finally, we have the following :

From Engels' notes for *Dialektik u. Natur*, it is clear that he founded dialectics on two facts mainly : (1) the transformation of motion into heat, light, electricity ; (2) the evolution of species. What these have to do with Communism I cannot, after patient effort, understand. He admits that his science may grow "out of date," i.e., you cannot predict by dialectic in science. Why, then, in politics ? If dialectic cannot tell what heat will turn into till science has discovered, it cannot tell what capitalism will turn into till empirical economic and social sciences discover that. We may think, they have done so ; if so, dialectic can be discarded. (LABOUR MONTHLY, May, 1933, p. 327).

I have quoted all the places in which Mr. Carritt tries to prove that dialectical materialism and Communism are not necessarily connected with one another. I have done so, not only in order to do justice to the arguments of the author, but also in order to show the reader that for him there is a real difficulty here. However, the difficulty is naturally an imaginary one. Let us review the arguments of the author one by one, (even though not quite in the same order as given by him).

What is Communism (in the sense of the word used by Mr. Carritt) ? It is the revolutionary movement of the working class, it is organised struggle against capitalism and against the capitalist class ; it is *class struggle*. And what is the class struggle ? It is the consequence of the *contradiction* between the social productive forces of present day society and the productive relations in the latter. That is to say, Communism is the result of the *dialectical contradiction* inside capitalist society between the productive forces and the productive relations. The economic and social theory of Marxism-Leninism reveals this contradiction. But the economic and social theory of Marx is based

on the *dialectical method*. The social contradiction of which we have spoken is indeed only a special case of the general dialectical law that development proceeds by contradictions and in the struggle of opposites. Everyone who merely casts a glance at Marx's works can see that without the dialectical method the Marxist economic and social theory is simply unthinkable. Compare bourgeois economy and "social theory" with that of Marxism-Leninism. The former is neither materialist nor dialectical. What can it predict ? For it bourgeois society is something eternally present, it does not develop but always remains capitalism. For it the contradictions of the capitalist society are no *necessary* contradictions, the class struggle can be eliminated or even it is an invention of the Marxists, etc., etc. Bourgeois social science is totally *helpless* today, in face of the world-crisis of capitalism. On the other hand, Marx, by the aid of the dialectical method, predicted almost a century ago not only the world-crisis and the end of capitalism but also the proletarian dictatorship which succeeds capitalism and which to-day has become a reality. In our epoch, in which what Marx predicted by the aid of the dialectical method has been verified almost word for word, where the Communist Party is the only Party which can truly forecast the course of events of capitalist society and which predicts and also realises the inevitable social revolution, which it is able to do thanks to dialectical materialism, it is incomprehensible to me for anyone to say that nothing can be predicted in politics with the help of dialectics. With the continual application of the dialectical method, the Soviet Union is celebrating one triumph after another in the construction of Socialism. The plan, according to which the construction is carried on, is laid down on the basis of the dialectical method. Under these circumstances, how can anyone say that dialectics cannot foretell anything and is superfluous ?

Mr. Carritt regards dialectics as superfluous because in each separate case the nature of the contradiction and its cause, &c., has to be specially investigated, because, that is to say, dialectics is not a formula, which can be applied to every case without further investigation. But is this not the case with all other general laws ? Take the law of the conservation and transformation of energy. Is this law a formula, which makes the investigation of particular cases unnecessary ? Can I, for example, on the basis of the general law, predict how concretely heat is converted into electricity ? Or how energy is conserved on the collision of an electron with a light photon ? Nevertheless, this law is one of the most important in natural science, governing all individual cases. The revolution in science during the recent period has not even touched this law. And if natural scientists were to be conscious that this law is a *dialectical law*, they would spare themselves many errors.

The case is not different with dialectics. It is a still more general law than that of the conservation of energy, which latter is only a physical

special case of general dialectics. It is for this reason that Engels paid so much attention to it in his *Naturdialektik*. Similarly, the transformation of species is a special case of dialectics in biology. But it is an error to believe that Engels based dialectics on these two facts and to conclude from that, that because these two facts are not immediately connected with Communism, therefore dialectics in general has nothing to do with the latter. In *nature*, these two facts are the most important (but by no means the sole) phenomena of general dialectics, but Engels does not base dialectics on nature alone but also on *history*. And the question whether society develops dialectically has surely something to do with Communism.

As the reader can see, what is spoken of here is dialectics as *method*. Mr. Carritt considers dialectics to be superfluous because "prediction" is the task of *each* separate science, and dialectics in this case reduces itself to a scientific method. This latter, however, appears to him superfluous, probably because he correctly assumes that if the natural sciences do as a matter of fact make predictions, they are only able to do this on the basis of a correct method. If, however, the separate sciences themselves, without outside assistance, can arrive at correct results, why then have a separate method called dialectics? It is in this case superfluous.

The whole argument, however, is unsound. In the first place, we saw that the separate sciences, at least the social sciences of the bourgeoisie, by no means arrive at correct results; it is really only with great reservations that one can speak of a bourgeois social *science*. And the natural sciences also, among many correct results, also arrive at numerous incorrect results, precisely because they are *undialectical*, because they do not apply a correct method. I will mention only, among the many examples which could be adduced, the adoption by Newton of an *absolute* space and an *absolute* time, both independent of matter. Engels as a dialectical materialist, although he lived at a time of the unrestricted predominance of Newtonian physics, always characterised space and time as the *forms of existence of matter*. Einsteinian physics, which bring space and time into the closest dependence on matter, only justifies here, without having any suspicion of it, what dialectical materialism has always maintained, *viz.*, the closest dialectical unity between matter, movement, space and time.

In the second place, dialectics is not only a method, it is also the "science of the general laws of movement" (Engels). That is just the reason why it is also method. As the science which is concerned with the most general laws of movement of the world (nature, society and thought), it naturally provides the method for the separate sciences which are concerned with the separate, concrete, forms of movement of matter. The *particular* is quite naturally included in the *general*. But it follows

that dialectics as method is indispensable for the separate sciences; for even if it were the case that the separate sciences themselves, besides their special tasks, desired in addition to concern themselves with the task of discovering the general laws of the world, that would be nothing else but *dialectics*. But are they in a position to do so? These general laws can certainly only be reached as the result of the total labour of all the sciences, no separate science which has not exactly this as its special task can achieve this. It is only necessary to look at the position of natural science to-day. The greatest confusion prevails in it, not only from social reasons, but also because the development of science made it impossible to refuse to take up the questions of the general laws of movement of matter, while the natural scientists were not capable of coping with this task with the limited means of their specialised science *alone*. For this what is required is precisely a knowledge of *dialectics* (cf. Engels, preface to the second edition of *Anti-Dühring*).

It is not only more advantageous but altogether indispensable for the separate sciences to have at their disposal in comprehensive form the general results of investigation in the separate spheres, in accordance with the level of our scientific knowledge reached in each one, not to mention the fact that only in such a manner is a scientific picture of the world arrived at, which the separate sciences are unable to supply since each of them is necessarily compelled to remain restricted to its special sphere. Such a picture can only be provided by philosophy, therefore by the science of dialectics, and philosophy in this sense will continue to exist as long as scientific investigation proceeds on an ascending line and as long as the intellectual life of mankind does not regress. For this reason Engels always emphasised that what would remain of philosophy would be dialectics and logic. Moreover only so can the science of the general laws of the world, *i.e.* dialectics, react upon and fertilise the separate sciences.

In short, without dialectics, there can be no scientific picture of the world, without dialectics the separate sciences are condemned to groping in the dark, without dialectics there is no correct method for investigation of an individual case or a single region. Still less is it possible for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat to exist without materialist dialectics. The dialectical method is the sharpest weapon of this revolutionary struggle, it leads the way to action. It is dialectics which reveals for us the laws of development of present day society, which shows that the goal for which we are fighting is furthered by the objective dialectics of society. How then can dialectical materialism and Communism not be in the closest connection? Communism is a revolutionary movement, which arises and grows on the basis of social development. It is the product of social dialectics. Dialectical materialism, for its part, is the consciousness, the reflection of this objective dialectics in the heads of

the members of the vanguard of the revolution, the Communists.<sup>2</sup> How can the objective movement and the consciousness of it not be inseparably connected? Can one conduct a fight *correctly* with incorrect consciousness? And how could a non-Communist be a dialectical materialist? For dialectical materialism means recognition of the social revolution, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as the concrete solution of the social contradictions. Only one who recognises this revolution will also recognise its theoretical foundation and, *vice-versa*, one who is a dialectical materialist will and must become a Communist for he must draw the practical consequences from his theoretical conviction. If he does not do so, then he is not a dialectical materialist.

Therefore, if Mr. Carritt sympathises with the aim of the Communists but not with their strategy and tactics, that implies a grievous misunderstanding of the relation of the aim and of the strategy and tactics among the Communists. He desires the aim but not the path which leads to it. He forcibly separates the dialectics of social development from the dialectics of the struggle for the social revolution. We do not contend that Communists cannot make mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable precisely because dialectics is not a formula which can be applied mechanically without thinking. We speak of strategy and tactics, which Marx, Engels and Lenin have bequeathed to us, which under Lenin's leadership led to the victory of the proletariat in the Soviet Union and which, under Stalin's leadership, is daily bringing new victories. The strategy of British Communists is the strategy of Marxism-Leninism. British Communists strive for the social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat just as all Communists in all countries of the globe. But whoever wants Communism *without* the social revolution and *without* proletarian dictatorship, whoever rejects the strategy of the Communists,—his sympathy with Communism may be the expression of dissatisfaction with the existing social order, but it can be nothing more. From that to conscious struggle for the better economic order there is still a long way, a way which few intellectuals coming from outside the proletarian class go to the end.

It may be objected here that, granted that the recognition of the dialectics of society is inseparable from Communism, yet dialectical materialism is

<sup>2</sup>Naturally every communist is not a specialist in philosophy. We should be unpardonable fools to demand such a thing. But neither is every communist a specialist in economics or history. Nevertheless every communist must know the basic features of Marxist-Leninist economics and social science if he is to be a conscious and not merely an instinctive fighter for communism. The same holds good for dialectical materialism. This may be a high demand on the members of the Communist Party but it is just on that account that this Party is the conscious vanguard of the proletariat. The educational task of the Party is to realise this necessary requirement of the class struggle. In the Soviet Union the educational apparatus of the proletarian state is joined to the resources of the Party. As experience shows, our Party thereby succeeds better than the bourgeoisie likes. That shows that it is quite unnecessary to "tie a millstone round the neck of communism and throw it overboard," but on the contrary, that communism is immensely strengthened by this educational work. The successful progress of communism is impossible without educational work.

more than this, it is a philosophy which one can reject or partially accept without ceasing to be a Communist. It is easy to see that this objection does not hold water. The dialectics of society is only a special case of the *general dialectics* of the world, since society, in the last resort, is also part of nature and has developed from nature. Whoever in consequence does not recognise the dialectics of nature, cannot recognise, without illogicality, the dialectics of society either. He, on the other hand, who denies the dialectics of thinking, and therefore, for example, does not recognise that our knowledge is a reflection of the objective dialectics of the world, he who contests the possibility of knowing the world, &c., how can he be a fighter for the alteration of the world? In short, without the dialectical conception of the *world*, it is impossible to be a Communist. Dialectical materialism is cast from one mould, it is a strictly coherent theory, it leaves no loophole for unscientific, religious conceptions, &c. And every undialectical conception cannot help being unscientific! Dialectical materialism cannot be split into pieces and one part accepted and another rejected without the person doing so ceasing to be a dialectical materialist and a communist.

Mr. Carritt in denying all this proves with it that he does not understand dialectical materialism. This he concedes himself and he confesses also that, in so far as he does understand it, he does not accept it on philosophical grounds. The greatest source of offence for him is the *concept of development* of dialectics, and, in the second place, what he likes to call the "vitalism" of Engels. The former he characterises as a hidden teleology, which he even declares to be inevitable if one desires to prove the inevitability of the Communist economic order with the help of dialectics. He declares:

Such certainty of progress (as we find expressed by Engels, L. R.), would seem hard to establish empirically for a materialism which professes to detest teleology. Yet on the other hand it seems indispensable, if we are to prove from dialectic that capitalism must result in Communism rather than in chaos. (LABOUR MONTHLY, May, 1933, p. 328).

That nature and society have developed *up to the present* is an *incontestable fact*. Has our solar system developed from some relatively primitive condition or not? Has the earth developed? Has life on the earth developed? Have organic beings developed up to mankind, have human societies developed? Except for a philosophical reactionary, these questions must be answered in accordance with scientific knowledge in the affirmative. Development is a fact which is recognised in every separate scientific sphere, and dialectics only *generalises* these separate views to a total view, to a *theory of development*, which—as is the task of every true science—not only gives the fact of development but also seeks to explain the *how* of development, the *origin of the new*. Dialectics

sees the motive of development in the struggle of contradictions, in the splitting of the one and in the struggle of its contradictory parts.

Two fundamental . . . conceptions of development (evolution) are : development as decrease and increase, as repetition ; *and* development as a unity of opposites (the division of the one into mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal correlation).

The first conception is dead, poor and dry : the second is vital. It is only this second conception which offers the key to understanding the "self-movement" of everything in existence ; it alone offers the key to understanding "leaps," to the "interruption of gradual succession," to the destruction of the old and the appearance of the new. (Lenin, *Works*, Vol. XIII. English edition, p. 323-4.)

Mr. Carritt calls this conception of the origin of the new (*e.g.*, of life from dead matter) through the dialectical struggle of opposites, "mere juxtaposition" and he demands "a higher synthesis." We will show later that when dialectical materialism fulfils this demand, then it is accused by Mr. Carritt of vitalism. Just now we desire to draw the attention of the reader to another side of the question. On the one hand materialist dialectics maintains "the unending ascent from lower to higher" (Engels). At the same time it recognises decline, the backward development of all which has developed, retrogression. Indeed, the recognition of retrogression is not less important for materialist dialectics than the recognition of development, for on the transitoriness of social structures is based for example the struggle of the Communists against capitalists. Materialist dialectics, says Marx :

Includes in its comprehension and 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. (*Capital*, Vol. I., Kerr edition, 1912. Preface to 2nd German edition, p. 28.)

Mr. Carritt does not see how the two assertions of general development and of retrogression are compatible with one another. I must confess that I do not understand the difficulty. The downfall of everything that exists is an equally scientifically established fact as evolution itself. Solar systems arise and pass away. Life on the earth arises and passes away as soon as the conditions for it become impossible. Human societies pass away after they have become fully developed. *But what passes away at one point of the universe, develops anew at another.* Our solar system passes away, new ones develop. Life passes away from the earth, it arises elsewhere anew. *In this sense* dialectical materialism asserts an eternal development ; what exists evolves. It evolves because the dialectical self-movement of every thing which exists is a driving force towards development. *Decay holds in general for every special case, the*

*endlessness of development holds only for the infinite universe, sub specie aeternitatis (from the viewpoint of eternity).*

There is not the slightest trace of "teleology" in this. Dialectical materialism conducts the sharpest possible struggle against transferring the source of development to something outside (God or the Subject, *e.g.*, the Absolute Idea of Hegel), which is precisely teleology. On the contrary, it comprehends movement, development as *self-movement* (see the quotation from Lenin cited above).

Then Communism is also transitory, Mr. Carritt will exclaim. Naturally it is, since human society is itself transitory. But we are a long way off from that at present and the question is not worth discussing. Let us first fight for Communism, the rest will follow. It will have quite a time for development. Mr. Carritt objects : "How do you know that capitalism must be followed by Communism and not by chaos ? It cannot be proved by dialectics, at least not without teleology !"

The dialectical concept of development holds equally for nature and society. Experience has shown that capitalism has developed from feudalism. Experience has also shown that capitalism has developed further to imperialism. That capitalism develops to Socialism (*i.e.*, the first phase of Communism) is shown again by the development in the Soviet Union. Therefore, it has already been shown purely empirically that capitalism is followed not by chaos but by Communism. But Communism in the Soviet Union is not a result of chance, but the conscious work of the proletariat. It is the result of the struggle for Communism as the goal which was envisaged beforehand by the fighting proletariat. The struggle for Communism was, and remains, an historic task, which grows on the basis of knowledge of social development. And where does this knowledge come from ? From materialist dialectics. It is this which reveals the dialectical contradiction between productive forces and productive relations, which lays bare the laws of the self-movement of society, the antagonism of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and its class struggle, and at the same time points out in the proletariat the power which solves the social contradiction by the bringing about of Communism. Human society is still a long way from the point when its downfall must begin. On the contrary, the development of the productive forces of society has, for the first time, reached the point where the real history of mankind can begin. Everything up to the present was only the pre-history of mankind. Human society is still evolving, it is not yet in retrogression. Because, as we have said, the inner laws of capitalist society also call into being the class which opens the way for this inevitable development, therefore the whole "problem" which Mr. Carritt puts forward as insoluble is nothing but—a misunderstanding. Dialectics not only points out to the proletariat its historical task, but it gives the proletariat the certainty of victory, it is to a certain extent *the guarantees of this victory.*

## II.

LET us now consider Mr. Carritt's second objection—as to the alleged “vitalism” of Engels—and his misinterpretation of the dialectical method as “a vitalist method outside biology.”

“Dialectical materialism,” argues Mr. Carritt, “looks like vitalism applied to physics and to society as well as life. . . . It applies a vitalist method outside biology.” (LABOUR MONTHLY, June, 1933, p. 391.)

This objection of Mr. Carritt's is closely connected with his inability to understand the dialectical conception of development. According to dialectical materialism development does not consist in the *gradual* growth or the *gradual* diminution of the old. The way capitalism develops into communism, for instance, is not (as, by the way, “constructive Socialism” would try to persuade us), that oppression continually decreases while democracy continually increases, until capitalism almost imperceptibly passes into Socialism—one fine day we wake up and find ourselves in Socialism. No, in reality the development proceeds quite differently: the gradual nature of the development only prepares the way for the interruption of gradual succession, for revolutionary leaps which necessarily take place at certain *nodal points* of the development. As a result of this revolutionary, discontinuous, in short, dialectical development, there then arises something *really new*, something which is not the mere continuation of the old but which means the destruction of the old and the sudden appearance of something really essentially new. The social revolution is only a special case of such a revolutionary leap, and its result, Communism, is not the continuation of capitalism, with its “bad” sides removed and its “good” ones developed, but something that has never hitherto existed in human history: a classless society based on the high degree of development attained under capitalism by the material productive forces of human society.

If the Marxist-Leninist theory of the social revolution is entirely based on the recognition of this discontinuous development—(a further proof that dialectics and Communism are most intimately connected!)—the realisation is also gaining ground in natural science that the old rule which prevailed almost exclusively for centuries, that *natura non facit saltus* [“nature makes no leaps”] is false, for nature is continually making leaps, the process of nature involves as many leaps as the process of society. What else is the quantum theory but a recognition that the process of nature involves leaps? What is the modern theory of light, with its conception of light as *at once* wave and corpuscle, other than a sign that dialectic is penetrating natural science, which can no longer get on without the dialectical conception of natural processes? Natural science, which for a long time almost exclusively took only the continuity of natural processes into consideration, is being gradually forced by the weight of facts into a dialectical understanding of the unity of continuity and discontinuity

in natural processes. It is still far from its goal, it still clings to the old traditional methods of thought and neither can nor will consciously apply dialectic as a method (to say nothing of the fact that many natural scientists, from social causes, are adherents of idealist metaphysics), but once the bonds of social prejudice which hold it fettered are broken, its development is leading it towards dialectical materialism.

From this dialectical conception of development follows the other assertion maintained by dialectical materialism, namely, that in objective reality there exist different systems of laws which are as much interconnected, and therefore *continuous*, as they are distinct from one another and therefore *discrete*. Thus Engels says:

If I call physics the mechanics of the molecule; chemistry the physics of the atom, and then further biology the chemistry of albumen, I am trying by this means to express the transition of these sciences one into the other and therefore as much their interconnection or continuity as their difference or discreteness. (*Dialectics of Nature*.)

There are mechanical, physical, chemical, biological and social systems of law. The sequence given here expresses a *hierarchy* at the same time, since each successive unity is not only qualitatively different, but also *higher* than the preceding one. The discreteness of these systems of law is expressed in their qualitative difference, their continuity, in the fact that each higher system contains the lower laws within itself as accessory forms, as subordinate elements.<sup>3</sup> Thus life originated in the physico-chemical sphere, but life is at the same time something more than the physico-chemical processes, which are included in the life-process as subordinate processes. Albumen is undoubtedly a chemical product, but “if chemistry ever succeeds in producing albumen artificially, this albumen must show the phenomena of life, however weak these may be” (Engels). For:

Life, the mode of existence of albuminous substances, consists primarily in the fact that at each moment it is itself and at the same time something else; and this does not take place as the result of a process to which it is subjected from without, as might also occur in the case of inanimate bodies. On the contrary, life, the exchange of matter which takes place through nutrition and excretion, is a self-completing process, which is inherent in and native to its medium, albumen, without which it cannot exist. (Engels, *Anti-Dühring*.)

Despite the risk that Mr. Carritt will accuse us of swearing by every word uttered by the master, we have here described in Engels' own words what, according to dialectical materialism, the specific character of the life-process, in relation to the purely physico-chemical processes included within it, consists in. And what here applies to life applies equally, for instance, to social processes in their relation to biological processes. There can be no social process without human beings and therefore without living beings and therefore without biological processes. But

<sup>3</sup>It is impossible to translate the Hegelian-Marxian concept expressed in the German word *Moment* adequately into English; we here use “element.”



the biological processes of human beings are not only subordinated to the social processes, they are at the same time essentially modified by them. Take for instance the development of the species "man," that is the development of his organs. Since man has lived in society the development of his organs has become almost negligible, it is insignificant in comparison to the development of the "artificial organs" of man, of his *means of production*. The biological "struggle for existence" here changes into the class struggle. The "mechanists" of social science have nevertheless tried to represent the struggle for existence as the motive force of history. Such attempts were mercilessly ridiculed by Marx and Engels, since the law of the struggle for existence, which may be adequate as an explanation of the development of the species up to man, becomes an empty phrase if applied without further qualification to society, where specific laws arise and operate. The well known biologist, Professor L. Hogben, as a true mechanist, repeats the error of his predecessors and, as the reader will soon have the opportunity of convincing himself, assures us that "we can envisage the possibility that the methods of physical science will one day claim the whole field of what can properly be called knowledge." In the light of our explanation of the dialectical standpoint in this question, it is needless to point out that this view is nothing more than an illusion.

The dialectical conception outlined above is what Mr. Carritt chooses to call "a vitalist method outside biology," "applied to physics and to society as well as life." No doubt he bases this assertion on the superficial point of agreement that the real vitalists (who represent a *reactionary* tendency in biology) also defend the specific character of the life-process in relation to the physico-chemical processes involved in it. And as dialectical materialism emphasises this likewise, but further maintains in addition the specific character of physical processes in relation to mechanical ones, of chemical processes in relation to physical processes and finally, the specific character of the social process in relation to the biological process, therefore dialectical materialism is "vitalism applied to physics and to society as well as life." This analogy is surely worth about as much as that other one which describes Communists as the disciples of a new "Communitic religion" on the ground that they "believe" in Communism.

Indeed, the difference between vitalism and dialectical materialism is the same as the difference between a religious sect and the Communist Party. Just as the religious sect takes the most unscientific phantasies, the crudest notions of primitive man as the basis of its faith, while the Communist bases himself upon the whole scientific experience of humanity, the highest achievements of science, so vitalism in biology is more or less skilfully disguised theology which, side by side with physico-chemical laws, adopts particular "life forces," non-material "entelechies," &c.,

and side by side with the biological laws of causation adopts a particular *teleology*. According to vitalism the physico-chemical processes of the living organism are only the instrument utilised by an alleged immaterial "life-principle" in order to realise its ends, which are independent of these processes and given in advance. It is easy to see that in the last resort this will culminate in the theory of free will and in the idealistic assertion of the priority of mind to matter. The vain attempt to save by the aid of a mystified biology this prop of reaction, which the development of science has completely undermined, is indeed the admitted aim of all vitalism.

The fact that Mr. Carritt mixes up this arch-reactionary "theory" with dialectical materialism shows that he arms himself against our theory with very superficial analogies. (Indeed at another point he actually lumps us together, with Plato and the "entelechies" of Aristotle!) Dialectical materialism affirms the strictest causal development of the higher from the lower. True, it recognises a *higher synthesis* as a result of this development, but there is nothing mystical about this, as there is with the vitalists. Is there any mysticism in the fact that from unities already existing on lower levels unities are formed on higher levels? At every step practice proves to us that there exist unities, unions, which represent more than the sum of their parts. From atoms are formed molecules, from molecules chemical substances, micellæ, chromosomes, and other subordinate parts of the cell, then the cell itself as a unity, the multi-cellular organism, human society (class, state, family) —are not all of these unities of which each is more than the sum of its parts or components? The simplest form of co-operation on the part of several human beings brings about results which can only be explained if the law by which quantity changes into quality is a real, actual and widely operative law of nature and society. Why then cannot life, although it originated in a physico-chemical way and consists in physico-chemical processes, be qualitatively more in its totality than the sum of these processes? To give two examples: let us take first the relation of plane and solid geometry. Plane geometry is not capable of dealing with the relations of the spatial elements in three-dimensional bodies because it is limited to two dimensions. Three-dimensional space can only be dealt with by solid geometry. But the laws of plane geometry are in no way revoked by solid geometry, which includes them under its system as particular cases. In relation to physico-chemical laws the life-process represents as it were a new dimension, of which the laws must be established by experience.

Or take the case of magnetism and radio-activity. The English astronomer, Sir James Jeans, thinks it most remarkable that:

The phenomenon of permanent magnetism appears in a tremendous degree in iron, and in a lesser degree in its neighbours, nickel and cobalt. The atoms of these elements have 26, 27 and 28 electrons respectively.

The magnetic properties of all other atoms are almost negligible in comparison. Somehow, then, although again mathematical physics has not yet unravelled how, magnetism depends on the peculiar properties of the 26, 27 and 28 electron atoms, especially the first. Radio-activity provides a third instance, being confined, with insignificant exceptions, to atoms having from 83 to 92 electrons, again we do not know why.

Thus chemistry can only tell us to place life in the same category as magnetism and radio-activity. The universe is built so as to operate according to certain laws. As a consequence of these laws, atoms having certain definite numbers of electrons, namely 6, 26 to 28, and 83 to 92, have certain special properties, which show themselves in the phenomena of life, magnetism and radio-activity respectively. (Jeans, "The Mysterious Universe," p. 11.)

This scientist, being philosophically a mystic and reactionary without the faintest notion of dialectic, scents a "mystery" here and bases a religious mysticism on these and similar facts. But the facts themselves are strictly scientific facts and only prove the truth of the saying of the dialectical materialist, Engels, that "nature is the proof of dialectics."

Of course it must always be carefully and scientifically established whether what we have before us is really a higher unity, a higher synthesis, and in what this synthesis consists. Here, in its application of the strictest scientific method, dialectical materialism differs from vitalism which, as we have already said, seeks the causes of the life-process in mystic, non-material forces. The entelechies and life-forces of the vitalists are only empty names, the refuge of ignorance and reactionary endeavours; they block the path to real knowledge because, like every form of idealism, despite high-sounding words, they leave unsolved the problem to be solved. On the other hand, *without a recognition of the dialectical synthesis, of the formation of new and higher unities in nature and society, not a single real step can be taken in science.* Mr. Carritt, who brands the recognition of this synthesis by dialectical materialism as "vitalism" proceeds in a somewhat inconsistent way; it was he himself who demanded that the contradictions of which we spoke should not remain in "mere juxtaposition" but should be united in a "higher synthesis." Now, when dialectical materialism fulfils this demand, he complains of "vitalism." Not a very consistent proceeding!

Mr. Carritt would indeed like to resolve the contradiction of mind and matter into a "higher synthesis," *i.e.*, to reduce matter as well as mind to a third something. But here dialectical materialism cannot oblige. Of course we fully recognise that this contradiction is as much purely relative as all the contradictory processes in the world (it has an *absolute* significance only within the boundaries of a very limited sphere—in this case exclusively within the limits of the fundamental epistemological question of what is to be considered primary and what secondary), but dialectical materialism will never transform its materialism (which

admittedly consists, among other things, in the recognition that mind, thought, is a product of matter) into an eclecticism which, on the pretext of being equally superior to materialism and to idealism, really takes mind as the synthesis of matter and thought and so preaches idealism. Anyone who prefers the feeble, inconsistent, confused "philosophy" of eclecticism to the clear and consistent line of dialectical materialism on this question should apply to Mr. Bertrand Russell and not to Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Ignorance of dialectics, or the direct repudiation of the dialectical standpoint regarding the specific character of the life-process in relation to purely physico-chemical processes, deflect science from the correct path and even become a direct obstacle to its further development. This is shown by the fate of the opposite extreme to the vitalists in biology, the so-called mechanists. In their justifiable struggle against the vitalists, they empty out the baby with the bath and land in *behaviourism*; in denying the specific character of the life process they end by denying thinking itself. Thus, Professor Hogben says:

While possessing a greater range of reversible response than any living system, it would be difficult to specify in a living system any single activity which could not be reproduced by a mechanical system. (*Nature of Living Matter*, p. 83.)

And in another place:

A new school of psychologists has come into being with the express object of making psychology a physical science, relieving man, the celestial pilgrim, of his burden of Soul. . . . In the light of Pavlov's work we can envisage the possibility that the methods of physical science will one day claim the whole field of what can properly be called knowledge. (*Ibid.*, p. 90.)

Even if we admit that every *single* activity of a living system could be reproduced by a "mechanical" (meaning, of course physico-chemical) system, does this prove anything against the specific character of the life-process *as a whole*, of the living organism *as a whole*? This in the first place. Secondly, even a behaviourist like Mr. Hogben cannot deny that he possesses sensibility and "thinking." This sensibility and this thinking are certainly the product of physico-chemical, material, processes and indissolubly bound up with these processes. Anyone who disputes this is not a materialist, but an idealist. But anyone who supposes that consistent materialism only lies in denying the existence of thought is making a great mistake.<sup>4</sup> A problem is not solved by a denial that it exists. That is the well-known method of Machism, which

<sup>4</sup>Mr. Bertrand Russell, who is himself an advocate of Machist "neutral monism," makes exactly this mistake when he gives the following misrepresentation of the standpoint of materialism:—"Popular metaphysics," he writes, "divides the known world into mind and matter and a human being into soul and body. Some—the materialists—have said that matter alone is real and *mind is an illusion.*" (*Outline of Philosophy*, p. 303.) This is a complete misrepresentation even of the standpoint of older materialism, but does not in any case take into account the standpoint of modern, dialectical materialism.

wherever it is faced by a scientific problem still unsolved simply denies its existence. So the Machists obstinately denied the existence of atoms and ridiculed the atom-hypothesis. (The illustrious physicist, Boltzmann, was even driven into suicide by them for his consistent adherence to atomism.) But the recent development of natural science has, as is well known, decided against Machism. Because of its sterility, Machism, which is fond of calling itself positivism, has been justly described by a German author as negativism. Behaviourism, too, is nothing more than a similar ostrich policy of sticking one's head in the sands of denial in order to avoid seeing the "enemy," the unsolved problem. Behaviourism is, of course, anything rather than materialism, fundamentally it is also a Machist form of agnosticism. On the pretext that we do not yet know what the connection is between the material and mental processes of a living organism it asserts that we also never can know it, and declares that mental processes do not exist, they are—an illusion. This "illusion" however *does exist* and requires an explanation. Thinking has also its *special laws*, dialectical logic, which cannot and never will be *reduced* to the laws of movement of material particles or to chemical processes. That is to say, neither psychology nor dialectical logic will ever become a "physical science" and the methods of physical science will never "claim the whole field of what can properly be called knowledge." But the assertion of the behaviourists is, of course, not true; one day we shall know what the connection between mental and material processes is. One of the paths to this knowledge is undoubtedly the most careful investigation of the physico-chemical processes here involved. But in denying that we have here a problem requiring an answer we are in practice hindering the development of science. The fact is that even the fullest knowledge of the physico-chemical processes in a living organism would be far from exhausting the question, as the dialectical materialist Engels long ago foresaw:

*Mechanical Motion.* Among natural scientists movement is always understood as mechanical motion, change of place. This is a legacy from the pre-chemical eighteenth century and greatly impedes a clear conception of phenomena. Movement in application to matter is *change in general*. . . . This does not mean that each of the higher forms of movement is not always and necessarily connected with real mechanical motion (external or molecular) just as the higher forms of movement produce other forms of movement at the same time. Chemical action is impossible without changes in temperature and electricity. Organic life is impossible without mechanical, molecular, chemical, thermal, electrical and other changes. But the presence of these accessory forms does not exhaust the essence of the chief form in each case. Some day we shall certainly experimentally "reduce" thinking to molecular and chemical motions in the brain; but does this exhaust the essence of thought? (*Dialectics of Nature*.)

Materialism is constantly slandered by the idealists with the assertion that it *reduces* thinking to, or *derives* it from, the movement of matter.

As the reader sees this is a mere calumny, a conscious falsification of the materialistic standpoint in this question.

Lenin, in accordance with Engels, contrasts with this calumny (recently revived by the Machists) the true view-point of modern dialectical materialism. He writes:—

The doctrine consists not in the derivation of sensation from the movement of matter or in the identification of sensation with the movement of matter, but in the recognition that sensation is one of the properties of matter in motion. On this particular question Engels held Diderot's views. Engels opposed the "vulgar" materialists, Vogt, Büchner and Moleschott, because they assumed that thought is secreted by the brain as bile is secreted by the liver, holding that in this matter they were confused. (Works, Vol. XIII., p. 28, English edition.)

I have quoted these passages not only because they clearly establish the conception of biology held by dialectical materialism as compared with that of the "mechanists" (Engels, by the way, ridicules this designation "mechanists." He says: "Mechanism as applied to life is a helpless category, the most we could speak of would be chemicalism, unless we are to relinquish all understanding of terms"), but because they also clearly illuminate the method—described by Mr. Carritt as "vitalist"—of dialectical materialism in general. Dialectical materialism recognises nothing but *motion, movements, processes*. But motions, movements, are of higher and lower kinds: the lowest is mechanical motion, mere change of place, the highest is thought. The particular sciences are all concerned with different kinds of movement. The order in which the sciences are ranked expresses the sequence of the forms of movement themselves, the classification of the sciences is "the classification and arrangement according to their inherent sequence of these forms of movement themselves, and herein lies its importance." (Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*.) No one who bears this conception of dialectical materialism in mind will scent "vitalism" where all that has to be considered is the simple scientific phenomenon of the passing of one form of motion into another and higher one.

This conception of all existence as movement, process, is the fundamental condition for the understanding of dialectic. Only from this standpoint do the contradictions and opposites, their struggle, their transformation and conversion into one another, their inter-penetration, their dialectical interaction become comprehensible. Those who see rigid entities before them and have rigid concepts of them in their heads will find it impossible to understand how the same thing can possess contradictory determinations or change into its opposite. But to those who regard both things and their reflection in our minds as *processes*, it will not seem strange that a process should have contradictory tendencies, sides,<sup>5</sup> elements which conflict with one another, penetrate one another

<sup>5</sup>This word again stands for the German word *Moment*.

and change one into the other. Mr. Carritt remains on the standpoint of rigidly fixed entities and concepts (on the standpoint called "meta-physical" by Engels and Lenin), although present-day natural science (to say nothing of Marxism-Leninism) completely justifies the dialectical point of view. Hence he once more sees insoluble problems where relatively simple things are concerned :

"When the process is most carefully described"—he maintains, for instance—"it is generally said to work by opposites or by contraries or by contradictions. But clearly most of the instances given are simply instances of otherness. Egg and bird, successive geological strata, feudalism and industrialism (does he mean capitalism?—L.R.)—a and—a are not opposites, contraries or contradictories." (LABOUR MONTHLY, June, 1933, p. 385.)

Certainly all these things are only "otherness"—if they are conceived as rigid entities. But if they are conceived as processes, *arising from one another*, if they are grasped in their *process of becoming*, they represent a sequence of development which cannot be understood if the contradictory elements in the movement are torn out so that only their "otherness" and not the dialectical relation of becoming is seen. Let us take the example which strikes Mr. Carritt as particularly strange, namely, —a and —a. Regarded as isolated, rigid concepts or things they are not even "otherness." One —a is as like the other as one pea is like another. But considered in the process of multiplication they are a movement of our thought and in this movement —a comes to life, moves, and passes into its opposite, into +a<sup>2</sup>, just as it arose from +a as its opposite in the course of this movement of thought. Or let us take feudalism and capitalism. If capitalism is regarded merely as industrialism (that is, without *class content*), it seems only to be "otherness" in relation to feudalism. But capitalism is a certain *mode of production* connected with a *certain form of property* which arose from feudalism. It arose in the course of a violent class struggle, in which feudalism was "negated," *i.e.*, defeated by force, and the domination of feudal property was replaced by the domination of the opposing system of capitalist property. Anyone who will take a glance at history will not need any explanation of how capitalism arose in opposition to feudalism, developed and was victorious. The same is true of capitalism and Communism.

So the "other" which arises from the dialectical process of becoming is not an other, *i.e.*, not only "otherness," but also *its other*, as Hegel emphasised :

"This harmony," he says, "is just absolute becoming, change—not becoming something other, now this and now an other. The essential point is that each different, particular thing is different from an other, not however abstractly different from any other, but different from *its other*." (Hegel, *History of Philosophy*.)

Upon which Lenin comments :

Very true and important : the "other" as *its other*, development into *its opposite*." (*Critique of Hegel's Logic*.)

Are life and death, matter and thought, bourgeois and proletarian, capitalism (not industrialism, for communism will also be industrialism, and that even in a higher degree than capitalism) and communism only "otherness," and not also opposites which arise from a contradictory process and represent its opposite poles or the transformation of one into another? If things are not considered in their real interconnection, dialectical interaction, in their conflict, in their *process* of development, then of course their dialectic cannot be understood. But in that case the fault does not lie with dialectic but with our own inability to think dialectically.

Finally, a few words about the way in which Mr. Carritt represents the conception of matter. He sees no difference between Hegel's absolute idea and the matter of the materialist and consequently regards dialectical materialism as a synthesis of idealism and materialism. The history of philosophy, we would reply, itself proceeded dialectically, *i.e.*, as a struggle and inter-penetration of opposites. But this is something wholly different from the eclecticism here represented by Mr. Carritt, the "synthesis" of materialism and idealism which would in fact be no synthesis but another of the many vain attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable fundamental tendencies of philosophy—materialism and idealism.

In reality the position is quite different. Engels writes in his *Ludwig Feuerbach* that modern philosophy received its special incentive from the powerful and ever more rapid onrush of progress in natural science and industry. Consequently "the systems of idealism became more and more impregnated with materialistic content and attempted to reconcile the opposites of mind and matter by pantheism, so that ultimately the Hegelian system only represents materialism idealistically turned upside down in method and content."

It is not surprising, therefore, that Hegel's "idea" is often compelled to make materialistic leaps. Does this mean that Hegel's "idea" is the matter of the materialist? Far from it. Why did Marx have to turn the Hegelian dialectic upside down and set it on its feet instead of on its head? Why had Lenin to read Hegel "materialistically"? The fact is that in the fundamental question of philosophy, the relation of thinking to being, Hegel is an idealist, for he conceives nature as an other being of the idea. He recognises the objective existence of nature, but only as a phase in the spontaneous movement of the idea. The spontaneous movement of the "concept" is at the same time the spontaneous generation of nature. The fact that it was nevertheless possible to use Hegel's dialectic in a reshaped materialistic form is ultimately bound up

with a circumstance remarked upon by Schelling, among others. Schelling says of the Hegelian method :

But this process is after all tacitly guided the whole time by the *terminus ad quem* (the end in view, L.R.), the real world, at which science is finally to arrive. In this allegedly necessary movement (of the concept, L.R.), there is therefore a double illusion : (1) the *concept* is substituted for *thought* and represented as moving spontaneously, whereas in itself the concept would remain perfectly immobile if it were not the concept of a *thinking subject*, i.e., if it were not a thought ; (2) thought is imagined as being only impelled by a necessity within itself, whereas obviously it has an end (nature ! L.R.), after which it is striving and which, however much the philosopher may try to conceal his consciousness of the fact, has all the more decisive an unconscious effect on the course of his philosophising.

Trendelenburg makes the same accusation against Hegel :

Pure being as an empty abstraction can only be understood in so far as thought already possesses the world within itself and then withdraws from it into its self alone. (*Logische Untersuchungen*, I. p. 37.)

With this "double fault" of Hegelian Philosophy Marx also deals in his articles : "Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy in General." (Works I. 3. p. 154. *Gesamtausgabe*.)

In fact, like all idealists, Hegel starts from the real world, while he professes to "deduce" the world from the "idea." Thus in an idealistic form he describes the real laws of movement of the world while professing that they are the laws of the movement of the absolute idea. Hence it was possible for Hegel's idealist dialectics to be reshaped and made use of. The matter of the materialist, on the other hand, is the *real world* and nothing else. A vast difference, which Mr. Carritt has once more spared himself the trouble of thinking about. Ultimately Hegel's idealism, like every form of idealism, only represents a "refined," "more complex," form of religion and theology, which is as incompatible with the matter of the materialist as it is fully harmonious with the "idea"—for the "idea" is only another name for the God of theology.

What has been said explains why it was possible for Marx and Engels to rescue the Hegelian method, dialectic, from the bankruptcy of Hegelian idealism and of idealism in general. The dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels, therefore, is in no sense a synthesis of idealism and materialism (such a synthesis is impossible as we have said already), but a further development of pre-Marxist materialism, which has utilised the valuable result of Hegelian philosophy, dialectic. Hegel's idealism was and remained useless and was cast aside by Marx and Engels. The correct method which lay hidden within it, though in a distorted form, was reshaped on materialist lines and utilised by Marx and Engels. Such are the facts of the case.

### III.

SOME remarks about *historical materialism*, on which, I regret to say, the views of Mr. Carritt are really antediluvian. He condescends, for instance, to consider the "maxim" of historical materialism "much more respectable" than the maxim : "*Cherchez la femme*" ! If this is meant as a joke, everybody must agree that it is rather below the level of the celebrated English humourists ; if meant seriously, does it not demonstrate that he has taken very little trouble to *study* the theory he comments on ? In this, however, he would only follow the example given by so many predecessors who all "criticise" historical materialism without having a correct notion of its essence, or any notion of it at all.

Mr. Carritt, first of all, is again rather sceptical, if not directly contemptuous, regarding *practice* :

"The doctrine," he declares, "that economic conditions predominate over any other influence, perhaps over all others together, is highly probable, but requires empirical proof, and might every now and again mislead. It is just a maxim, though a much more respectable one, like *cherchez la femme*." (*LABOUR MONTHLY*, June, 1933, p. 387.)

A "maxim" is called in philosophical language a principle *having purely practical significance*, that is to say, not being "deduced" philosophically out of "eternal principles," *a priori* (before experience). Is it a defect or the strength of our historical theory that it is not "deduced" in such a way, but is fully based on practice ? In justice to Mr. Carritt, he does not consider this as a weakness of our theory :

"In fact," he admits, "dialectical materialism is not really (to its credit be it said) a philosophy of history but a guiding thread for historical research." (*Ibidem*, p. 386.)

As the reader sees, Mr. Carritt on one side considers it a merit of historical materialism that it is no philosophy of history, on the other side he minimises its importance and regards it only as "a guiding thread for historical research," as a "maxim" precisely because it is based on "empirical proof." Here, perhaps unconsciously on the part of Mr. Carritt, we have to do with *one of the most erroneous prejudices of idealistic philosophy : the rupture between theory and practice*. Idealistic philosophy considers everything which is proved "only" by practice as not "wholly," not "fully" established, in fact as *second rate*, and it acknowledges as truth only what is "deduced" out of the "eternal principles" of reason. To the credit of Mr. Carritt be it said, he seems to repudiate this nonsense of idealistic philosophy ; but at the same time he is nevertheless under its influence. But if practice "every now and again" misleads us, surely idealistic philosophy misleads us always and in every respect ! Why mistrust in this case practice and not idealistic philosophy ? Why not rely on practice and acknowledge that it is able

to give us not only a "thread" for historical research, but a *consistent, in every sense reliable, valid, theory of historical development* whereas idealistic philosophy was never able to give anything except an erroneous philosophy of history?

The greatest strength of historical materialism is precisely that it is proved by practice. And it is in no way empty boasting to say that historical materialism is at the same time *the only theory of social development in every respect justified by practice*. There is no need to refer again to the facts mentioned already respecting the present world crisis of capitalism and the dictatorship of the proletariat, both predicted by Marx with the help of his historical theory several decades ago when capitalism was still in its beginning. Instead of this the reader will permit us to prove it by an example which on a smaller scale is not less convincing.

The well-known French historian, M. Seignobos, in an interview given to the reactionary French paper *Temps*, recently once again "demonstrated" the "invalidity" of historical materialism. This "demonstration," however, he not only commenced with the confession (undoubtedly *favourable* to the "refuted" theory) that it had a "wholesome influence" on historical research, but what is still more interesting he also concluded his "demonstration" with another confession, a confession of the total incapacity and sterility of bourgeois science. "The rôle of history," he declared, "consists in the establishment of the past and not in the prediction of the future." Continuing, he said:

I twice had the imprudence to overstep the boundaries prescribed to history. In 1913 and 1914, from good intentions, to reassure the public, I wrote and published in two magazines . . . that there would be no war between France and Germany. This experience was for me sufficient, I hope you will find it sufficient.

Yes, we find it sufficient and everybody will find it sufficient: this is nothing else than the confession of the *total abdication of bourgeois historical science in face of the future*. But compare with this total incapacity and sterility the following facts: Marx, in the second address of the International Working Men's Association on the Paris Commune, that is in 1871 and not on the eve of the war in 1913 and 1914, not only "wrote and published" that there *would be war* between France and Germany if the latter took Alsace and Lorraine by force, but he "wrote and published" also that France would be driven in this case *into the arms of Russia*. The reader will permit me to quote fully this remarkable published prediction of Marx:

If the fortune of her arms, the arrogance of success, and dynastic intrigue lead Germany to a spoliation of French territory, there will then only remain two courses open to her. She must at all risks become the *avowed* tool of Russian aggrandisement, or, after some short respite, again make ready for another "defensive" war, not one of those new-fangled "localised wars," but a *war of races*—a war with the combined Slavonian and Roman races. (Marx: *Civil War in France*. London, 1933, p. 76.)

And Engels in 1891, in his Preface to the same work of Marx, again "wrote and published" that there *will be a world war*.

I shall not quote the last words of Marx in his *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* where, two decades before the downfall of this adventurer, he predicted its inevitability, and was again, as in the previous cases, exactly justified by the subsequent events. Let us instead remember that Lenin predicted the world war, that Stalin and the Communists predict the new world wars without the least fear of being blamed by the future, without fear of "over-stepping the boundaries prescribed to history"!

What do these facts prove, if not the superiority of historical materialism over bourgeois historical science? Do they not prove that our theory is something more than "a guiding thread to historical research," that it is more than a "maxim"? They prove that historical materialism is the *only scientific theory of social development capable of leading us to knowledge of the past and of the future*. The *facts* prove it and this is something more than a "deduction" out of "eternal" philosophical principles!

It is not possible for me (and I have also no desire) to deal with "problems" like free-will, &c., put before us by Mr. Carritt. Here again he stands completely under the influence of idealistic philosophy. He is not content with "freedom from disease obtained by knowing and following the laws of health," but requires a "philosophical freedom." Well, I frankly admit I do not know what this is if it is not a fallacy. Freedom, as dialectical materialism understands it, is precisely the "rule over us and nature obtained by the knowledge of the necessary laws of nature" (Engels), and any other "philosophical freedom" is only a *chimaera* if not worse: a *conscious support of religion by "philosophical," that is to say, disguised, means*. I hope Mr. Carritt had not the intention to *smuggle* in this religious nonsense on the pretext that here we have a "serious" "philosophical" problem?

The same has to be said about his remarks on "human nature." In his opinion, historical materialism "is a conclusion drawn from observation of human nature in ourselves and others and depends on no particular philosophy" (Ibidem, p. 389). In this statement there are two mistakes at once. In the first place, there is no such thing as "human nature" *in general*, without further qualification, equally the same and invariable for all historical periods and classes. In consequence, historical materialism can still less be the conclusion drawn from observation of a non-existing "human nature." If Mr. Carritt stood previously under the undeniable influence of idealistic, here he is fully under the influence of pre-Marxist materialistic, philosophy (likewise in his remarks about "hedonism"). One of the greatest advances made in historical

science by Marx is precisely that of having shown that *man is a historical product*, a product of the given society in which he lives. "*Human nature*" therefore changes together with the development of society and as long as society is divided into classes "*human nature*" changes also with the classes to which its owners belong. The "nature" of a capitalist is necessarily different from that of a Roman slave-holder or a feudal lord; and the "nature" of a proletarian is again different, not only from that of a slave or a serf, but also from that of a bourgeois or a peasant of our own epoch.

On the other hand, it is a mistake when Mr. Carritt denies the connection between the philosophy of Marxism, dialectical materialism, and the historical theory of Marx, historical materialism. It is true, Marx never demonstrated the future development of society with the help of a "special" philosophy of history," in other words Marx never required from practice that it should agree with some *preconceived ideas* of his. On the contrary, the historical theory of Marx is *entirely based on practice, on the observation of the inner laws of society in general, of capitalistic society in particular*. But the same must be said about dialectical materialism. It is a philosophical theory entirely derived from practice: from nature and history. The fact is that both nature and society are a *dialectical process subject to the general dialectical laws of motion, development*. The same is true about the laws of thinking.

This is what Engels emphasises in saying that the "general laws of movement, of the external world as well as of human thought, constitute two series of laws which are identical in essence, but different in expression" (L. Feuerbach). The laws of movement of society are, too, *in essence* identical with the natural laws of movement. (Society is a *product* of nature!) They are totally different from them *in expression*. And again, it was only this when Engels, against Dühring, declared that:—

Marx simply pointed to history . . . The process is a historical one, and if it is at the same time dialectical, Marx is not to blame . . . It is mere supposition . . . that Marx wants to convince anyone of the necessity of the social ownership of land and capital upon the credit of the negation of negation . . . We need no philosophy. (*Anti-Dühring*.)

Mr. Carritt, who quotes these words of Engels, is therefore totally wrong in deducing from them that, in the opinion of Engels, there is no connection between dialectical and historical materialism. Engels himself emphasises that history is *dialectical*. What Engels means is obviously nothing more than the fact that *we need no philosophy in the old sense of the word, that we need no philosophy of history which prescribes to history its course without taking into consideration whether practice is in agreement or not with the "pet ideas" of the given philosopher about the necessary course of world history*.

A very good illustration, which is linked with the problem discussed above, can be given of the connection between dialectical and historical materialism. We saw that class society allows no room for a real *human nature*, only for a class-nature of man. In class society there is no such thing as "*humanity*," there are only classes. Even in primitive communism—a classless but very primitive society—there existed no humanity because mankind was divided into innumerable tribes lacking any unity between themselves, combating each other in eternal feuds. Only in Communism will there be, for the first time in the history of mankind, humanity as a whole, divided neither into hostile tribes, nor into hostile classes or nations. But even then, "*human nature*" will of course change and develop together with the development of society. Even then there will be no unchangeable, invariable "*human nature*." But will there be a development in Communism? Mr. Carritt misinterprets historical materialism also in this respect. He maintains that historical materialism considers class antagonisms as the exclusive driving force of historical development. He says:—

One last point on which Marxists speak with no clear voice is whether the dialectical process will end with the establishment of communism. (1) If it only operates by the antagonism of classes as they define them, it must. But then it is no law of nature, but only a historical generalisation about certain epochs. It will cease to apply; as apparently it began to apply with primitive Communism, which was classless, yet developed . . . Indeed it is often suggested that not only class antagonism but all antagonism will disappear in Communism (Bukharin, p. 40), but this is merely fatuous. (2) If, on other hand, it may act in other ways it seems hard to be sure that it may not be acting in other and perhaps more decisive ways now than in the conflict of classes. (*Ibidem*, p. 389.)

If this were a correct interpretation of historical materialism, it would indeed be a "*mere fatuity*," and not the consistent theory of social development that historical materialism in fact is. On the one hand, we would be asserting that development is a general law of nature and society, on the other we should deprive Communist society of the incentive to further development. If this were true, the abolition of classes in Communism would be not a *progress*, but a *regress*. In this case with capitalism there would come to an end not the *prehistory* of mankind, but its *history*: society would *regress* in Communism (it being impossible for it to remain at one spot, neither progressing nor regressing!). *This would be the justification of capitalism! This would deprive our struggle for Communism of its whole justification*.

Fortunately this statement of historical materialism is totally wrong. It is absurd to say that Marxists do not speak with a clear voice on "*whether the dialectical development will end with the establishment of communism*." Anybody who only casts a superficial glance at the writings

of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin can find hundreds and hundreds of clear, unmistakable, categorical and decisive statements on this. To suppose even for a moment that a revolutionary world movement like the Communist movement is fighting for a social order without having a clear notion about the *result of this fight*, to suppose that we fight not for the progress, but the *regress* of mankind is really more than absurd! It is to accuse us of being not a revolutionary, but a reactionary party!

Precisely because historical materialism is in the closest connection with dialectical materialism, it is simply *inconceivable* to any Marxist that the development, or what is the same the dialectical process, should cease with Communism. Development is a general law of nature and society and it *cannot end, it can only become accelerated, in Communism* where the obstacles to this development—the classes—will disappear.

*But dialectical materialism never asserted that the motive of development is antagonism!* On the contrary, Engels (against Dühring) as well as Lenin (against Bukharin) categorically protested against the *identification of antagonism with contradiction*, which latter indeed is the driving force of development in society not less than in nature. I quote Lenin:—

“Totally inexact,” he writes against the same Bukharin, who is cited by Mr. Carritt and who identified contradiction and antagonism in his *Transition Period*, “antagonism and contradiction are far from being the same. The first will disappear, the second will remain in Socialism.” (Remarks on Bukharin’s *Transition Period*.)

Is this a “clear voice” or not? “Contradiction remains in Socialism” means that the dialectical process remains, and as the dialectical process means development—development remains in Socialism.

Neither Marx, nor Engels, nor Lenin ever said that the dialectical process operates in society by the antagonisms of classes. They always said that it operates *by the contradiction between the productive forces and productive relations*. It is sufficient to cast a look at the famous Preface of Marx to his “Critique of Political Economy,” where he gives a summary of his historical theory, to convince oneself of the absurdity of the opposite view. In this Preface *Marx does not even mention the classes, there is not a single word about the classes and class antagonisms*. Marx there speaks about the “basis” and the “superstructure.” This “basis” is the *productive relations of a given society* which “correspond” to the level of *productive forces* and change with the development of these. Only at a given level of the productive forces do the productive relations take the form of classes, to disappear at a higher level. *Class antagonisms are in consequence rooted in the deeper lying contradiction between the productive forces and productive relations*, they are a driving force in class society because and only because they are *the expression, the result* of the decisive contradiction of class society: in capitalism of the contradiction between *social production and private appropriation*. Once this contradiction is

eliminated does it mean that contradiction itself will disappear from society? Not at all: contradiction remains, but it takes another form. So for instance, in the Soviet Union the contradiction of capitalistic society, the contradiction between social production and private appropriation has disappeared, to social production there correspond *socialist productive relations*. But the socialist productive relations require a high level of productive forces, a higher one than the Soviet Union inherited from capitalism. This is a contradiction which is totally different, even inverse, to the contradiction existing in Capitalism, *but it is a contradiction*. And it is precisely this contradiction which drives forward the Soviet Union in an unprecedentedly rapid tempo of development. The same applies to Communism. Once, the highly developed productive forces required the development of social revolutions; in this future the higher social relations will give room to the further development of the productive forces. The result will be a higher and higher form of Communism. And this will continue while the conditions of our globe permit the development of human society.

The other alternative of Mr. Carritt is not less absurd. He fears that in Communism the dialectical process “may act in a perhaps more decisive way than in the conflict of classes.” This is what we call “Aesopian language.” Mr. Carritt simply means but carefully avoids saying in a “clear voice” that he does not believe in Communism, in the communist theory of social development (or is he ignorant of it?) He does not believe that Communism will be a social order where there will be no oppression, no war, no political conflicts, no politics at all, no state, etc. But the question is not what Mr. Carritt believes or not, the question is whether Mr. Carritt or anybody else is capable of *refuting the arguments* upon which the communist theory of social development is based. These are expounded in the writings of our classics: for instance, in the chapter of the first volume of Marx’s “Capital” called “The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation,” or in the same passage of Engels’ “Anti-Dühring” which Mr. Carritt quoted above, or in the last chapter of Lenin’s “State and Revolution.” Let Mr. Carritt and everybody, who doubts that in Communism mankind will at last be able to develop harmoniously all his faculties, *refute scientific communism* expounded in these and other works of our classics. If they succeed let them come again. It is no secret that the bourgeoisie and their ideologues have tried this more than once. They have tried it not with some superficial sceptical remarks like Mr. Carritt, but with thousands and thousands of books. It was in vain. This experience—to speak in the words of M. Seignobos—was for us sufficient. I hope Mr. Carritt will find it sufficient.

Here I will close my contribution to the discussion, although I am conscious that from lack of space I have been obliged to deal inadequately



with many points or to leave them untouched altogether. I hope, however, that I have dealt with the most important of the points on which the discussion turned. To sum up the main conclusions, it must once more be pointed out that our philosophy, which was originated by such geniuses as Marx, Engels and Lenin, which is the basis of the most powerful movement in the history of the world, our Communist Movement, and our sharpest weapon in the struggle for the liberation of the proletariat—a philosophy which is daily celebrating the greatest triumphs in the construction of a new social order in the land of Socialism—such a philosophy is not the ordinary philosophy of the schools and can neither be measured by the standard of the schools nor understood by them. One must dig deep before one can grasp it. And that demands, as we said at the beginning of this article, a decisive break with the traditional methods of thought—the revolutionising of thought and its liberation both from the traditional narrow English empiricism and from the idealistic eclecticism dominant in England to-day. This again can only be achieved, first by the most careful study of the socialist classics, the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, and secondly by practical participation in the world-historic movement of the proletariat for the classless society. Only a revolutionary can revolutionise his thought; only those who take their part in the struggle to change the world can rightly understand the theory of the world's dialectical development.

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