

# Introduction to Dialectical Materialism - The Marxist World-View

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**INTRODUCTION TO  
DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM  
-  
THE MARXIST WORLD-VIEW**

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## CONTENTS

### [Preface to the German Edition](#)

### [Preface to the American Edition](#)

#### [1. Religion: I](#)

Diversity of "modern" world-views. The unity of the natural sciences. The unity of dialectical materialism. Its opponents. The problem: Presentation of dialectical materialism in its historical development. Two basic trends in the modern world-view: the proletarian and the bourgeois. An intermediate trend: the petty-bourgeois, a variety of the bourgeois trend.

Outline of the lectures. Religion: the oldest of the world-views. Essential characteristic of religion. The religious and the natural-scientific explanations of natural phenomena. The chief sources of religion: (1) Relation of man to nature; (2) Social relations. The emergence of the priestly caste from the social division of labor; class structure. The erstwhile progressive role of the priesthood.

#### [2. Religion: II](#)

The development of religion and its relation to the forms of production and of society. Local, tribal, national gods. Christianity as a world-religion. Early Christianity: the religion of slaves and oppressed nations. Feudal Christianity. Religion in capitalist society and its class bases. Social anarchy of capitalism. Religiosity, wars, and revolutions. The revolutionary bourgeoisie as opponents of religion and the church. Religion as a means of authority. Religion and the agricultural class. Religion and the modern working class.

#### [3. Greek Materialism](#)

Rationalist and historical-materialist position on religion. Anti-religious enlightenment as an accessory part of revolutionary preparation. Position of the Communist Party on religion. The Soviet Union and religion. Religion and fully developed socialist society. The "substitute" for religion. Development of the modern world-view. Its beginning in Greece. Prerequisites for the disintegration of religion and the development of philosophy and the natural sciences. Progress in the mastery of natural phenomena. Relation to the development of slave-economy. Greek natural philosophy and the development of the Greek commercial cities of Asia Minor. Tyrants, the people, and the city-nobility. Slave trade and slave-economy. Free artisans and wage-laborers. Thales of Miletus: the beginning of a materialistic explanation of the world. Water as the cosmic principle.

#### [4. Greek Idealism](#)

Anaximander. Matter as the starting-point of cosmic development. Heraclitus. The law of the universal development of things. The beginnings of dialectics. Difference between classic and modern concepts of development. Opposition to the notion of the immortality of individual souls. Heraclitus and the class-relations of his time. The

people seek refuge in a religion of redemption. The theory of atoms: the most consistent product of ancient materialism. Idealistic turning-point.

Plato and Aristotle. Beginning of the decline of society based on slave-economy and the transition to idealism. Hindering of technical progress by slave-economy. Supremacy of the Idea and the supremacy of the "rational". Ancient, bourgeois, and proletarian democracy. Reactionary and progressive aspects of ancient idealistic philosophy.

### **5. Ancient Logic and Dialectics**

A few facts about Plato and Aristotle. Athenian society and logico-scientific interests. The subject-matter of formal logic. Significance of formal logic for science. Two main laws of formal logic: (1) The law of identity; (2) The law of contradiction. Evidence for two main laws of formal logic. Proof of two main laws of logic from the standpoint of dialectics. The law of identity postulates the changelessness of things. Limited significance of the law of identity. Dialectical proof of the law of contradiction. Universality of contradiction as the expression of universal change. Examples. Meaningful and meaningless contradictions. Criterion of the actual change of things. Opposite relation of formal logic and dialectics. Limited field of application of formal logic. Dialectics as the universal and exact comprehension of things in their motion and their interrelations. Materialistic and idealistic dialectics. Sources of dialectics in antiquity: (1) Heraclitus; (2) Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. Synthesis of two in modern dialectics: historical dialectics. An example: Marx's Capital. Dialectics of a totality of relations and its changes. Slave-labor and the limitations of ancient dialectics. The extension of dialectics to complete universality in materialistic form and its social conditions.

### **6. Indian Materialism**

Elements of materialism in the East as a point of departure for dialectical materialism. The religious crisis of the epic period. Brahman priesthood. Social relations in the Vedic period. Emergence of class-oppositions in the primitive communist village communities. Emergence of great landed estates and slave trade. The Sudras. Sharpened class-oppositions in the North-east. Class relations in the sixth century. The social upheaval and the religious crisis. Great merchants as bearers of materialism. The castes. The four main castes. Caste-structure and basic problems of Indian thought. (1) The cycle of regeneration: Sansara. Caste-structure and ideas on regeneration in ancient Egypt. (2) Karma. Buddhism as a rebellion within the bounds of religion against castes and priestly supremacy. Upheavals in primitive Buddhism. Its qualification as a world-religion. Indian materialism as the most radical critic of Brahmanism. Lokayata or the theory of laymen. The main tenets of Indian materialism.

### **7. Hegel and Feuerbach**

Characteristic of scholasticism of European Middle Ages. Transition from feudal to bourgeois development. The Reformation.

Main purpose and substance of bourgeois philosophy. Criticism of Christianity and of religion in general. Making way for the development of the natural sciences. Peak of French materialism of the eighteenth century. Diderot. Helvetius. Voltaire. Rousseau. The religion of reason. German philosophy. Hegel as the pioneer of the bourgeois revolution. The rediscovery and further development of the dialectical method. Dialectics as the universal formula of resolution. Hegelian absolute or objective idealism. Hegel undermines religion from within.

The young Hegelians and the open break with the Christian religion. Ludwig Feuerbach. The Essence of Christianity. Transition from idealism to materialism. Overthrow of supersensual knowledge or metaphysics. The negative destruction of philosophy. Natural-science materialism and historical idealism. Feuerbach as the exponent of the radical, left bourgeoisie of his time.

## **8. From Natural-Science Materialism to Dialectical Materialism**

Contributions and defects in Feuerbach. The sources of the dialectical materialism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The materialistic explanation of history and the destruction of religion and of philosophy. Materialistic dialectics as the positive outcome of the history of philosophy. Theory of knowledge: the independent existence of the external world. The idealistic conception. Consequences of the idealistic conception. The relation of being and non-being and self-consciousness. Subjective and objective ideas. The materiality of the external world. Thought and brain.

## **9. The Materialistic Theory of Knowledge**

The infinite variety and the infinite unity of matter and its functions. The relation of thought to reality. The idealistic view. Thought as a special case of the universal interaction of things. The specificity of human sense-organs. The limitations of human sense-organs. Transcending the specificity and limitations of human sense-organs through thought. The criterion of truth. Note the absence of contradiction. Observation and research as the touchstone of truth. Is a complete or absolute knowledge of things possible? Dialectics and the special sciences. Mutual conditioning of dialectics and the special sciences. Are there innate ideas? The natural characteristics or functions of thought.

## **10. Dialectics: I**

Stages in the development of dialectics. Historical materialistic dialectics - Marx and Engels. The Hegelian synthesis of the two ancient stages of dialectics. Bourgeois dialectics. Revival of Hegelian dialectics. Bergson's dialectics. Definition of dialectics. Three sources of dialectics. The three main laws of dialectics. First law: Law of the permeation of opposites, or law of the polar unity of things. The infinite or absolute unity or identity of things. Obstacles to dialectics. The infinite or absolute diversity of the opposition of things. Every proposition that is not without content contains the law of the permeation of opposites. The sources of the first law of dialectics.

## **11. Dialectics: II**

Second law of dialectics: Law of negation. All things are processes or events. Change occurs through opposites or contradictions. Negation indicates the motion or change of things. Negation and affirmation as polar conceptual operations. Emergence of the new through double negation. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Two distortions of the law of the negation of the negation: (1) the opportunistic; (2) the anarchistic. Examples. The relation of the second main law of dialectics to the first. The permeation of opposites as process or succession. Third main law of dialectics: Transformation of quality into quantity and of quantity into quality. The third main law of dialectics as a special case of the first main law.

## **12. Theory of History and Dialectical Materialism: II**

Theory of history and revolutionary practice. The fundamental difference between materialistic and idealistic theory of history. Materialistic theory of history and common sense. The idealistic theory of history explains nothing.

What is the mode of production? The capitalist mode of production. Simple commodity production. Production and distribution. What determines the development of the mode of production? The development of the productivity of labor. Classes.

## **13. Theory of History and Dialectical Materialism: II**

The class struggle. Social division of labor and class structure. Class opposition is something objective. Class opposition in action. The class struggle no invention of Karl Marx. Forms of class struggle. Content of class struggle. Class consciousness, class ideology. True and false class consciousness, class illusions, class deceptions. Class membership and class consciousness. Classes and other social groupings. Revolution and evolution.

## **14. Ancient Chinese Philosophy: I**

Ancient Chinese philosophy from the view-point of dialectical materialism. The ancient Chinese popular and state religion. Why no struggle of ancient Chinese philosophy against religion? Class relations in the period of ancient Chinese philosophy. Lao-tse. Interrelation of social and natural order: "universism". Kung-tse.

## **15. Ancient Chinese Philosophy: II**

Sophists or dialecticians. Chinese philosophy and the basic tendencies of philosophy. Presentiments or elements of dialectics in Lao-tse; in Yih-king. Primitive materialism of Mo'-ti'. Sophists. Ancient Chinese philosophy and the requirements of the Chinese revolution.

## **16. Pragmatism**

The progressive, democratic, and unprejudiced appearance of pragmatism. Characteristics of bourgeois philosophy in Europe after Feuerbach. General character of post-war philosophy. Pragmatism is subjective idealism. Affinity of pragmatism

with empirio-criticism. Evidence from F. C. S. Schiller. Literature on dialectical materialism. Conclusion.

## Preface to the German Edition

The following lectures, under the title of "The Modern World-View," were delivered in Moscow in the spring of 1927 before second-term students of the Sun Yat-Sen University. They were delivered in German, and every paragraph or section was followed by a translation into Chinese. The brevity, of the individual lectures is ascribable to this devious method of presentation, which at times limited a single lecture to three-quarters of an hour and necessarily made them extremely concise.

At the same time, the need for translation demanded the simplest possible style. Moreover, the presentation had to be as elementary as possible because of the great differences in education among my Chinese listeners, differences between those who had been students in Europe and the young workers. Especially in European history and literature was there much that could not be taken for granted - although, of course, one could assume a great deal of knowledge of Chinese history and literature which is not part of the average European education.

Since the course had to be completed within a comparatively short time, a systematic and exhaustive treatment was impossible; it had to be limited to those fundamental theoretic concepts which were most important to the given audience.

The purpose of the lectures was to help the Chinese listeners, as well as possible Chinese readers, towards an *independent orientation* to the principal philosophic world-views which impinged upon them. For this reason the historical form of presentation was chosen. It also accounts for the review of ancient Indian and Chinese philosophy as well as pragmatism. Unfortunately, sufficient source-material for a contemplated treatment of the currents in modern Chinese philosophy was not available.

The lectures were stenographically recorded and only slightly edited, and they remain essentially as given. It was therefore further intended to add to the small number of literary quotations contained in the lectures. Instead, however, marginal notes were placed beside each paragraph or section to help the reader's perspective.<sup>1</sup>

The author hopes that the lectures will also be of use to European readers who wish to be introduced to dialectical materialism. He refers, above all, to young revolutionary workers.

The reader trained in Marxism will notice that a number of themes are treated here either for the first time or in new connections. Some of these are ancient dialectics, ancient Indian and Chinese philosophy, and the development of the inner connections between the main propositions of materialistic dialectics.

I should be pleased if the ideas sketched here inspired further detailed Marxist research.

August Thalheimer



Moscow, June 1927

## Preface to the American Edition

For details about the origin of this book, which reproduces a series of lectures, the reader is referred to the preface of the German edition, reprinted here.

The book has appeared in Russian, Japanese, and Spanish, as well as in German. The original German edition has long been out of print. Owners of copies in Germany have to conceal them carefully from the eyes of the "Gestapo," the government secret police. Consequently the translators had considerable difficulty hunting out an extra German copy.

For American readers the following comments may be in order: The book is meant for readers who have no special philosophic training, but who are connected with the labor movement - that is, it is meant primarily for workers. In virtue of their class position and their class experience much of its content will be clearer to them than to bourgeois intellectuals, who, though they may indeed be practiced in abstract thought, will approach the subject with their peculiar class prejudices, with deep-rooted habits of thought, and with traditional academic concepts.

I have taken pains to present the subject in the simplest possible language and to relate it as much as possible to everyday experience. But let no one therefore be misled into thinking that the subject itself is "simple" or "commonplace". The fruits of more than two thousand years of painstaking and involved intellectual labor are contained in materialistic dialectics - a labor shared by many peoples. The readers may rest assured that it is much easier to present the subject in traditional philosophic language. For students this might have certain superficial advantages. But it would not make the problem itself any easier nor would it help the workers, who constituted the main contingent of my European readers and whom I chiefly wish to address here in America as well.

Usually, when confronted with an introduction to a science, one assumes that the science itself already exists in elaborate systematic form, in formal texts. But this does not apply to materialistic dialectics, and it can be safely said that it will still be some time before there will be a text for materialist dialectics as systematic and complete as Hegel's *Logic* is for idealistic dialectics, or as many texts on formal logic. To make way for such a text a tremendous amount of preliminary labor is necessary, among other things, the critical examination of all materials in the history of philosophy as sources.

Readers who wish to go more deeply into the subject should refer to the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Plekhanoff, Labriola, Franz Mehring, and Lenin, who treat of the problems of philosophy and the history of philosophy. And, if they wish to go further and make independent investigations in the field of materialistic dialectics, they should, on the basis of the groundwork thus laid, make a critical study of the principal works of philosophy and the principal contributions of modern natural science, as well as the Marxist social sciences.

Readers who have neither the opportunities nor the inclination for this sort of study (and these will doubtless be in the majority) are advised that conscious participation in the struggles of our time, which is uncommonly full of sudden crises and sharp contradictions, will provide more than enough material for a deeper understanding of the fundamental concepts and methods of materialistic dialectics. Such participation can make these principles and methods a vital part of oneself, an instrument of thought for daily use – i.e., it can teach one to "think dialectically".

This book is not meant for casual spectators; nor is it meant for those who are or wish to be academic philosophers. It is intended primarily as a tool for practical and conscious participants in the class struggle of today

Perhaps it may also be of some service to natural scientists who wish to become acquainted with unbiased methods of thought which depart from tradition but which are closely related to the "instinctive" materialism of natural-science practice.

August Thalheimer  
Paris, December, 1935

## 1 - Religion I

Our topic is the "modern world-view". Immediately this question arises: Is there a uniform modern world-view accepted by everyone, in the sense that there is a uniform physics or chemistry? Physics and chemistry are unquestionably uniform systems which one can expound in the same way all over the world. Of course, in these sciences, too, there are moot questions, but these moot questions remain within the bounds of the science. They only arise upon a common basis of accepted scientific achievement. And they are settled by methods which are accepted by all concerned - that is, by experiments. This is true of such problems as arise in physics, those, for example, in relation to the theory of relativity. Thus there is the important and very much discussed question whether there is an ether, a material medium of light. Now in physics we answer such questions by experiments, and this problem was actually tackled by a series of experiments by famous physicists, particularly by the American physicist, Michelson. Then there are a whole series of other problems which arise in this connection, such as the question of apparent irregularities in the orbit of the planet Mercury, the question of the path of a ray of light which passes close to the sun, etc. For all these questions in physics there is a uniform method of research, a uniform solution. The same is true of problems in chemistry. Recently, for example, the question arose whether it was possible to change lead or quicksilver into gold. Several investigators maintained that it could be done, but it was demonstrated through more exact experiments that *for the present* it cannot be done. Or other problems of chemistry: the problem of the composition of the ultimate chemical elements—atoms. Here too experiment has led to further disclosures and to uniform solutions. Atoms have been finally analyzed into smaller elements. Therefore, all things considered, we can say that there are a number of sciences which are uniform, which one can uniformly expound, and which are determined by uniform methods.

The case is quite different with questions of world-view. There is no uniform, universally accepted, modern world-view - as there is a uniform physics or a uniform chemistry or botany. There are, as we know, wholly opposed world-views which wage violent war on each other, which do not accept each other's methods. What is true for one philosophy is false for the others, what is false for one is true for the others. For instance, I am a Communist and as a Communist represent a very definite viewpoint, namely, historical or dialectical materialism. But this world-view co-exists with others opposing it which also call themselves "modern" and which wage violent war on dialectical materialism, while at the same time dialectical materialism wages violent war on them. Moreover, there is a further consideration: You see on the one hand that this theory of historical materialism is uniform. Wherever it is presented, it is presented in the same manner. When a dialectical materialist deals with certain questions, he treats them in the same way as another dialectical materialist; one more skillfully, the other less skillfully; one with more, the other with less knowledge of the facts. But the method is one and same.

But consider on the other hand the world-views which stand opposed to historical materialism. Here are a whole host of different viewpoints on nature and on history.

To begin with, there are a great number of world-views which we call religion. Religion is a definite world-view. As you know, there is not one but a great number of religions each of which maintains that it alone is right and that all others are wrong, and that letter-spacing: it alone points out to men the right path in life and the way to a happy life after death, that it alone delivers men from all evil and suffering. Besides these different religions there are various other world-views of a philosophical nature. Such conceptions are well-nigh as numerous as professors of philosophy. There are a whole host of schools of philosophy in America and Europe, and, depending upon where you go, you will be told that one or another is *the* philosophy. Here the case is the same as with religions: each maintains that it alone is right and that all the others are wrong. Such world-views occur in great number not only in America and Europe; as you know, there are also in China a whole host of philosophic systems which war with each other, which compete with each other for your attention. The question therefore arises: How shall we correctly orient ourselves in this difficult situation? How shall we solve the problem of describing the modern world-view without causing a hullabaloo in our minds?

Since I accept a definite modern world-view, dialectical materialism, the impression might be received that this will be a one-sided report. Perhaps someone might propose that we seek to get a cross-section of all the different viewpoints and possibly find therein what is common to all and present it as "the modern world-view". But these viewpoints so contradict each other, they set out from such different premises and employ methods so different that if I contrived to put them all together into one lump and then pared away the contradictions there would be nothing left. The problem becomes all the more difficult since you who read these lectures are not possessed of blank minds. Rather, each one of you already holds to this or that world-view more or less clearly, either as a result of inculcated religious attitudes or as a result of other environmental influences - language, lectures, books, etc. Thus I cannot assume that you will receive what I shall say about modern world-views without prejudice. Consequently, I shall approach the problem in the following manner: I shall present dialectical materialism as the most advanced modern world-view, yet not simply as something ready-made, but in *its historical setting*, in its development. I shall therefore try to show how and from what sources historical materialism came into being. Secondly, from the standpoint of historical materialism, I shall try, together with you, to come to an understanding of the most important and influential world-views in Europe, America and China which co-exist with historical materialism, so that we may confute or even accept them, supplement or improve them. I choose this type of presentation to help you arrive at an independent orientation, and to help you find your way among the various intellectual currents which will sooner or later confront you. I consider best the method used by the famous German philosopher, Kant. He used to say to his listeners: I do not want to teach you philosophy - that is, a hard and fast doctrine - but I wish to teach you how man philosophizes, how man orients himself in relation to nature and history. It is the same with philosophy as with a craft, shoemaking, let us say. If I discuss shoemaking, it will be of little value if I do not show how the thing is practically handled. Likewise, you will gain little if I speak at great length on dialectical materialism but fail to point

out how man applies this world-view to the fundamental problems of social theory, history, natural science, epistemology, etc., so that he may consistently elaborate and solve them.

Therefore, in my presentation of historical or dialectical materialism I shall apply the method of historical materialism itself. Through this procedure you will become acquainted with two special characteristics of dialectical materialism at the same time: I present dialectical materialism itself as something which comes into being, that is, as something historical. It is a peculiar quality of historical materialism that it views all things in both natural and human worlds not as completed, not as finished once and for all, but as emerging, continually changing, and ultimately disappearing. And secondly, when I show you how historical materialism emerged from a world-view or from various world-views which were directly opposed to it, you will see here a special kind of dialectical materialism: you will perceive that development comes about through contradictions, that a thing always develops out of its opposite. This proposition demands detailed clarification and foundation, which it will receive later. What obtains for all things also obtains for historical materialism itself, and this we shall have to show. When we consider at closer range the different world-views which today stand opposed to each other, we can distinguish beneath apparent confusion very definite groupings, very definite categories. When we examine them from this point of view, we find two *fundamental tendencies*. These two tendencies of the modern world-view are in close correspondence with the underlying class division which is characteristic of modern capitalistic society. Just as the working class and the bourgeoisie stand opposed to each other, so we see that the modern world-views are grouped in accordance with these two fundamental tendencies. One tendency is the proletarian. To it belongs historical or dialectical materialism, otherwise known as Marxism. The other is the bourgeois tendency, which is represented by the different forms of the so-called idealistic world-view. These two fundamental tendencies are as definitive of the world-views as difference between the two classes is definitive of social life and economics. In addition, there is still a third tendency, which stands apparently between the two, between the proletarian and the bourgeois, and which fancies itself as standing *above* the other two tendencies, but which is really only a special form of the bourgeois outlook. This type of world-view corresponds to that class which stands between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, namely, the petty bourgeoisie. Just as the petty bourgeoisie stands socially between proletariat and bourgeoisie, so there is a series of world-views which stand between the materialist tendency of the proletariat and the idealist tendency of the bourgeoisie. But just as the petty bourgeoisie cannot in actuality assume a neutral, intermediate position between proletariat and bourgeoisie, but must decide in favor of one or the other class, and must form an alliance with one or with the other, so the world-views of the petty bourgeoisie cannot stand above or between materialism and idealism. All of these viewpoints are actually varieties of the idealistic or bourgeois tendency.

In what follows I shall try to present these fundamental tendencies in their historical development. Accordingly, we need not treat them in very great detail, listing many

names, dates, etc.; but we need only make the basic concepts as clear and distinct as possible. From the standpoint of China, only the great lines of European cultural history are of importance. I want to tell you briefly what I shall mainly deal with as regards the prehistory and later development of historical materialism, and the views opposed to it. Of course, dialectical materialism itself will be the focal point. First, I shall deal with the question of religion as the oldest and fundamental conception, from which all the others have emerged. Then I shall deal with the most important world-views as they were developed in antiquity, in ancient Greece, in India, and in China - again not in detail, but only in broad and general outline. Then I shall enter upon a treatment of French materialism, that is, that world-view which prepared the way for the greatest and most significant bourgeois revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. I shall treat French materialism separately because of its essential contribution to the development of historical materialism. Then I shall present the most important stages in the development of classical bourgeois philosophy in Germany: Hegel and Feuerbach. I single out these two because, like the French materialists, they made a surpassing contribution to the building of the modern dialectical viewpoint. Finally, when we have viewed the history of dialectical materialism in its principal phases, we shall seek to orient ourselves in relation to the most important intellectual currents of the present day in America, in Europe, and in China.

We may now turn immediately to our first topic, a consideration of religions. We begin with religion because religion, as you know, is the oldest of all world-views. I shall not deal with the different forms of religion in different countries and ages. That would have no value for us. Rather, I am going to deal only with that which is universal and fundamental in religion. I shall take up the question in what fundamental way it differs from the modern world-view, how religion emerges, what material bases it has, how religion becomes separated from science and finally disintegrates, and what particular stand Communism takes on the question of religion.

The first question: What distinguishes religion from the modern, scientific dialectical-materialistic world-view? What is the peculiar, essential characteristic of religion? The essential characteristic of religion I can designate thus: Religion is the product of fantasy, of the imagination, as opposed to the modern world-view which is a product of science. Or it may also be contrasted thus: Religion is rooted in belief, science in knowledge. But it is not true that religion, as opposed to science, is solely a product of free fantasy, that it comes into being without previous experience. The case is just the same with religious fantasy as it is with every other fantasy. Every fantasy, all poetry, has a distinct empirical basis which is elaborated in a fantastic way. Science likewise has its empirical basis, but it elaborates it in a manner diametrically opposite to religion; not through fantasy, but through logic, through research and through reason.

In order to present this contrast as simply as possible, I want to give you an example of how one and the same event is treated by religion and by science. Let us take a phenomenon like rain. Rain is a phenomenon of extraordinary importance to the

material life of mankind. Among peoples whose principal occupation is agriculture the fate of the population is in large measure dependent upon the frequency, quantity, and local distribution of rain. But rain is a phenomenon which lies outside man's control. Man cannot cause it to come and go as he pleases. What, then, does religion do? What do primitive peoples do? They represent the natural phenomenon of rain as the product of a fantastic being, of a god of rain. Such rain-gods are found among primitive folk in highly varying forms. The problem then is to influence these lords of rain by those methods known through experience to exert an influence on mighty beings. These are gifts (sacrifices), supplications (prayers), threats or symbolic acts which are supposed to represent real acts (ceremonies). Among some peoples we find specialists for this purpose, so-called rain-makers, who believe that they can conjure up rain through ceremonies, incantations, etc.

Science views rain quite differently. It considers it not as the product of a god, spirit, or demon, but as the product of natural causes, of given natural forces. It seeks the causes of rain not in the arbitrary will of fantastic beings which are supposed to be hidden behind the phenomenon, but in the phenomenon itself and in its relation to the general organization of nature. Thus there is a special science, meteorology, which deals with rain, observes its manifestations, and arranges these observations with special reference to the question: What is the cause and what is the effect? Under what conditions does rain fail to appear, in what regions does it appear, etc.? We are not yet so far advanced in the science that we can always predict exactly the occurrence of rain, nor can we produce it at will. Thus an Australian rain-magician is apparently much farther advanced than a modern student of meteorology, who predicts rain more or less exactly, but cannot produce it. You see here the fundamental contrast between the method of religion and that of science. A second, very well-known example: the remarkable phenomenon of thunder, on which everyone reflects. The religious person conceives that there is a god of thunder who travels over the clouds in a chariot or who brings forth the tumult with an instrument. He has various magical means by which he believes he can make thunder.

Science, as we know, treats thunder very differently, namely, as a noise which is bound up with the occurrence of an electric discharge, lightning. We are not yet so far advanced that we can actually bring forth thunder and lightning on a large scale. But on a small scale, in the laboratory, we can already produce events identical with thunder and lightning.

To sum up what we have learned from these examples: the peculiar characteristic of religion is that it fantastically elaborates a certain cycle of experiences, be they in nature or in history, and in such fashion that gods, spirits or demons are represented as the producers, lords or masters of natural phenomena. In the most developed forms of religion there are not many spirits, gods or demons, but only one god who is the supreme ruler of nature, a fantastic being who is supposed to sit above and beyond the world, whose nature can be recognized as the projection of man himself, whose capacities are fantastically elevated, and who has these capacities without a body appertaining. Perhaps we should not say that there is one god, but rather that



there is a ruling family: the father, the son, and the holy ghost, who together rule the world. From the elementary form which this assumes with the Australian Negro to the form which it takes in the Christian religion there is a long chain of development, but in fundamental principle it is the same throughout. Today under modern capitalism there are, to be sure, extraordinarily refined forms in which the religious idea is far removed from the primitive conception of rain-god held by the Australian Negro. If we probe deeply, however, we discover that these very refined conceptions hark back to the mystical beings of primitive people, who arbitrarily control events.

Quite different is the method of science. What does science do? It observes and collects facts; it arranges them in groups, classes, etc.; it analyzes them, seeks rules as to how the consequences derive from the precedent facts, how concomitants mutually affect each other, how the facts occurred. It investigates - and this is very important - how social forms come into being and how they change; and moreover, on the basis of natural science it builds technology, and on the basis of social science, politics. Thus, in accordance with known laws, it places the forces of nature at the service of human ends, at the service of the establishment of use-values, or social institutions. In this respect religion, no matter what name it may bear, fundamentally differs from modern science, from the modern world-view.

I proceed now to my next topic, namely, to the question: "What are the main sources of religious conceptions?" We can distinguish two main sources from which religious conceptions flow. The first source is the relation of man to nature - his dependence, in fact, upon nature and his desire to master in fantasy the forces of nature which he cannot master in reality, by offering sacrifices, praying, performing ceremonies, etc. The second and no less important source from which religious conceptions and religious fantasies flow are the relations of individual men to society; that is to say, the totality of social relations. Now, the basis of social relations in turn is the mode of production, i.e. the relationships into which men enter with each other while producing, with certain instruments, useful things for the maintenance of life; or the social way in which they produce their material livelihood.

We shall now consider these two sources of religion, first of all in the most primitive social forms. As for dependence upon nature: it is clear that the less developed men are - technically and economically - so much more dependent are they upon nature, and they are more inclined to view all natural phenomena through the eyes of religious fantasy. If you consider primitive man, armed with only the most elementary implements of stone, bone, or wood, scarcely able to sustain life by hunting, fishing, etc., it is clear that from such relations of dependence upon nature the most varied religious ideas must develop. Or take the primitive farmer: he is extremely dependent upon the forces of nature, on the sun, the wind, the rain, on the river which flows past his land. As long as man is unable to supervise all these relations, to foresee them, and conquer them technically to a certain degree, he will seek mastery over these things through religious ideas. In this connection I want to remind you of the distinctive characteristics of the ancient religion of China, which naturally is a religion of farmers; in it the forces of nature which are most important for the farmer, such as

rain, the heavens, the stars, etc., play a decisive role in the religious idea. If you consider the different social forms and their religions you will find that they always stand in exceedingly close connection with the way in which such a society stands in relation to nature. I do not wish to go into any further detail on this question, but simply to indicate the general aspect of the matter.

The second source from which the religious idea flows is the social relations of men with each other. These social relations show that the individual man in society is dependent upon the whole, that over against him a higher power is placed. In early times the society as a whole exercised a very powerful influence upon the individual, and the subordination of the individual to the family and to the tribe was extraordinarily great. For the individual, morals, laws, customs, usages and precepts of universal scope had the force of imperative commands. But their meaning and purpose were not generally, not even in the majority of instances, clear to the individual or understood by him. Conformity was instinctive, automatic. Primitive society was itself still a kind of natural organism. Its codes, precepts, customs, etc., affected individuals just like the uncomprehended forces of nature. Indeed, primitive social organizations in general reacted to their own regulations as they did to these immutable forces of nature. And from this characteristic of social organization there naturally arose the religious idea as its *support* and *sanction*. For example: everywhere in the South Seas we have the so-called tabu-commandments, that is, commandments which declare that such and such groups of men must not hunt and eat such and such animals at certain times, or not collect and eat certain plants. Such commandments once had a distinct significance. They were equivalent to the regulation of production; they effected a kind of division of labor and a kind of regulation of consumption. But these commandments later became obscure, became automatic. From them certain religious commandments developed to the effect that such and such spirits, demons, etc., had issued such and such commandments and would see to their observance by threat of punishment.

Still another example that comes very close to home: one of the oldest, perhaps the oldest religious idea is that of reverence for the souls of the dead, the spirits of the ancestors. Even in the most primitive religious ideas this plays a very important role. The spirits of the ancestors cannot be explained as the personification of a natural phenomenon, but they can easily be explained in terms of social relations. The souls of the dead, which are revered by their descendants, preserve the continuity, in the imagination of course, between ancestors and descendants. They assure the continuous recognition of the traditional social order. The ancestral spirit of the family or the tribe personifies its order. Especially potent sources of religious ideas develop when class conflicts come to the fore, for then religious ideas become a means through which the ruling class holds the exploited and oppressed class in obedience and subjection. Moreover, as soon as class conflicts arise in the course of the social division of labor, there emerges a distinct class or caste which specializes in religious matters, namely, the priests. This class is more or less freed from direct productive labor and lives upon the surplus product of the others. For this priestly caste religious ideas become a means by which to support and preserve their

privileged status in society. We must not think of this matter as if it were sheer imposture. On the contrary, this class or caste, like their ideas, grew out of social and natural relations. Hence they became just as widely accepted by the mass of people as by the priests. They constituted a world-view adapted to primitive relationships and to primitive methods of thought. As a dialectical materialist one must recognize that for a certain limited period this priesthood played a progressive role. In a time when men had to exert themselves to the utmost to produce even the barest essentials of life, the priests represented a social stratum which did not directly participate in labor and, therefore, could occupy themselves with a number of socially important problems for which this very freedom from directly productive labor was prerequisite. Thus it was the priests who first developed the elements of science. The beginnings of astronomy can be traced back to the Egyptian and Babylonian priests; the first elements of geometry were discovered by priests; they discovered how to measure land; they developed the ground-plan for constructing temples; they predicted the rise and fall of the waters of the Nile, etc. The priestly caste developed the seeds which, in the form of philosophy and natural science, finally put an end to all priests and all religion.

## 2 - Religion II

In the last chapter we dealt with the nature and sources of religion, and subsequently with the roots of religion in early society. We came to the conclusion that even in primitive society there existed two basic roots of the religious viewpoint: one, the dependence of society upon nature; the other, social life itself. Now we shall go further, and I shall try to point out the connection between the development of religion on the one hand and the development of the mode of production and the form of society on the other. I cannot, of course, go into great detail on this question. Its history is indeed very interesting and very full, but I can give only the very general fundamentals.

I should like first of all to point out the extremely close relation in ancient times between the development of ideas concerning the gods and the development of social forms, social organization. Let us take a very wide-spread phenomenon, such as the community of the various local and tribal gods. Just as individual families in primitive times are joined to tribes and the individual tribes are themselves joined to coups of tribes and peoples, so also we see that the primitive village and familial gods are joined to the tribal gods, from whose number is chosen the highest god or a given tribe. When the different tribes are then joined into a nation, into a people, a national god emerges. Finally, when we get a still greater entity, an empire, which consists of different nations, we find that above the level of the national gods an imperial god is created. This is especially evident in ancient China, where the organization of gods, demons, spirits, etc., corresponds exactly to the social organization. First we have the family and clan spirits, the ancestors. In a wider sphere we have the village and local spirits or deities. Then we have the deities of cities and of provinces. Finally, as China developed from various small feudal states into a centralized monarchy we likewise get a centralization of gods. "Heaven" emerges as the highest divine power, and the high priest of heaven is, of course, the emperor. Correspondingly in the western world, in the Roman empire, we see how Christianity develops as a world religion out of the primitive tribal and national religions. The starting point for the Christian world religion was the national religion of a small nation of Palestine, the Jews. The Jewish national god expanded into a world god. This Jewish national god was highly suited to be the starting point for an international world god of ancient times since he was the god of an oppressed national people, and the oppressed classes and peoples of the Roman empire naturally became the first bearers of this new world religion.

A few more words concerning Christianity and its introduction. Not only is the connection of Christianity with the structure of society manifested in the character of god as the world god, but the connection is evident in still another very significant respect. Christianity first appeared as the religion of *slaves*. The slaves, as the most harshly exploited and oppressed class of the population, had the greatest need for deliverance. The slaves were brought to Rome from all over the world. The common oppression and the common life they shared effaced their national differences. They were predisposed to an international religion of deliverance, to a world religion. One may ask why this religious need became especially marked among the slaves and why

they did not become materialists or atheists. In order to understand this, we must realize that a class can only shake off religion completely when it has the power and the capacity to construct a new world, a higher economic and social order, when, in short, it can deliver itself. This was not the case among the slaves of antiquity. From slavery there lies no direct path to a higher economic and social order. Slavery led to the decline of the ancient world, the world of Greek and Roman culture. A new development did not set in until the German tribes invaded the Roman empire, destroyed the old social order and culture, and built up feudalism. The slave system, as such, offers no historical way out.

Thus the ideology of the slaves rebelling against their destiny was bound to become a religion, Christianity. The emancipation was bound to assume a fantastic form, an empire ruled by a world savior with a communistic consumption-economy. This empire was first located in this world, then in the next, in "heaven". I should like to add that among modern slaves there exists, naturally and necessarily, an especially strong Christian religious feeling, for example, in the cotton plantations of the southern states of the United States. This is a reaction against the terrible oppression which they suffered, from which they saw no way out through their own powers.

The same connection between the social order and religious ideas we see again in the feudal Middle Ages. The religion of the feudal Middle Ages is only apparently the same as the religion of declining antiquity. But actually Christianity changed in the Middle Ages just as social relations changed. In place of the Roman world empire there appears in the Middle Ages a system of feudal states. The forerunners of modern European national states are developed. Local economic ties become closer. We are immediately struck by the fact that, whereas Christianity expressly recognized only one divinity in the form of three beings, the medieval picture becomes much more complicated and heavenly beings are arranged like feudal society itself. In the Middle Ages we have an organization of divinities which corresponds exactly to the organization of ruling classes on earth. The organization of the feudal order is about as follows: There is first the single feudal landholder, who is the vassal of an earl or a duke. These dukes are further organized under a sovereign. Over the sovereign princes, dukes, kings or whatever they may be called, is a supreme ruler, the emperor. The gods and saints in the Middle Ages are organized in the same way. First we have the village with its village saints; then the individual provinces with their special saints; and individual nations, Germany, France, England, with their national saints. The organization extends to heaven itself. There we have the angels in various ranks, the archangels and the holy trinity constituting the all-highest. We have exactly the same feudal organization in hell, in the underworld. This feudal conception of Christianity has been portrayed by a great poet of the European Middle Ages, the Italian poet Dante, who lived in the thirteenth century. He portrayed the hierarchy of heaven and of hell in classic fashion. We further see that in the feudal Middle Ages even the most primitive religious ideas have not died out. Ideas dating from pagan times, about ghosts, dwarfs and giants, still persist. All these different demons, spirits, etc., populate the world of Christianity. They too have their roots in the vital relations of medieval society.

Now to turn to the sources and role of religion in modern capitalistic society. One might at first believe that religion today no longer has any basis in capitalistic society, since this society's relation to nature is entirely different from that of all previous societies. Whereas primitive man found himself in extreme dependence upon nature, and whereas such was still the case to a great degree even in the Middle Ages, in modern capitalistic society we have a technology and natural science which enable man to master nature and which contain the possibility of immeasurably extending this mastery. No modern natural scientist believes in magic formulas. The technologist who wants to produce some machine will not go about it like an Australian magician or a Siberian Shaman, but he will attend to the known qualities and behavior of his material and then produce a machine accordingly. It thus seems strange that under such conditions religious ideas can still be present in modern capitalistic society. But the source of these ideas in modern capitalistic society is not nature; it is society itself. The significant fact here is that the ruling class knows well enough the methods of mastering nature, but knows no methods of planfully mastering society. As you know from our reading in political economy, the capitalist social order is throughout characterized by the fact that it does not produce planfully *as a whole*, but that in it blind anarchy reigns. Capitalistic society does not control its own economic and social life; rather, every individual and society as a whole is controlled by that life. Thus capitalist society copes with its own economy not otherwise than the Australian savage copes with lightning, thunder or rain. This characteristic of capitalist society is brought into sharpest relief in times of economic crises, in times of war and revolution. In an economic crisis hundreds of thousands of livelihoods are extinguished without the individual being able to defend himself against it, without his being able to escape this fate. Capitalist economy runs its course from depression to extreme prosperity, from prosperity to crisis, without being able to influence this development, without being able to foresee the occurrence of the crisis, without being able to avert it. Ever more extensive become these catastrophes which sweep over capitalist society in times of war, when millions of men are killed, when millions in goods are destroyed - and capitalist society is unable to do anything about it. No one wants millions of men to be killed, no one wants millions in goods to be destroyed, and yet capitalist society is powerless to protect itself against this. Indeed, it is capitalist competition itself which leads to such crises, and to the solution of these crises through wars and through revolutions.

These facts completely explain why religious ideas have not expired even in modern capitalist society, why they have social roots here, and also why they continue to exist and why they will continue to exist as long as this social base exists. It is significant that religious currents in their cruder or more refined forms surge up most strongly in the ruling class in times of such crises, wars, or revolutions. You all know - or perhaps you do not, but it is a fact - that a new religious movement sprang up among the European bourgeoisie during the World War. New religions currents also appeared in conjunction with the revolutions which marked the close of the World War. We have an extraordinarily strong revival and spread of spiritualism or occultism that calls for belief in spirits or ghosts. This is a belief which is no different from the belief of the Bushmen. And besides these crude forms of religion there are refined

forms which are not recognizable at first glance; forms which are more or less related to the primitive beliefs of early man that the souls of the dead exist independently of their bodies and that they can influence human life. In such times as the present when the development of the European bourgeoisie is on the downward path, when they perceive opposed to them the proletarian revolution, religion becomes for them too a means of consolation and invigoration, a prop on which they support themselves when the ground begins to slip from under their feet.

There have, however, been times when the bourgeoisie fought against religion. These were times when the Church formed a part of those classes against which the bourgeoisie had to organize their revolution, when the Church was bound together with feudalism and with absolute monarchy. At such periods, although they were only very brief, the bourgeoisie became anti-religious and called upon the people to combat religion and the church. But as soon as the bourgeoisie had conquered power with the help of the people and was seated in authority, it always reversed its stand, for it discovered that religion was also an excellent support for its political and economic authority. We shall speak later of the period when the bourgeoisie prepared its revolution and waged war on the church and religion. By and large, however, such periods were of short duration. As soon as they found it to their interests to keep the great masses in a state of oppression, they transformed religion into a means of authority, a spiritual means of oppression against the great mass of the people.

I shall now turn to the role which religion plays in another great class in modern society, namely, the farmers. In modern society, a farmer, and particularly the small farmer, is distinguished by a very special social and economic position, and he has a special relation to nature. The small farmer is not in possession of modern techniques as is the great capitalist entrepreneur. He works with relatively primitive, simple tools, since his enterprise is not great enough for the full employment of modern science and technology. Accordingly, the farmer is found in much greater dependence upon natural events than is the capitalist entrepreneur. The farmer is dependent upon rain and sunshine, on the condition of the soil, and on incalculable natural events which he cannot master, can only slightly influence, and which confront him as a superior force. Thus, we see in the case of the small farmer that religion has its roots in his relation to nature. But also in his social relations, in his class position. The farmer, in so far as he does not carry on a simple nature economy, is a producer of commodities. He raises grain and cattle and offers them as commodities on the market. What becomes of this grain and cattle and how his income is determined depends on the market. For the individual farmer the market determines whether he has worked for nothing, whether he receives the full value of his labor or only a part. It is not the farmer himself who determines the price, but ultimately his destiny is dependent upon this economic force, upon these market relationships. Let us take a farmer who grows rice in China. When he is about to sell the rice, the price does not simply depend on the amount of the labor which he has put in while producing it. It depends on the market prices which are determined on the exchanges in London or New York, and all too often the farmer finds himself in a

situation where he is destroyed through laws of the market which he does not know, or which, even when he does know them, he can neither control nor influence. Another example: there are hundreds of thousands or millions of farmers in India who produce the blue dye material, indigo. After chemistry succeeded in producing artificial indigo, all of this production, and, therefore, untold numbers of farm households, were destroyed. Such being the position of the farmer, with his extraordinarily close dependence on natural events on the one hand, and his dependence on the capitalist market, on the laws of capitalist society, on the other, it is clear that here again we are confronted with quite obvious sources of religious ideas.

That class of modern society which because of its position is most predisposed to break with religious ideas is the modern working class, the proletariat. The basis for this is clear: the working class, by virtue of its position, is the most revolutionary class in modern society. As such it sees that religious ideas are the means by which it is consoled by the ruling class for its poverty on earth through promises of joy in heaven. The working class also sees that the bourgeoisie itself is not content with heavenly goods, but strives to snap up as many earthly goods as possible. It therefore sees that its promises are not sincere. In addition, Christianity, as the erstwhile religion of slaves, also preaches the sentiment of resignation. This is a valuable aspect of Christianity for the ruling class, but an attitude which every worker must repudiate. This also explains why the European bourgeoisie is so extraordinarily intent upon exporting the religion of contentment to the colonial countries - to India, China, Africa, etc. It is a situation convenient and agreeable to English imperialism when the missionary preaches to the Chinese that he should place his hope in heaven, that he should be content and submissive, whereas the capitalist may go to church on Sunday, but on weekdays strives to appropriate China's earthly goods. This explains why, wherever European capitalists penetrate, they send, along with whiskey, the Bible and the missionary. There are other motives too which impel the modern worker to throw religion overboard, to construct for himself a modern world-view. The modern worker does not have the same relation to nature as the farmer. The worker is in contact with the machine. He understands technology. It does not occur to him to give supernatural meanings to natural occurrences. By virtue of his place in the labor-process the worker has a natural and not a fantastic attitude toward natural events. In accordance with its position in the social hierarchy, the proletariat is the one class which has insight into the nature of capitalist economy. It is the historical task of this class to overthrow this society which is abandoned to the mercy of blind chance, and to replace it with a socialist society in which man systematically molds not only nature, but economic life as well. As a result of his position the modern worker can most easily and fully loosen the grip of the fantastic ideas of religions. Thus today in all modern capitalist countries we see that it is actually only the working class which makes a complete break with religious ideas. Of course, there are still workers who are religious. It would be false to deny this, but this is in the last analysis due to the fact that the working class is subjected to the stultifying influence of the church and bourgeois education. And only through its own study and observation can it free itself from this influence. Under capitalist



relations it will always be only a minority of the working class which will be able to achieve this complete intellectual freedom. Not until capitalist authority has been overthrown are the conditions created for the complete uprooting of religion in the working class.

### 3 - Greek Materialism

In the last chapter we considered how religion endured in capitalist society and especially how the economic and social role of the various classes determined their relation to religion. I shall now turn to a brief description of the different points of view which one can take towards religion. There are two fundamentally different positions. One is the position of rationalism. It is characteristic of this position to consider religion simply as something which is irrational and which sufficient knowledge will erase from the mind. The term "rationalists" is applied here because the French philosophers of the eighteenth century took; the point of view of "reason" in their struggle against religion and the church; that is, the point of view that religion is simply something irrational, an error, which can and will be eradicated through knowledge. The characteristic of this position is that it is *unhistorical*. It does not comprehend religion as something which has emerged from historical forces and which must be destroyed by still other historical forces. I cite this position especially because we still find it very prevalent even today, and particularly among bourgeois revolutionaries or progressives. This position, though appearing to be very radical, is nevertheless not very effective in the struggle against religion.

The second position on religion is the position which accepts Marxist science, the position of *dialectical materialism*. This point of view differs from rationalism in that it looks upon religion as an historical phenomenon, as a phenomenon which has its roots in the material conditions of society, in its mode of production, and which, at a certain period, in fact, played a progressive role in the relation of society to nature and in the building of society itself. This conception opposes religion on the ground that it has now become a hindrance to further social development, though it still has material roots in capitalist society. The practical inference from this position is that it is not sufficient simply to destroy religion through knowledge, but that we must lay hold of the material roots of religion, of the mode of production, in order to overcome it completely. Such an attack produces a twofold change: First, the replacement of the contemporary class structure by classless socialist society. This destroys the most fertile source of religion, namely, the inability of capitalist society to control its own destiny. And second, with the transition to the socialist mode of production, the relation of society and of individuals to nature is also changed. Socialist, classless society bases itself, as far as its technology is concerned, upon the achievements bequeathed by capitalism, and develops them to their greatest efficiency. It is apparent that these two bases of religious fantasy cannot be destroyed through knowledge alone, but in the last analysis only through complete social revolution. This position does not preclude the necessity for dissemination of anti-religious information, for this spreading of information is itself part of the preparation for revolution. But it teaches how to estimate properly the effect of propaganda, and how to orient it correctly in the total labor of revolutionary preparation; that is, as a part which is subservient to the whole of the political and economic struggle. Hence this conception also teaches how to carry on the work of propaganda against religion most expediently and effectively.

Now I wish to speak of the theoretical and practical attitude of the Communist Party toward religion. The Party, as you know, is a *voluntary* organization of men who fundamentally hold to the same viewpoint. The fundamental viewpoint of Communism is that of dialectical materialism. It therefore follows that in the Communist Party itself every member is required to have freed or to be freeing himself of religious ideas and to assume the position of dialectical materialism. Anyone who is still attached to religious ideas and continues to hold to them cannot, therefore, in the nature of the case, be a member of the Communist Party. You further know that everyone who wants to become a member of the Communist Party in Russia has to go through preliminary schooling during which the viewpoint is explained. It also follows from this that the Party as such carries on anti-religious propaganda. The Party also works through the medium of the school to eradicate religious superstitions from the minds of the younger generation, or to prevent them from arising.

As regards the place of religion in the Soviet Union in general it is quite different from what it is in the Communist Party itself. The Communist Party is a voluntary association of the like-minded. The Soviet Union is an association of men of various dispositions. In the Soviet Union everybody has the right to hold and practice whatever religious ideas he pleases. There is only this difference from most, but not all, of the bourgeois States: that anyone who holds definite religious ideas and wishes to create organizations to serve these ideas must pay for them out of his own pocket. The soviet State assumes a wholly neutral position in regard to all church-going communities. They must support themselves, maintain their parishes, their priests, etc. And they must fulfill still another condition. This stipulates that religious communities carry on no counter-revolutionary agitation against the Soviet State. As you know, it often happens that priests are summoned before revolutionary tribunals and punished. This never occurs because of their religious ideas, propaganda, etc., but because of their counter-revolutionary activity. On condition that the religious community maintains itself and that it does not carry on propaganda against the Soviet State - under these reasonable conditions every religious society in Soviet Russia has free rein. The most important means employed in the Soviet Union to eradicate religious superstitions is anti-religious propaganda, and education in the building of socialism. Only complete material freedom, not merely legal freedom such as already exists in many bourgeois states, can give the full intellectual freedom which renders them competent to free themselves from religious ideas. And, furthermore, not until this material freedom is won, does the great mass of people have the necessary leisure, the necessary free time to pursue science and art.

It may be asked: What takes the place of religion after it is destroyed? To this the best answer is an aphorism of the poet Goethe, who said: "He who has art and science, has religion; he who has neither art nor science, ought to have religion," i.e., such a person needs religion. What a man like Goethe claimed only for a small group of highly cultured people but would deny to the great masses will apply to all. In bourgeois society *some* could become intellectually free; in a fully developed socialist society all can become free. This matter we must also view as dialectical materialists.

From our general survey we have seen that while today it is a hindrance to social development that only a small number of the privileged have the material opportunity to become free, formerly, due to the underdeveloped state of the forces of production, it was a necessary prerequisite for the creation of conditions which now make the material and intellectual emancipation of the broad mass of the people possible. The emancipation of a minority from immediate productive work - of certain classes, castes, or ranks - was prerequisite to for the development of natural science and technology, which, as soon as the necessary *social* conditions are created, provide the material possibility for the free cultural development of all. In this connection, I want to point out to you what is meant by historical dialectics. You have already met the term several times. From this instance we see that it means that a phenomenon which is necessary under certain conditions and signifies progress, under changed historical conditions straightway changes to its opposite and becomes a hindrance to further development. In the role of religion in different historical periods we see the elucidation of the universal law of historical development, namely, development through opposites or contradictions. We shall further see that this law of development through contradictions is valid not only for historical motion, but that it is a law of *all* motion.

The struggles from which the modern world-view has emerged, have gone on for over two thousand years. It did not appear overnight. Along the path of these struggles lies the development of philosophy and modern natural science. Dialectical materialism is the last and highest step in this development, the end-result of the struggles which have raged since the earliest historical time. The point of departure for the modern world-view is ancient Greece. Here is the cradle of philosophy and natural science. Here were laid the foundations of the modern world-view. Therefore I shall begin with Greece. I shall also touch briefly upon India, to deal with the struggle against religion, and finally I shall deal with China.

First of all, a few words about the *universal* material conditions for the development of philosophy and science and for the disintegration of the popular religion in ancient times, in ancient Greece, in India, and in China. When I come to speak of Greece, India, and China, I shall become specific and describe the peculiar conditions leading to the destruction of the old religions in each of the countries mentioned. Of the universal conditions the first in importance is the advance in the development of the productive capacity, in the productiveness of the economy, in the mastery of nature. The advances from the primitive communistic stage are distinctly connected with the development of private property and a commodity economy. Most crucial for these advances is the development of agriculture. After this, the establishment of the first form of capital, merchant capital or business capital and money capital, plays an important role.

The second and closely related condition is this: that, with the development of a commodity economy in which merchant capital and money capital grow up alongside of the priestly class and the landowners, a new class of people appears who enjoy free time, who have leisure to develop themselves and to dedicate themselves to art and science. One can say quite generally that this development in ancient times is

most intimately connected with the development of the slave economy - slave economy on the land (slave plantations) and slave economy in the cities, where the wholesale manufacture of industrial articles was carried on by slaves. Slave economy also plays an important role in shipping. The great merchant ships which in ancient times sailed the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, etc., were, in the main, manned by slaves. Thus the basis of this entire development which began to undermine ancient religion and which laid the groundwork for the modern world-view is the emergence and establishment of a slave economy. Through the slave economy it first became possible for another class of free people to emerge, in addition to the priests - a class which had the necessary time to devote itself to other things than to the direct labor of earning a living. As Aristotle said, leisure is the premise of philosophy. In an earlier period, before slave economy is developed to its full height, we have an intermediate stage where free peasants and crafts-men emerge. Upon this foundation is built the authority of the so-called Tyrants in the Greek cities, that is, the despotism of one individual among the citizens of the city. The term, Tyrants, can easily be translated into Chinese; it means military commander. The consequences of this great economic and class upheaval were severe disturbances, changes, and upheavals in traditional moral and political views. It is clear that when a people who have lived hundreds and thousands of years in the same relationships are subjected to basic economic and social changes, all their thinking and especially their thinking on religious subjects, will be profoundly affected. In Greece, especially, the development of philosophy and natural science is closely related to the development of Greek commercial cities on the coast of Asia Minor, where, as early as the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., there emerged a materialistic viewpoint opposed to the priesthood. In India the turn against religion was related to the establishment and the strengthening of the military nobility and the merchantry who turned against the Brahman priests. In China, Lao-Tse and Confucius appeared at a time when the old feudalism was falling, when a free agriculture was emerging, and when, upon this foundation, the centralized, monarchical, bureaucratic state was being established.

I now turn to Greece. I shall first briefly describe the general conditions for the emergence of Greek natural philosophy. Here we are concerned with a number of philosophers commonly designated Ionians, after the group to which they belonged. The general basis for the emergence of this first philosophy is the development of the Greek commercial cities on the coast of Asia Minor. These cities, of which the most important were Miletus and Ephesus, stand culturally and economically, far above contemporary Greek development. They stand much higher than the cities of Greece itself, the Greek peninsula. In these cities for the first time it was possible for other people besides the priests to obtain great wealth and be in a position to dedicate themselves to free investigation. This development was further influenced by the fact that through the growth of commercial shipping the intellectual horizon of these Greeks of Asia Minor was tremendously widened. These first Greek merchants traversed the whole Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, etc., with their merchant ships. They came to know many strange peoples, religions, manners, and customs. Thus it came about that they grew critical of their own religion, of their own

customs, and came to look upon all those things with a clearer vision. The development of shipping and commerce demands a correspondingly higher technical development. The commodities with which the ships were laden, the raw materials, were refashioned in the cities. There finally developed from commercial shipping a number of different, highly developed industries - one of the most important being the manufacture of wool into fine mantles. Other luxury industries also developed, the manufacture of Greek vases, for example, which were common in all the ancient maritime countries. Further, the manufacture of ornaments out of expensive metals and expensive stones, as well as the manufacture of costly ornamented weapons, played an important role. These commodities were made to sell to the kings, nobles and high officials of the great oriental kingdoms. The development of commercial shipping on the other hand was connected with the importing of grain and other vital necessities. This resulted in the impoverishment of the old native landed proprietors. The peasants who served these great landed proprietors were able to free themselves and go into the cities as craftsmen. There was established a class of free craftsmen in the Greek commercial cities of Asia Minor, and over these craftsmen the so-called Tyrant ruled.

Who was this Tyrant? He was usually a rich landed proprietor who turned to commerce and finance. He was as a rule one of the richest persons in the city. Because of his wealth and because of the presence of many freemen without land who sought occupation, he was able to hire a body of troops and to impose his authority upon the city by force.

This is the background and point of departure for Greek natural philosophy. Through the development of technology, handicraft and shipping, and through the extension of the geographical horizon, the prerequisites were created for seeking a natural explanation of the world, as opposed to the fantastic explanation of the priests. Men who had made long journeys within the bounds of the Mediterranean Sea, who had made themselves familiar with the elements of astronomy, of geography, etc., who found shipping necessary to them, and who had seen many foreign peoples and their customs - these men could undertake to build a scientific world-view. They had the necessary free time, the necessary means, and the impulse to acquire knowledge; and they also had the necessary independence for such an undertaking. Thus we understand how from such relationships philosophy could take its first flights and how criticism could overthrow the old popular religion.

I should like to add a few more words about the Tyrants and contemporary conditions. These Tyrants, it is very important to note, were supported by the people against the city nobility. With the help of the people they raised themselves above the city nobility, who were at the same time merchants. Thus they dominated the richest noble merchants - the merchant nobility. After they won over the people and established a body of troops for themselves, they oppressed the people. Thus, throughout all antiquity, the struggle against the Tyrants is considered a meritorious thing. The principal hold which they had over the people was the work which they provided for craftsmen on public buildings. The most beautiful buildings in the Greek commercial cities of Asia Minor were built by these Tyrants. Further, it is very

important to mention that all these Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor continually had to defend their national independence against the great Persian Empire. They waged a national struggle for freedom. This struggle for freedom developed the intellectual powers, the self-consciousness of the cities, which became the foundation for free, intellectual development.

One more comment on the development of slave traffic. Slave traffic played an important role in these cities. In ancient times and even in the Middle Ages slaves were one of the chief articles of trade. But the slave economy in these cities was only in its infancy. In the seventh and sixth centuries most of the craftsmen of these cities were still freemen, that is, independent craftsmen or wage laborers.

I now turn to the most important Ionian philosophers of nature and their doctrines. The earliest of these philosophers of nature, also called the father of philosophy, is a certain Thales of Miletus. At this time Miletus was the richest of all the commercial cities of Asia Minor. She commanded a great merchant fleet and ruled over a great tract of land. Very little of the theory of Thales has come down to us. But it is characteristic of him that he had a natural theory of the origin of the world. This, indeed, is one of the first questions which religion also seeks to answer: "How did the world begin?" Thales tried to give a natural explanation of this. The world, he said, came into being from water. This was the "beginning" and the *true essence* of all things. It was reasoned that all the other elements (at that time the elements were divided into water, fire, air, and earth) derived from water. This was based on the notion that all substances were unitary, that all substances were capable of changing into each other. Of course, this early philosophy could not establish this assertion in a manner such as is employed by chemistry today. The idea that life first originated from water was also part of the theory. You know that modern natural science explains that all land animals arose from sea animals and that life first appeared in the sea. Hence, this proposition contains, as we see, an ingenious presentiment of future discoveries. It is natural that Thales should have hit upon the idea that water was the material source of the universe, living, as he did, in a commercial city that lay by the sea. It was a city in constant contact with this element of continually changing appearance, this element teeming with an inexhaustible wealth of living creatures useful to men - a city for which the sea was the foundation of economic life. It is also asserted of Thales that he made great advances in astronomy and geometry. He is said to have made journeys to the Egyptian priests, from whom he obtained a great deal of his knowledge. This indicates that the knowledge of the Egyptian priests became one of the starting points for philosophy. The Egyptian priests had a special motive for developing natural philosophy. Egyptian life depends upon artificial irrigation from the Nile. Without artificial irrigation the land would be a desert. In order to be able to regulate irrigation, the priests had to be able to predict the time of the Nile's ebb and flow. And to do this they had to observe the stars. Irrigation, like the building of temples, required surveying the land. These were the motives which led the Egyptian priests to develop the elements of surveying and astronomy, as well as of mathematics. These elements were taken over, systematized, and further developed by the first Greek philosophers of nature.





## 4 Greek Idealism

From the further development of Greek materialistic philosophy I shall select only the most prominent names and schools - Anaximander, Heraclitus and the Atomists, most prominent of whom are Democritus and Empedocles.

I begin with Anaximander. Like Thales of Miletus, he comes from the renowned Greek commercial city of which we have already spoken. He lived somewhat after Thales. His theory is characterized by the proposition that the world has emerged from formless stuff, from unformed homogeneous matter, as he called it. The development of this matter or of this formless stuff occurs through its separation into contradictory elements. This is the way the heavenly bodies came into being, the sun and the other stars. Man developed from fish-like beings which had taken to the land. To this conception of the world, of the planets, and of life, Anaximander added the conception of the future decline of the world. If the emergence of the world consists in the division of matter, in the breaking up of matter into opposite elements, then the decline of the world, of individual beings, consists in dissolution of these elements. According to Anaximander's theory matter is eternal and indestructible. As you see, it is a fairly broadly constructed theory of the development of the world, a theory which is completely materialistic, that is, deriving from natural causes. One cannot help being astonished at its correctness in the large, at a time when all the great accomplishments of modern natural science were lacking.

The second great name which I mention is that of Heraclitus the Obscure, of Ephesus. The nickname "Obscure" was given to him because of the obscurity and the difficulty of his writings. Heraclitus was also born in one of the greatest commercial cities of Greek Asia Minor, Ephesus. This city was one of the strongest competitors of Miletus. He lived about five hundred years before Christ. His great significance lies in the fact that he first discovered and gave expression to the qualities of what later developed into dialectics. I shall recount his principal ideas. Heraclitus arrived at his conceptions of the origin and nature of the world by synthesizing previous doctrines concerning the emergence of the world, the previous cosmology. Every previous philosopher had the world emerging from a different stuff. One, like Thales, from water, another from light, a third from stuff in general. From these doctrines Heraclitus elaborated the general universal transformation of all things. This conception he compressed into the striking proposition, "Everything is in flux"; that is, everything is changing, nothing remains as it is. He also compressed it into another proposition: "One cannot ascend the same river twice." This contained the same thought differently expressed. The river never remains the same; every instant it is a different river. In this instance, the river, of course, is only a figure of speech. It serves as the symbol of all the changes in nature and in the human world. This conception of the unceasing, universal change of all things can be taken as a fundamental conception of dialectics. According to the view of Heraclitus the world as a whole is eternal - that is, infinite in time; and endless - that is, infinite in space. But this world is always changing; it never remains the same. This change, however, is not conceived in terms of modern evolution. According to Heraclitus world-change does not proceed continuously

forward, but in what the physicists and chemists call a circular process. It is a constant transformation of things, which, however, always reverts to a certain starting point. For example: like all his predecessors Heraclitus differentiates four elements: fire, earth, air, and water. These four elements continuously change into each other, but in such a manner that the change always occurs within the same circle of the four elements. This change of things occurs, according to Heraclitus, not arbitrarily, but in accordance with certain mass relationships. It is regular change. This also as a new and advanced thought. Heraclitus called the world an eternal fire - again figuratively, of course. He did not mean that the world emerged from fire as the prime stuff; fire was merely a figurative designation for the continual process of change. The world is not a stable substance, but a continual chemical process. I have already said - and I need not elaborate - that the Heraclitean conception of chance must not be confused with the modern concept of evolution. It is a change that occurs in a circle and which reverts to the original starting point.

Another basic idea of Heraclitus is that this change of all things follows the rule that opposites always emerge from opposites; that is, that this change always takes place in the form of contradictions. For this, too, he found a striking metaphorical expression: "Conflict is the father of all things." The conflict of opposites is the impulse to all change, to all development. This is also a fundamental conception of dialectics, and Heraclitus was able to express even this thought in very general fashion. He applied it to the relation of Being and Non-Being. Heraclitus said that Being and Non-Being, these two extreme opposites, come together in the concept of Becoming. The thought is clear. A thing that is becoming is, and at the same time is not, that thing. These two ideas are contained in Becoming. Otherwise expressed: The nature of all things and processes consists of the togetherness of opposites. All things, in other words, are polar, are composed of opposites or contradictions.

Also germane to the theory of Heraclitus is the fact that he declared himself against the notion of the immortality of the soul. He also declared himself against the doctrine that sensual pleasure is bad, a doctrine which at that time played an important role among certain religious societies, and we shall soon see why.

I proceed now to another point, namely, the explanation how this theory of Heraclitus is connected with the mode of production and with the class relationships of the time. From your actual observation of contemporary events, it is understandable to you how a world-view is connected with certain class attitudes. This observation which we can make today holds for all periods. Each world-view has its roots in certain class relationships. There is only this difference; we can very clearly see the modern class relations, whereas the class relations of 2,000 to 3,000 years ago are only in small part known. Often we have to guess at these because the historical sources are meager. Concerning the class position of Heraclitus we can roughly say the following:

He belonged to the *municipal aristocracy* in Ephesus. I have already discussed the rule of the aristocracy in these cities. Previous to the time of Heraclitus a government

of such aristocrats existed, but this had been unseated by the government of a Tyrant or military commander.

This Tyrant was supported by the mass of petty craftsmen and peasants against the aristocracy. Later the rule of the Tyrant yielded to a more or less restricted democracy which was brought into Ephesus by the citizens of the city of Athens. Heraclitus, who belonged to the aristocracy against which the Tyrant fought and against which the Tyrant played the masses of the people, was naturally considered a revolutionary. The existing state of affairs was not to his liking. He was anxious to overthrow it. Therefore there developed in him the conception that it is a general law of all existing things not to remain as they are, but to change – to change, indeed, into their opposites. From the relations which prevailed in the city he arrived at the idea that conflict is the impulse of all change. And he came to the conclusion that this holds not only for political and social relations in the city, but that it applies universally. I believe that the concept of dialectics will now be accessible to you. The masses of the people in Ephesus were severely oppressed and exploited by the Tyrants. They had to work for the Tyrants, they had to pay heavy tribute, and in part also to perform forced labor. In this situation the masses of the people sought any ideas at all which could give them consolation. And so they took refuge in religion, which gave them the consolation they needed. They established religious groups which sought security in the theory of a Redeemer who would come and free the people; in the theory of the immortality of the soul; and in the evil of sensual pleasures - a theory which is very congenial to an exploited mass of people. When men turn against sensual pleasures, this signifies a political break with and a repudiation of the luxurious life of the rich. All should live as simply and frugally as possible, and avoid luxury. This idea is congenial to the exploited and oppressed masses at a time when the material prerequisites are not yet at hand for *all* to be able to live in plenty; that is to say, when the productiveness of labor is still poorly developed. And this was the case then, as opposed to the situation now in capitalist society. Heraclitus' attitude is explained in the simplest manner by reference to the role of the mass of the people, the role of the Tyrant, and Heraclitus' own membership in the aristocracy. Since the Tyrant was supported by the mass of the people against the aristocracy, Heraclitus had to turn against the ideas of these masses, against their religious ideas, against the conception of a Redeemer, against the immortality of the soul, and against the doctrine of the evil or sensual pleasures. Thus you see that all the fundamental ideas in Heraclitus are determined, are conditioned by the characteristic class relations of his time.

I should now like to make a few brief comments on the theory of atoms. Atomic theory or atomistics was developed by a number of these philosophers of nature. The principal proposition of the theory maintains that the world consists of small, identical material parts and empty space. The various movements of these material parts explain all phenomena. I do not need to develop this theory further. Atomic theory is today a part of natural science, of chemistry, of physics, etc. The significance of atomic theory in antiquity, however, lay in the fact that it was the most consistent

development of materialism. This theory of atoms has played a part in all consistent theories of materialism for thousands of years.

With this I close the discussion of the Ionian natural philosophy, the period of materialistic philosophy in ancient times, and come now to a most important turning point, when materialist philosophy was replaced by idealist philosophy. This turning point is linked with the names of two great philosophers of ancient times, Plato and Aristotle. Plato was born in 429 B.C., Aristotle in 384 B.C. They are thus somewhat later than the Ionian philosophers of nature. These two philosophers of idealism have had a tremendous influence on the whole subsequent period, on the philosophy of the Middle Ages, as well as on the world-view of modern times. In the last analysis we can say that all idealistic world-views have their origin in Plato and Aristotle. We will now investigate the reasons for this transition from the materialist to the idealist world-view. The fundamental reason for this is the complete development of slave economy as the basis of Greek society and the beginning of its decline. This society, founded on slave labor, led into a blind alley, with no way out. In the seventh century *slave labor* was just appearing in the Greek colonies of Asia Minor, although *slave trade* was already in full swing. Industrial labor was, in the main, performed by handicraftsmen or free wage laborers. In the fifth and fourth centuries, however, in Athens - where the philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, lived and taught, slave labor was the foundation of the State and of the whole economy. Slavery was the basis of the class system in Athens at that time, and not, as has often superficially been contended, the opposition between aristocracy and democracy, which was *only an opposition within the ruling class which consisted of free citizens*. Both the rich and poor free citizens were propped on the shoulders of slaves. The rich as well as the poor freemen in Athens lived at the expense of the slaves, who were without rights, who were not considered men but simply *tools* endowed with speech. That the Athenian people were able to devote themselves to politics, art, philosophy, gymnastics, and all such fine things was made possible only by abundant and constant importation of slave laborers. This is not simply my opinion; it is taken from a work on ancient Athens by a good bourgeois historian.

I shall now develop the contradictions which beset a society which is built on a slave economy. First contradiction and first difficulty: In no slave economy is the natural propagation of slaves sufficient to maintain it. This experience is not restricted to antiquity. The same thing occurred in the slave plantations in the South of the United States of America. To maintain the slave economy, there must be a continual importation of new slaves. They can be obtained only through wars or predation. Continual waging of war, which is necessary for a State built on a slave economy, naturally saps the strength of such a State. To wage war in ancient times it was necessary for the citizen about to go to war to furnish his own equipment. This was costly, of course, especially for a mounted warrior. He had to maintain his horse and a groom. He had to be able to support his dependants at home as well as himself in the field. This necessity gradually impoverished the simple farmers and artisans who participated. Thereby the power of the State was diminished, and it was exposed to

the danger of being conquered by another State where the farmers and artisans were not yet undermined. To be humbled and conquered meant something quite different then from what it means today. It meant that the people would be carried off as slaves - men, women and children.

The second contradiction in which a society built on slave labor is involved is the following: It is proudly maintained in such a society that working for a living is unworthy of a freeman. Labor is stigmatized as unworthy. Labor is only for slaves. This conception of labor dominated the best and most open minds of antiquity. And it had a further consequence: The free people who could not exploit slaves were dependent on the State for a livelihood. They were parasites, spongers on the State. The unpropertied freeman of antiquity was fundamentally different from the modern proletarian. The latter through his labor supports the whole society, the capitalists and everything else. The unpropertied freeman, the proletarian of antiquity, was supported by the State at the expense of slave labor. The State itself maintained a great number of slaves who provided the means of support for the unpropertied freemen. Moreover, a powerful city like Athens subjugated a great number of other cities who had to pay tribute, which also served to maintain these unpropertied freemen. Thus the existence of such a city was naturally very precarious. A society which rests on such an uncertain foundation as slave labor becomes increasingly involved in difficulties.

The third contradiction within this city which was at the same time a state - city and state are here one - is the following: Within this city there developed, even among the freemen, more and more class oppositions. The great private fortunes increased and fell into the hands of fewer people, whereas the artisans were impoverished by continual warfare. This sharpened the opposition between creditors and debtors. At the same time the moral bond which bound the city dwellers to each other became weaker and weaker, and this led to continual civil wars which jeopardized the existence of the State more and more.

Further, I should like to mention a fourth and very important point in the realm of economics: Slave labor hinders technical progress. The connection here is very clear. Since slaves work only under compulsion, they cannot be given very delicate or complicated tools. Slave labor can only be accomplished with the crudest and roughest tools. As soon as slave labor becomes the characteristic phenomenon of a society, technical development is hindered, and the development of the forces of production is brought to a standstill. Thus, at the height of the slave economy in antiquity we find technical stagnation and also a loss of the interest in natural science such as was prevalent in the colonies of Asia Minor which we have mentioned.

These conditions resulted in the following: first, that the problem of development in nature and the problem of the origin of the world no longer stood in the foreground as they did in the ascending period of Greek social development. Instead, the questions characteristic of society in its middle stage are emphasized: How should man live, how should the State be governed, how should the economy be carried on,

what is good, what is evil, what is permitted, what is forbidden? All these questions of morals now become matters of controversy.

The second and most important result linked with the transition to the declining phase of ancient society is the transition from the materialistic to the idealistic world-view. This critical change from materialism to idealism is conditioned by, and based on the facts which I have already set forth. It was conditioned, namely, by the circumstance that the old slave owning society had passed its apex and had entered upon its declining phase.

I should like to sketch very briefly the main features of Plato's idealism so that you may know something about the idealism here indicated. According to Plato, the true essence of things does not consist of a stuff, as the philosophers of nature had said, but rather the principle of the world is spiritual, non-material. The world of the senses, the world of sense-experience is nothing Plato's conception, an actual and true world, but only apparent and illusory. This world of sensory phenomena is only a consequence, a copy of eternal Ideas, of eternal spiritual prototypes, which are independent of material phenomena. Thus the true locus of things is posited in the mind. The highest idea is the idea of the Good. These ideas not only are the true essence, the very kernel of the world; they are, moreover, the ultimate impulse and the ultimate measure of all events. With Aristotle this is further developed: Reason is the essence, the ultimate impulse or prime mover of all worldly events.

But upon precisely what is this transition from materialism to idealism based? In the last analysis upon the fact that there is, from the standpoint of the ruling class of this period, no material, historical, progressive solution of social contradictions, as I have already shown. It is not possible for a slave economy to make the transition to a higher form of society and economy. It is a blind alley, a *cul-de-sac*. I have explained to you how the Christian religion grew up among the oppressed classes. In the same way idealistic philosophy grew on in the ruling class at this critical moment in the Athenian State. This idealistic philosophy became an element and a basis of later Christianity. What social aim did this idealist doctrine have? Its aim was to idealize the existing social situation, that is, to beautify to eliminate the contradictions in it, to immortalize it. The supremacy of the Idea, the supremacy of Reason, was only a universalization of the theory that the reasonable and the wise should rule. And of course every ruling class conceives these to be the members of the ruling class itself. The people, according to this notion, are unreasonable, and it is always a very small minority, the ruling class, which is reasonable. When this theory is carried from the State over to the whole world, idealistic philosophy appears, the concept of the supremacy of Reason over all things. In the later centuries and millennia this idealistic philosophy generally became one of the strongest foundations for the views of the ruling class. But you must not think that the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle was in their time reactionary *within* the ruling class. It was not. Ancient society had no way out. There was no class in this society which could offer any sort of antithetical, revolutionary outlet. On the question of slavery, democracy in ancient Greece did not and could not have a fundamentally different viewpoint, since its existence was based on resources of the State provided by slave labor. It would be a

very great error to mistake the democracy of Greek antiquity for bourgeois or proletarian democracy. The opposition between ancient Greek democracy and modern bourgeois democracy is even greater than that between bourgeois and proletarian democracy. The basic problems of this ancient society were not those of democracy or aristocracy; these were only problems of the superstructure. The basic problem was slave labor, the relation of the slaves to freemen. The reactionary aspect of this philosophy stands out in bold relief only *in relation to slavery*, in the fact that it is the philosophy of a slave owning society, based upon slave labor. It appears reactionary in the light of later historical development which abolished slave labor and substituted more progressive forms of exploitation. But this philosophy not only had a reactionary aspect; it also had a progressive aspect. We shall speak of this in the next chapter.

## 5 - Ancient Logic and Dialectics

Before I go further, I should like to give a few more biographical facts concerning Plato and Aristotle. Plato was born in Athens in 429 B.C., and came from a distinguished aristocratic family. His main works are put in the form of dialogues or conversations. He was a student of Socrates. Aristotle, in his turn, was a student of Plato. He was born in 384 B.C. He was not a native Athenian, but he lived the greater part of his life in Athens and there set up his own school of philosophy. Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great, the son of Philip of Macedonia. He left many voluminous writings. Not only was he the greatest philosopher of Greek antiquity, but he was also a great natural scientist and the founder of a whole range of sciences. Aristotle was a scientific genius of the first rank, the greatest mind in all antiquity. His influence on the subsequent period was so great that we can say that two thousand years, until the beginning of modern times, were under his sway.

We previously stressed the reactionary role of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Now we shall speak of its great progressive role. This resides in the fact that the ruling classes of Athens at that time believed the aim of the exploitation of slave labor and their class rule to be the free development of human capacities, above all, the development of reason. This is closely connected with the fact that this slave production was not ultimately and predominantly commodity production, not production for the sake of surplus value like capitalist production. Its chief aim was production for individual use, production of use values. From this it followed that the ruling class was not absorbed in business or industry, but conceived its ideal to be the development of art and of science. Thus arose the extraordinary great interest in the investigation of human reason, in the discovery of the laws of thought. Through this activity the Greeks created a new epoch in the general development of history. As represented by Aristotle they built up the doctrine of the forms and laws of thought, known as formal logic. They also laid the foundation for what is called dialectics. Wherein dialectics and formal logic differ, we shall soon see. The science of the laws of thought, formal logic, reached its highest point with Aristotle. It was here developed so broadly and fully that it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the German philosopher, Hegel, could make a significant and decisive advance over it.

I will now briefly explain what formal logic is and how it differs from dialectics. Formal logic can be defined as the theory of the laws of thought without regard to the content of thought. The theory of thinking or logic describes how concepts are built and wherein the different concepts differ from each other in regard to form. It deals with the different kinds of propositions and, ultimately, with the different kinds and forms of inferences, of syllogisms. Logic seeks to teach how to think correctly.

Ordinarily man thinks about nature without having need for any special art of thinking. This generally suffices for everyday life. But as soon as relations and things become more difficult, as soon as man concerns himself with conclusions drawn from a great number of premises, as soon as he becomes involved in long abstract processes of thought, then the possibility of error grows, and it becomes necessary



to control and to ascertain the correctness of thought. Therefore logic has a far-reaching significance for science.

The laws of logic are based on two main propositions. The first is that of identity or of self-conformity. The proposition very simply states: "A is A", that is, every concept is equal to itself. A man is a man; a hen is a hen; a potato is a potato. This proposition forms one basis of logic. The second main proposition is the law of contradiction, or as it is also called, the law of the excluded middle. This proposition states: "A is either A or *not* A. " It cannot be both at the same time. For example: Whatever is black is black; it cannot at the same time be black and white. A thing - to put it in general terms - cannot at the same time be itself and its opposite. In practice it therefore follows that if I draw certain conclusions from a given starting point and contradictions arise, then there are errors in thinking or my starting point was wrong. If from some correct premises I come to the conclusion that 4 is the same as 5, then I deduce from the law of contradiction that my conclusion is false.

So far all appears to be clear and certain. What can be a clearer law than that man is man, a rooster a rooster, that a thing is always the same thing? It even appears to be absolutely certain that a thing is either large or small; either black or white, that it cannot be both at the same time, that contradictions cannot exist in one and the same thing.

Let us now consider the matter from the standpoint of a higher doctrine of thought, from the standpoint of dialectics. Let us take the first law which we have developed as the foundation of logic: A is A. A thing is always the same thing. Without testing this law, let us consider another one which we have already mentioned, the law of Heraclitus which says "Everything is in flux," or "One cannot ascend the same river twice." Can we say that the river is always the same? No, the law of Heraclitus says the opposite. The river is at no moment the same. It is always changing. Thus one cannot twice nor, more exactly, even once ascend the same river. In short: the law "A is A" in the last analysis is valid only if I assume that the thing does not change. As soon as I consider the thing in its change, then A is always A and something else; A is at the same time not-A. And this in the last analysis holds for all things and events. Moreover, the seemingly changeless is established by science as changeful. One takes as a symbol of changelessness, for example, rocks or great mountains. But these rocks, as the history of geography shows, come into being and pass away; the changes, however, take so long in relation to the span of man's life that man does not notice them without special study. They are eroded by wind and by moisture; under the influence of heat and cold they are in motion. These are changes which occur so slowly that their process cannot be seen with the eye. They become visible only after long intervals. Or let us take plants. Plants change, grow. This cannot be seen with the naked eye either. It is today possible to see how a plant grows by means of moving pictures. We know today that various kinds of plants have changed. We know, for example, that wheat, rye, and rice were not always what they are today and that these plants have developed from simpler ones. This also applies to all types of animals and to human beings. Perhaps the planetary system and the sun are permanent and changeless? But astronomy teaches us that this planetary system

must have emerged and that it must again ultimately disappear. Thus even here there is change, unceasing, boundless change. Man had long believed - until very recent times - that the primordial matter to which all things could be reduced, the chemical elements, were changeless, that this primordial matter was the one thing that did not change. Today it is known that this also is not the case. Elements are known - radium, etc. - which change. We suspect that all matter has emerged from still simpler parts, from electrons, that under certain conditions of temperature and pressure they became integrated and that they will eventually disintegrate and be transformed. When we know this, now does the famous fundamental law of logic stand up - the law that, "A thing is always the same"? Evidently this law is in least not unconditionally correct. It has only a *limited significance*. It is only valid for certain limited periods of time, or in abstraction; that is, when I ignore the changes of a thing and consider it for the moment as invariable. When I thus control a thing, making it invariable and changeless for a certain length of time, I can operate without falling into great error. But if I generalize and propound without qualifications I fall into grave errors. Then this law of formal logic does not hold good. I must turn to a higher system, to dialectics; that is, I say that difference is bound up with all identity. Thus in no object can I absolutely separate identity and difference. The object remains the same, and at the same time it changes. Both attributes exist at the same time.

A modern bourgeois philosopher, the Frenchman, Bergson, fell into the error of overlooking the *identity* in universal change, and came to the conclusion that the true nature of all things is unknowable since the understanding can only work with fixed, changeless concepts. Here the error committed is the reverse of the assumption that the law of the self-conformity of things is exclusively and unconditionally valid. If I extend the change between two states of a thing so far that *no identity at all* remains between them, then I cannot establish any change. I am utterly unable to say that they represent two states of one thing. To establish change I need a single common reference. The *quantitative* difference between two things or two states of one thing is only possible to determine when I can consider them in some way alike. If there is no identity without difference, it is also true that there is no difference without identity.

Let us now examine the second basic law of thought, the law of contradiction. According to this law a thing cannot at the same time be itself and its opposite. A figure is either round or angular; a line is either straight or curved. If we consider what we previously discovered regarding the law of identity, we see that not only is contradiction not impossible, but that everything that changes must at every moment represent a contradiction. We have already said that a thing which changes is identical with itself and is different from itself. It is identical and different; identical and not identical. Within the same thing there exists a contradiction. And this law holds generally for all things which change - all things which are identical and not identical, the same and not the same. Let us apply, this, for example, to the proposition: "A line is either straight or curved." What do the mathematicians say? They consider the smallest part of a circle as straight. Within certain limits they make straight and curved identical. This allows much more precise and certain calculations

than if one absolutely separates straight and curved. A figure is either round or angular, but mathematicians consider a circle as a figure with an infinite number of angles. In this relation they thus make round and angular identical, and an entire section of mathematics is built upon this basic law which is full of contradictions.

In place of the law of contradiction which simple, traditional logic sets up, we can set up the opposite law, the law that everything contains a contradiction within itself, is composed of opposites. We have already verified this in the concept of change which obtains for all things. We have still to verify it in connection with certain propositions of the ancient Greeks, the concept of *locomotion*, for example. The Eleatic philosophers showed that all locomotion represents a contradiction and is therefore impossible. They concluded, therefore, that there is no actual motion, that motion is an illusion. And they proved this with two famous examples. The first is the proposition of the arrow, the other is the proposition of Achilles and the tortoise. The proposition of the arrow runs thus: It is asserted that if I shoot an arrow from a point, it never can reach a distant point. For if I shoot an arrow from a point which I designate A, and this arrow should reach point B, then it is certain that it must have previously traversed the intervening space. From A it must have reached C. Further, it is certain that still before that it must have covered half the distance A-C, that is, it must have travelled from A to D. If it was to reach D, it must have previously traversed half that distance, that is, to F. One can continue this division to infinity. The arrow must always have attained a previous point and thus *ad infinitum*. It consequently can never depart from A, since the number of distances is infinitely large. In a finite time it cannot go from A to B. Consequently motion is impossible.

Perhaps even clearer is the example of Achilles and the tortoise. Achilles was reputed to be the most swift-footed of the Greeks. The tortoise is a slow-moving animal. Yet if the tortoise has any head start at all, Achilles can never catch up with the tortoise. Let us say that the tortoise has a head start of a hundred yards. In one second Achilles runs ten yards, the tortoise one yard. What will be the outcome? While Achilles covers a distance of one hundred yards which separates him from the tortoise, the tortoise goes ten yards farther. While Achilles runs these ten yards which still separate him from the tortoise, the tortoise goes one yard farther. While Achilles runs the one yard, the tortoise goes one tenth of a yard, and so on *ad infinitum*. There always remains a certain distance between them. While Achilles runs through this distance, the tortoise each time covers a distance one-tenth as great. It therefore follows that Achilles will never catch up with the tortoise.

These two stories are of course not merely jokes; there is a deeper meaning within them. In both cases it is demonstrated that a certain finite distance can be infinitely divided and *for this very reason* it follows that a finite distance cannot be put together out of infinite) many parts; it follows, in other words, that a finite distance cannot consist of infinite parts. Now in notion it is demonstrated that from infinitely small distances I can put together a finitely large distance; that is, what is here set forth in the form of a story is the dialectical law which we have previously mentioned. It is shown that a distance can be finite as well as infinite, that it can be both, in fact, at the same time. Thus it is true, as can easily be calculated, that the

arrow can travel from A to B, and it is just as true that Achilles will overtake the tortoise.

Let us take the tortoise: While Achilles has traversed the handicap of one hundred yards, the tortoise has gone ahead ten yards, etc. Thus we have  $100 + 10 + 1 + 1/10 + 1/100 \dots = 111.11$  or  $111 \frac{1}{9}$  yards. At this point he will overtake the tortoise. He consumes ten seconds for 100 yards, 1 second for the next 10 yards,  $1/10$  of a second for the 1 yard, etc. Together,  $10 + 1 + 1/10 \dots = 11.1$ , or  $11 \frac{1}{9}$  seconds. Thus the question is solved. And at the same time we have another verification of our proposition that motion is contradictory.

Now, in order to clarify the matter, I will return to the first example, in which a distance which we designate 1 is composed of  $1/2$ 's; half of the distance is again divided into equal parts of  $1/4$ , which in turn are divided into equal parts of  $1/8$ , etc. Thus we have the series  $1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + 1/32 \dots$ . If we add them, we find that their sum more and more closely approaches 1. The sum of the infinitely many fractions,  $1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8$ , etc., is the finite total 1. This is perfectly accurate.

From my statement that contradictions occur in things, we must not conclude inversely that I always utter a truth when I contradict myself. The matter is not so simple; rather these contradictions which appear in concepts are only appropriate and correct if they reflect actual changes in things.

Thus there are meaningful and meaningless contradictions, and dialectics is not the art of meaningless, but of meaningful contradictions. Wherein lies the difference between formal logic and dialectics? If you look closely, you will find that it lies in the following: Formal logic considers all things as motionless and changeless, each as separate from all others, isolated in itself. Dialectics is a higher form of thought, since it considers them also in their motion and in their interconnection. What is the reciprocal relation of formal logic and dialectics? The use of formal logic is limited, restricted. It is a restricted, inferior approach to phenomena. It is admissible so far as I can consider things as unchanged and rigidly demarcated from each other. Dialectics is a superior, more universal, more exact, and more profound approach to phenomena. As soon as I consider things as moved, as changeable, or in their reciprocal connection, I get nowhere with formal logic and I must turn to dialectics. I wish to add that the dialectics of both Plato and Aristotle had an idealistic character; that is, both assume that contradictions have their origin in the mind and that the contradictions in actual things derive from the mind. We materialistic dialecticians say that the contradictions in concepts are only a reflection of the motion of things.

To put this even more simply: Idealistic dialecticians believe that motion of bodies occurs because a contradiction is present in the concept of motion. The materialistic dialecticians say the opposite: The actual motion of things is the prototype, and the contradictions which appear in the concept are reflections of this actual motion.

Let us inquire into the sources of dialectics in antiquity. Why was it that in antiquity man had already come upon the foundations of the dialectical method of thinking?  
1. The old philosophers of nature, Heraclitus, Anaximander, etc., investigated the

emergence and decline of the world. They thus had to arrive at the concept of the universal change and the universal motion of all things. I refer to Heraclitus especially. 2. Social relations, meditation on the form of the State, on religion, etc., stimulated the consideration of all things as changeful and self-contradictory. (This applies especially to Socrates, Plato, etc.) The immediate stimulus was that in public life contradictory viewpoints clashed one with another. Public life in Athens was a very lively affair. In the market-place discussions were constantly taking place concerning what is good and what is evil, how the State should be constituted, etc. One said A, another Not-A. This was true of all things in public and private life. From this there ultimately developed an art of conversation, and this art of conversation became the source of the art of dialectics. Dialectics was originally called the art of discourse because it grew out of discourse.

This ancient dialectics as developed by Plato and Aristotle was not yet the modern dialectics which is characteristic of dialectical materialism. It was still an undeveloped dialectics. This is consistent with the social relations from which this manner of thinking emerged. The aim of these ancient thinkers, Plato and Aristotle, was to find amidst the change of social and political matters something permanent, constant, secure, to create an ideal State, an ideal society. They did not seek absolute change; their aim, on the contrary, was a changeless, constant state of affairs. They did not favor revolution, but rather the suppression of the revolution which had taken place in the social order. This is why Plato constructed a political utopia, an ideal State. And thus is explained the limited and undeveloped form of dialectics in antiquity. In ancient times there were two stages in the development of dialectics: the first was simply the dialectics of change, of the one-after-the-other. This was the dialectics developed by Heraclitus. The second is dialectics as developed particularly by Plato and Aristotle. This is a dialectics not of one-after-the-other, but a dialectics of one-beside-the-other, of the simultaneous; the dialectics which is present in the relation of the parts of a motionless whole to each other. This second form of dialectics is the highest developed in antiquity. But it is a limited form. The higher form of dialectics is that which takes into consideration the dialectics of the simultaneous as well as the dialectics of one-after the-other. This dialectics is called historical dialectics. This historical dialectics embraces the law of the changes of a whole as well as the law of the simultaneous existence of a whole which is composed of many parts. You have an example of this if from your study of political economy you remember the way Marx describes capital. You there learned a number of economic laws which show how capitalism can exist as a whole and how individual phenomena within it are related to each other. Finally, you learned how this whole system emerges from another system, that of simple commodity production, and further, how the laws of the capitalist mode of production are changed in the course of time into other laws which lead from capitalism into another, opposed system, that of socialist economy. The most highly developed form of dialectics is Marxian or historical dialectics, which developed from the limited and restricted form of antiquity into a higher form.

This ancient dialectics is in the last analysis, limited and restricted because it is the dialectics of a ruling class which rests on slave labor. Neither Plato nor Aristotle, the

most advanced thinkers of this society, could imagine a change in social relations such that slave labor would disappear and the distinction between freeman and slave be abolished.

Therefore, it follows that their concept of the change of things had a completely determined social mold, namely, the mold wherein domination over slaves must always be changeless and eternal. Accordingly, they could not develop dialectics in its full universality, since this universality presupposes *that no molds can be imposed upon change*. But as usufructuaries of slave ownership they were unable to presuppose the abolition of slavery. This is the ultimate reason why they could not develop dialectics in its full universality, why it was restricted and idealistic - and not materialistic.

## 6 - Indian Materialism

The Greeks played the leading role in the foundation of science and philosophy, and in the detachment of these from religion, but they are not alone in having made this progress. It is no more than just to mention the great intellectual labor performed by the people of the East, even though this labor was not as consequential as that of the ancient Greeks. The elements of materialism which were developed in the East can there serve as a point of departure for dialectical materialism. Therefore, before concluding the first section of lectures, I should like to speak of materialism in ancient India. I will reserve discussion of China for the last section. In the next chapters I proceed directly to the doctrines of Marx and Engels.

Materialism had already appeared in ancient India by the sixth century B.C. This is the period which immediately follows primitive times. This period of primitivity is also called the period of the Vedas, because the Vedas, the oldest religious poems of ancient India, afford the best reflection of this period. The time in which materialism made its appearance is called the epic period of India, because then the great popular epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, emerged. It was a time of great religious and philosophical agitation; Buddhism then made its appearance as the new world religion and with it an allied religious reform called Jainism. It was thus a time of profound crisis for ancient religious views, a crisis for the ancient religion which bore the name Brahmanism. The members of the ancient priestly caste of India were called Brahmans. It was a time of broad mass movements against the authority of this Brahman caste and against the religious views on which the authority of the Brahmans rested.

Whence came this crisis? There were profound transformations in the class relations which, in the last analysis, brought on this crisis. Originally the Brahmans were priests of magic and sacrifice, such as we find more or less among all undeveloped peoples. Brahma originally signified the magic inherent in them. The Brahmans, the priests, thus developed into the highest ruling caste. They claimed authority over the other three principal castes. They obtained this authority chiefly through their talent for knowing the rituals of sacrifice, which they had built up into a highly developed system. This priestly caste lived at the expense of the other classes on sacrificial offerings which they exacted from them.

The Brahmans ruled without serious competition in this early period, in the time of the Vedas. This was a time when the communistic village-community prevailed in its *primitive* form. This village-community was founded on agriculture and stock-farming, without great economic differences between the individual members of the community, without great differentiation; hence a village-community had an economically and socially democratic government. But then the old inhabitants were subjugated by lighter-skinned Aryan Indians who immigrated into India from the north, a fair-complexioned people, linguistically very closely related to European groups (Greeks, Celts, Persians, etc.). The conquered natives were made the slaves of the conquerors.

Thus was created, instead of free and equal members of the democratic, communistic village-community, a class of people who lived not on a basis of social and legal equality, but who were the oppressed, the slaves, the enthralled. The opposition between the ruling conquerors and the defeated natives carried class opposition even into the ranks of the conquerors themselves. So there appeared more and more class oppositions in this primitive communistic village-community. The primitive Aryan peasants who were part of the conquerors were often replaced by native slaves. Large estates were built on the foundation of this slave enterprise. The great landed proprietors were, first of all, war-lords and great merchants. Merchants often ran their businesses with slaves also, just as we saw in ancient Greece. In time the agricultural slaves raised themselves to a higher rank, to thralls such as we have in the Middle Ages. These thralls or slaves formed the lowest caste in ancient India. They were called the Sudras. In the northeast where Buddhism and the religious reform movement emerged, class oppositions developed more sharply than in the east where the old Brahmanist religion had long held sway.

I will now briefly describe the situation in the sixth century, just when materialism and Buddhism emerged in ancient India. At this time the communistic village-community still prevailed. But it had already begun to disintegrate. The land could already be bought or leased, which was not the case in the pure, primitive communistic state, since the land belonged to the community; from time to time it used to be apportioned to individuals, but it could neither be bought nor leased. Since then many merchants had become land-buyers. There were even some free wage laborers, but only in very insignificant numbers. For the most part they worked on the greater landed estates, either for board and lodging, or for wages. The real slaves were mainly domestic slaves, just as they have been in China for a long time. Crafts developed. Craftsmen were organized in corporations or guilds. Rich merchants already existed in this period. They did a large business by means of caravans overland, or by maritime trade to China, to Alexandria, to Egypt, etc. This trade comprised mainly silks, fine cloths, ivory, jewels - by and large, luxuries for the use of kings and nobles. For the most part, barter had already been replaced by money transactions. At this time there were already money-lenders, and in the village the usurer already played an important role. Accordingly one can say that a disintegration of the primitive, simple, communistic village-community was already taking place. This disintegration was connected with the introduction of commodity production, and the latter, in turn, with the development of the forces of production in agricultural economy and with the development of private property. The introduction of slave labor, of the labor of thralls, was linked with the establishment of great landed estates, with the formation of commercial and money capital. Thus, when we consider the class divisions of this society in which materialism emerged in ancient India, we have the following main characteristics: on one side the ruling priest caste stood opposed to the noble landed proprietors and the rich merchants. The latter struggled with the priest caste for social supremacy. On the other side, there developed a caste of freemen, who owned little or no property, and a caste of slaves or thralls. These profound social changes from primitive times gave the impulse for a spiritual and religious crisis. On one side Buddhism emerged as a new



reformed popular religion opposed to the ancient Brahmans, who were set against the broad masses of the people. On the other side materialism emerged, the materialistic philosophy which was already breaking through the limitations of religion. Its bearers were characteristically the richest merchants, just as they were in the Greek commercial colonies of Asia Minor.

Class differentiation assumed a peculiar form in India, however; namely, the form of a caste system. A caste comes into being when the division of labor in a certain society becomes hereditary. That is, the son of a warrior must become a warrior; the son of a potter, a potter, etc. Associated with this homogeneity of castes is the fact that the members may marry only in their own caste, that each such caste has special religious customs, special customs in daily life, in eating, in dressing, etc. The precepts and customs of a given caste completely govern all details in the life of a man who belongs to the caste. The formation of castes is not limited to India. In antiquity we also have a very strong caste system in ancient Egypt. The starting point for the formation of castes in ancient India is already described in the term. The old Indian word for caste, *Varna*, originally means *color*. The starting point was the separation of the light-complexioned Aryan conquerors from the dark-complexioned natives who were made slaves or bondsmen. From this separation of dark-colored natives from light-colored conquerors there came the partition into castes. Four main castes are distinguished. I list them in the order of rank: The first, the most aristocratic and the ruling caste, was the Brahman or priest caste; the second, the warrior caste; the third was the caste of the rest of the freemen, merchants, and farmers; and the fourth and lowest was the caste of slaves, thralls, or Sudras, whom we have already named. Without these class oppositions in the form of castes the development of thought in ancient India after the Vedic times is not understandable. Therefore, at the outset, one must explain the castes, their significance and role, in order to understand the problems about which thought in ancient India revolved.

The fundamental questions of Indian thought revolve around problems related to the nature of the castes, that is, the nature of the special form which class relations assume in India. The fundamental conceptions of Indian thought are derived from this and understandable only through this: The fate of individual men in a caste society was completely determined by the caste into which they were born. Thinking on social questions had to assume the following form: What determines the caste into which an individual is born? The individual wanted to be able to determine this. For him this offered the only possibility of determining or changing his fate. But this possibility rests upon two assumptions: first, that connection exists between the individual's present existence in a certain class, his previous existence in another class, and his future existence in still another form. These connections quite naturally give rise to the idea of regeneration, of the eternal recurrence of birth. The Indian name for this is *Sansara*, recurrence. This name and this conception are familiar to everyone who has some knowledge of Buddhism. The same conception of eternal regeneration grew up in ancient Egypt and was based on the same relationships. I have already mentioned that ancient Egypt likewise had a caste system. We have here two main concepts. The first concept, *Sansara* or regeneration, is the basis for

the second fundamental concept: *Karma*, which means that my birth is determined by the fact that I have lived a previous life. If I conduct myself well in this life I shall perhaps later be born again into a higher caste or if I behave badly, into a lower caste or even as an animal or a plant. If my behavior is completely good, I may be reborn as a god or a hero, etc. This is the basic concept of Indian thought, and only in this form (fantasy) is it possible to change caste, to change my social destiny. Indian thought revolved about these two fundamental concepts as soon as class oppositions developed and began to be more and more embodied in castes.

Buddhism emerged as a rebellion against the caste system in general, and against the supremacy of the priest caste in particular, but as a rebellion still in religious form. I can only touch upon Buddhism here. According to evidence, Buddha himself, the founder of this religion, was a simple nobleman. He belonged to the second caste. He was not the son of a great king, as has often been said. He allied himself with the two castes which were struggling against the Brahmins for social supremacy. Buddhism opposes priestly sacrifice as a means of deliverance. In the acknowledgement of the exclusive power of the Brahmin priests to make offerings lay the foundation of their social dominance, and their economic position was ideologically based on the same thing, since the priests lived on the offerings which were brought to them. Thus Buddhism taught - and this constitutes its basis - that freedom from *Sansara* cannot be attained through sacrifices, but through knowledge of religious truths and through the stifling of passions. At the basis of Buddhism lies the principle of victory over the caste system; not an actual, but an ideal fantastic victory. Accordingly, the injunction of poverty is established, the organization of religious beggary. This must be considered as reaction against the existing class differentiation, a reaction which naturally must have been very agreeable to the exploited levels of the population.

Buddhism, like Christianity, did not persist in its original form. In the course of time and in consequence of its transplantation into different lands, it has undergone extraordinary changes. Buddhism qualifies as a world-religion, because, first, like Christianity, it raises itself above local and national ceremonial rites; second, because it propounds a completely *universal* formula for the redemption of human wrongs which is thus applicable to the most various social forms and classes; to exploiter as well as to the exploited, to slaves, free nomads, as well as to merchants.

The most radical form of criticism of Brahmanism, a criticism which went beyond the bounds of religion, was ancient Indian materialism, of which I shall now speak. This ancient Indian materialism certainly existed in 500 B.C., that is to say, simultaneously with Buddhism. In all probability it existed even somewhat earlier than Buddhism. Unfortunately this ancient Indian materialism is known to us only through statements of it made by opponents - the Brahminist scholars - so that much of what was said about ancient Indian materialism is slander and misrepresentation. This ancient materialism was called *Lokayata*, derived from an old Indian word, *Loka*, meaning the (secular) world. It is thus the theory of laymen, as opposed to the theory of priests. The theory was also called *Tcharwaka*, from *Tscharv* (to eat greedily). This is the name which the opponents of the doctrine gave to it. They wanted to describe it as a theory of men whose eating and drinking are their chief concern. These materialists

directed an extremely sharp attack against the Brahmans. Their aim was to break the monopoly of the Brahman priests and establish complete religious freedom. As merchants these materialists had a great interest in religious tolerance.

I will briefly describe the main theories of this ancient Indian materialism. It maintained that the source of all knowledge is simply sensory experience. They did not recognize the authority of religious revelation; but neither did they recognize *the course of reason*, the drawing of conclusions from given experiences, as the source of knowledge. Only immediate sensory experience is the source of all knowledge: all spirituality arises, according to this conception, from the material, from the four elements (which they had in common with the Greeks). Thought they considered as an activity of matter, matter alone is knowable and real. There is no hereafter and no immortality of the soul. The priests, they say, are deceivers and buffoons who perform their sacrifices, their ceremonies, etc., in order to cheat the people and live on the sacrifices. These materialists were also opposed to the Buddhists. One of the basic doctrines of Buddhism is that all is sorrow and that all pleasures of the world are illusory and had. To that the materialists answer: it is absurd to condemn pleasures because they are mixed with sorrow and dissatisfaction. Man does not throw rice away because the kernel is wrapped in a rough shell.

I will quote a few verses which present a concise summary of the theory of ancient Indian materialism. They run thus:

There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world,  
Nor do the actions of the four castes, orders, etc., produce any real effect.  
The Agnihotra, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three staves, and smearing one's self  
with ashes,  
Were made by Nature as the livelihood of those destitute of knowledge and  
manliness.  
If a beast slain in the Jvotistoma rite will itself go to heaven,  
Why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father?  
If the Sraddha produces gratification to kings who are dead,  
Then here, too, in the case of travellers when they start, it is heedless to give  
provisions for the journey.  
If beings in heaven are gratified by our offering the Sraddha here,  
Then why not give the food down below to those who are standing on the housetop?  
While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in  
debt.  
When once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again?  
If he who departs from the body goes to another world,  
How is it that he comes not back again, restless for love of his kindred?  
Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that Brahmans have established here  
All these ceremonies for the dead - there is no other fruit anywhere,  
The three authors of the Vedas were buffoons, knaves and demons.  
All the well-known formula of the pundits, jarphari, turphari, etc.  
And all the obscene rites for the queen commanded in the Asvamedha,  
These were invented by buffoons, and so all the various kinds of presents to the

priests,

While the eating of flesh was similarly commanded by night-prowling demons.<sup>2</sup>

With that I leave these materialists. I might simply mention, in conclusion, that in ancient India there was an independent development of the theory of thought or logic. This theory was called *Nyaya*, that is, the theory of concepts, etc. This logic developed in ancient India as it did in ancient Greece: from discussions of various conflicting philosophical systems as a defensive technique in these discussions and as an aid to thought. This was one of the great achievements of ancient India.

## 7 - Hegel and Feuerbach

We now make a great leap from ancient India to Marx and Engels, from the sixth century B.C., to the nineteenth century A.D., a leap of over twenty-five centuries. I should like to have dwelt at some length on the classic world-view as represented in the bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth century by the French Materialists, as well as on the more salient fact, of classical bourgeois philosophy in Germany. Unfortunately there is no space for this. I can only give a short résumé of the immediate forerunners of Marx and Engels, the German philosophers, Hegel and Feuerbach, in order to indicate the nature of the epoch-making advance which Marx and Engels achieved beyond the furthest outpost of the philosophy which preceded them.

But first I must insert some general preliminary comments, particularly on that great period that intervened between the ancient philosophy of Greece and India, and Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx. Between modern bourgeois philosophy in Europe and ancient philosophy lay the age of feudalism. Its ideological expression is the feudal world-view which dominated the whole of the Middle Ages, a period of about one thousand years from about 500 to 1500 A.D.). This period was subject to the overpowering influence of the church. The church formed the apex of the ruling feudal classes of the Middle Ages. It was at the same time the strongest ideological support of the feudal mode of production and the feudal system of authority. During the period of the church's uncontested supremacy, philosophy, and natural science as well, played no independent role. Philosophy was concerned only with the justification and elucidation of the basic doctrine of the church. Philosophy was, as it was called at the time, the handmaiden of the church. This philosophy, which occupied itself only with justifying and explaining the basic doctrine of the church, was called Scholastic philosophy. The term comes from a Latin word meaning school. Hence, this is the philosophy of the ecclesiastical colleges of the Middle Ages, of the Schools in which the lofty spirits of the church were educated.

We need not tarry with this scholastic philosophy which played no independent role and made no scientific progress worth mentioning. At the same time we must note that the development of natural science during the feudal Middle Ages was also very weak and paltry. But even during the reign of feudalism, in the very lap of feudal society, the bourgeoisie developed. We can designate the end of the fifteenth century as the critical point when the bourgeoisie began to make itself felt more strongly. The outstanding events which determine this as the critical point are the discovery of America, the inventions of printing and gunpowder, the universal application of the compass to ships, and a number of other discoveries. A particular characteristic of this transition from the Middle Ages to modern times is the expansion of world trade not only through the extension of trade to the newly discovered world, America, but also through maritime trade with the near, middle and far East which does not assume large proportions until this period. Concomitant with this development of the bourgeois mode of production a general struggle begins against the highest rank in the feudal social order, against the church. This conflict becomes sharper at the turn of the sixteenth century. You are aware that the

Reformation occurred then. Luther as well as Calvin and Zwingli emerged. The Reformation is a revolt against the church, though still within the boundaries of the church and of religion.

But the most universal and radical form of ideological struggle with feudal society in general and the church in particular was bourgeois philosophy. It is very significant that bourgeois philosophy first emerged in the countries where bourgeois development was most advanced; thus, first in England, in the Netherlands, then in France in the eighteenth century, and finally in Germany. It emerged in Germany last because in comparison with France and England Germany went through a much longer bourgeois development. The men who are called the fathers of modern bourgeois philosophy are the Englishman Bacon and the Frenchman Descartes, both of whom appeared in the first half of the seventeenth century. The development of bourgeois philosophy follows on the heels of the religious struggle. These religious struggles were the prerequisite, the foundation on which philosophical development was laid. In philosophy we see the epitome of the bourgeois class struggles against the feudal world-view, as well as the most general form of the development of bourgeois class-consciousness.

The main purpose and substance of bourgeois philosophy we can describe as follows:

First: The overthrow of the basic concepts of the Christian religion in particular, and of religion in general; the extension of the authority of reason to include realms where religious belief had hitherto been master

Second: A likewise important purpose of the new philosophy was to make room for the expansion of natural science. The development of natural science is a prerequisite for the economic development of bourgeois society. Natural science, in its turn, became a sharp weapon against ecclesiastical belief, especially those natural sciences which were most highly developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - mechanics and astronomy, especially celestial mechanics. Natural science had a strong influence the development of philosophy.

The union of natural science and philosophy in the struggle against the church and against the feudal world-view in general was most vigorously expressed in eighteenth century French materialism. I will mention only the names of two men in whom this view took on especially classic form. One of these is Diderot. His is the most ingenious mind of all the French materialists. The other is Helvetius, who incorporated the materialistic world-view of the eighteenth century into a complete system. You are probably already familiar with the names of Voltaire and Rousseau. They are the most significant bourgeois literary authors of the 18th century. They likewise led the struggle against the church and against feudal institutions. But in respect to philosophy they were not as radical as Helvetius and Diderot. They were not materialists, but they advocated a religion of reason. They sought to eliminate the feudal features from Christianity. What they wanted was a bourgeois Christianity.

The highest stage of bourgeois philosophy was reached in Germany. Germany, as I have already said, took longer to develop economically and politically than France

and England. It thus came about that the bourgeois revolution occurred there under generally more advanced conditions, with a more highly developed ideology, than in both the other countries. We select from this development only the two end-products, the philosophies of Hegel and of Feuerbach, because two are directly connected with and immediately precede dialectical materialism. They are the forerunners of Marx and Engels. In this development Hegel and Feuerbach play entirely different roles. Hegel is the positive consummator of bourgeois philosophy and of philosophy in general. Feuerbach is its negative consummator. Through him religion as well as philosophy was destroyed by criticism.

Hegel during the period of his greatest achievement was professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin. His first great work he completed in the year 1806, the same year that Napoleon indicted a severe defeat upon feudal Germany at the battle of Jena, when he overthrew Prussia and split Germany into two parts, North and South. Hegel died in 1830, the year of the July revolution in France and just before the Reform Bill in England. In Hegel all bourgeois philosophy is comprehended. And more than that, in him ancient philosophy is joined with modern, so that he summarized the intellectual development of two and a half thousand years and carried it to its conclusion. Hegel was one of the most profound and at the same time one of the most universal minds that has ever lived. Hegel was a pioneer of the bourgeois revolution in Germany which broke out in 1848, although he himself was not a political revolutionary.

I will now briefly present the substance of Hegelian philosophy. Most important and revolutionary was the dialectical method. Hegel discovered dialectics anew, so to speak. He was the first to elaborate it systematically and put it on a much higher plane than it had previously been. This was a revolutionary act of the highest order. Dialectics was an extremely revolutionary method. Dialectics teaches that no individual thing, whether in the external world or in thought, remains static, but that it constantly changes, that every single thing, every single institution must have a beginning and therefore necessarily an end, a rising and a declining phase of development. Dialectics teaches that every thing, every institution, every thought disappears because it is transformed into its opposite. Dialectics halts for nothing. Nothing is sacred to it, nothing is inviolable. This destructive power of dialectics is, in the Hegelian view, the strongest force of historical progress, or as Goethe, who lived in the time of Hegel, said, "All that exists has this much value, that it perishes." What this verse poetically expresses is conceptually developed in the dialectical method. Dialectics is the most universal formula of revolution.

The second basic feature of the Hegelian philosophy is that it is idealistic; in fact, it is idealism of an extreme form. According to Hegel, the motion of thought - by which he means universal thought, universal concepts, ideas, as he calls them - is autonomous, independent. Thought, the Idea, is for him the mover and creator of material reality, of nature, and of history. Intellectual motion, to put it concisely, is the creator of cosmic motion. Thought is the creator of reality. I will give you an example of Hegel's approach to history. According to our approach, Christianity in the Middle Ages is a doctrine which grew out of feudal relations of production and social

class relations. The relations of production of the Middle Ages are fundamental, primary; and from them are derived the ideas of the Middle Ages whose most universal expression is Christianity. According to Hegel's conception, the reverse is the case. In his view, medieval Christianity is fundamental. From that emerges the feudal mode of production, the class order of the feudal Middle Ages, its political forms and so forth. Thus, according to Hegel, the world and its development are posited literally in the mind, in thought. In this way Hegel demonstrates the pervasive interconnection of all parts of the social whole, of its spiritual and material structure. He further shows - and this marked an advance over all his predecessors - that social types form an historical progression, a developmental series which advances through contradictions. And he recognizes that the inner contradictions contained in every social form are the moving forces which supplant one historical period with another. Since he is an idealist however, he does not expose these contradictions in the material forces but looks for them in the most universal spiritual expression of the period in question. Hegel made the greatest and most profound discoveries in the realm of history, in which he revealed, in his own way, the inner connections of historical life. Although the form is here placed in the mind, the content signifies tremendous scientific progress.

Another feature of Hegelian philosophy, and a deficiency in it, is that Hegel recognized a temporal development in history, but not in nature. According to the Hegelian conception, nature moves eternally in the same grooves. In this respect, Hegel reverts to the philosopher, Kant, who sought to interpret the emergence of our planetary system by means of a mechanistic theory.

Finally, let us consider the relation of Hegel's philosophy to religion. With Hegel there is as yet no sharp contradiction between religion and philosophy. Hegelian philosophy undermines religion from within. All the basic concepts of religion contain, for Hegel, a purely philosophic meaning. They were put on the same plane with the basic concepts of logic or of dialectics, so that actually the fundamental concepts of religion retain nothing distinctive. But Hegel left their external form untouched. This was consistent with the level of the class struggle in Germany, where organization and propaganda for the bourgeois revolution were just being prepared, and open attack on the church and on absolutism was not yet propitious. It is pertinent that the founder of this philosophy, Hegel, was a professor at the most important university of the Prussian State, of precisely the absolutistic State against which the bourgeois revolution was directed. This was possible only because this philosophy was so extremely obscure and abstract that it was accessible to a restricted number of men schooled in philosophic thought. The Prussian Guardians of Absolutism not recognize that this obscure and abstract philosophy which Hegel propounded at the University of Berlin was something extremely revolutionary. Even today it remains true that no one without a very thorough preparation in the history of philosophy and logic, as well as abstract thought in general, can make any headway in the study of Hegel's philosophy. Without this preparation most of it will remain incomprehensible.



The revolutionary character of Hegel's philosophy stands out in sharper relief in some of his students than it does in Hegel himself. These students directly attacked Christianity, which was then the state religion. Attack on the Christian religion was thus a political attack on the existing state. The most important and the most radical of these students of Hegel was Ludwig Feuerbach. Though it was still possible for Hegel to be a regular professor at the University, his student Feuerbach had a different fate in store for him. For some time Feuerbach tried to teach at the university in the role of *Privatdozent* (unsalaried lecturer). But he could not make any progress and he finally had to retreat as a private teacher to a small village, where he wrote his principal works. In Feuerbach's hands philosophy became so revolutionary that it could no longer be tolerated in the learned chairs of absolutist Prussia.

Feuerbach accomplished the open break with religion which Hegel had not achieved, and it is precisely in this respect that his book, *The Essence of Christianity*, was epoch-making. Moreover, with Feuerbach a further break was made not only with religion, but also with philosophy as a *special* science, since in Feuerbach's view philosophy was the last form of religion. Feuerbach achieved the transition from idealism to materialism. For Feuerbach the substance of religion lies in one or another form of belief in a super-sensual, fantastic, spiritual Being as the creator and mover of the world. Philosophy teaches the same thing in a different form. Cosmic reason, which for Hegel is the world-mover, is only another form of the Christian concept of God. The secret which is hidden behind this infinite spirit and will, and which men represent as in another world beyond their perception, is human understanding and will. Man is the real secret of religion and of philosophy. To put it very simply, the Christian, and the Jewish religion as well, maintained that God created man in his own image. Feuerbach maintains the reverse: God has not created man in his own image, but man has created God in his own image. This thought is similar to that of an ancient Greek philosopher who said: "If oxen made a God, he would be an ox; if a Negro made a God, he would have a flat nose and thick lips." Feuerbach universalised this. He also applied it to philosophy. Philosophy to him is only a refined form of religion, of belief in God.

According to Feuerbach, real knowledge is possible only as knowledge of the material, of the sentient. There is no supersensual knowledge, as religion and philosophy maintain - no knowledge which comes without sense perception or transcends the perceivable world. What is passed off as supersensual knowledge is nothing but a fantastic transformation of sense knowledge. Accordingly, there is no special philosophy, no special philosophic method by which one can construe the world out of one's own head. Knowledge of the world is possible only on the basis of sense experience. One cannot construct the world merely out of one's head as philosophy assumes. Any philosophic method which assumes that it can build the world out of mere thoughts must be rejected. Thought is not separable from matter.

The epoch-making aspect of Feuerbach's theory consists, first, in the destruction of philosophy as a special form in the general field of science; secondly, in the destruction of idealism, the transition to materialism. But the position which Feuerbach reached was in part only negative. What Feuerbach lacked, in contrast

with Hegel, was dialectics. In the second place, Feuerbach lacked a materialistic key, a materialistic comprehension of history. His position permitted him to think materialistically only about nature. He was unable to give a materialistic interpretation of history. Feuerbachian materialism was thus natural-science materialism, and in the historical realm this natural-science materialism approached idealism. Thus, it was an incomplete and a defective materialism. This incompleteness provided one of the impulses which sent Marx and Engels beyond Feuerbach to dialectical materialism.

Feuerbach, as the advocate of the radical bourgeoisie in Germany, made an advance over Hegel. In contemporary Chinese politics he would be the equivalent of a left member of the Kuomintang.

## 8 - From Natural-Science Materialism to Dialectical Materialism

The last chapter took us as far as Feuerbach. I will briefly recapitulate the progress Feuerbach made over Hegel and the deficiencies which he evinced. The principal advances which Feuerbach made are:

1. The transition from idealism to materialism.
2. The scientific rejection of religion. Feuerbach disclosed religion as the handiwork of men. Man creates God and the deities after his own image. Since Feuerbach, religion has been scientifically dead, scientifically vanquished. But I shall soon point out that it is not yet dead in practice.
3. Moreover, philosophy as a *special* science opposed to natural science, as a science which explains things purely through the mind, without experience, was also buried by Feuerbach.

These are the principal advances which were made by Feuerbach over Hegel.

Now I shall consider the two fundamental deficiencies in Feuerbachian materialism. The first is that Feuerbachian materialism is only natural-science materialism; that is, it is an incomplete materialism. Incomplete because Feuerbach was unable to give a materialistic explanation of the process of history. In Feuerbach there is here a distinct lack. He does not know what to say. When confronted with the task of explaining history, other natural-science materialists resort to the old idealism. This is either the usual idea that historical progress is conditioned by the progress of thought, ideas, or, even more naively, that great men make history through the thoughts which, more or less by accident, crop up in their minds. This is the first deficiency. The second, with Feuerbach, is that he lacks the dialectical method. Yet this dialectical method was the great revolutionary advance which Hegel had made over all his predecessors. This advance was lost on Feuerbach. He recognizes dialectics neither in natural science nor in history.

The decisive advance over the natural-science materialism of Feuerbach was made by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. They were also the founders of scientific socialism. This decisive advance occurred in the middle of the forties, some few years before the outbreak of the German revolution, Feuerbach himself had written his book, *The Essence of Christianity*, in 1839, and his *Thoughts on the Philosophy of the Future* in 1843. Marx and Engels took only a few more years to reach the point which Feuerbach had attained. Feuerbach was still a bourgeois revolutionary and belonged to the most radical, most progressive section in the bourgeois revolution. Marx and Engels also began as radical bourgeois revolutionaries, but they later went over to the side of the working class and became the founders of scientific socialism. They became socialist or proletarian revolutionaries, and only then was it possible for them to advance beyond the radical bourgeois position. Marx and Engels studied Hegel, the philosopher who dominated the entire period throughout the twenties and thirties, and Feuerbach.

Historical or dialectical materialism was developed by them not only from German philosophy; other phenomena of the time also contributed. The most important are the following two: I. The contemporary class struggles in England. This was the time of the Chartist movement in England, the first great modern working class movement. In England, then economically the most highly developed country, any one could see that the true explanation of political struggles resided in the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It was also unmistakably clear that this struggle between working class and bourgeoisie was based on the economic position of the two classes, on the fact that the bourgeoisie was in possession of all the means of production and piled up riches upon riches, while the working class, lacking means of production, was dependent solely on the sale of its labor power. Thus, here was the most obvious place to study the materialistic explanation of historical events. As you know, Friedrich Engels spent several years in England as a young man. He here developed his interest in the workers' movement and received his first impulse toward historical materialism.

The second impulse came from the history of the French Revolution. This had the greatest influence on Marx, who at this time was living in Paris and devoting himself to an exhaustive study of the history of the French Revolution. The bourgeois historians of the French Revolution had already seen that the events of the French Revolution could be explained in terms of the struggles of the different classes. Class struggles as the propelling force of political history became especially clear to Marx through the study of the French Revolution, while Engels came to understand the economic basis of the class struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Since these two men, Marx and Engels, came together, since they applied the dialectical method which they had learned from Hegel, and since with Feuerbach they passed from idealism to materialism, the elements were brought together for the creation of dialectical materialism, and, at the same time, the scientific elements for the generation of socialism.

What was the nature of this decisive advance which Marx and Engels made over Feuerbach? 1. Feuerbach found the key to the materialistic explanation of nature. Marx and Engels found in addition the key to the materialistic explanation of history. Marx and Engels found this explanation in the manner and mode in which men acquired their living, how they produced their material livelihood. For this they used the expression "mode of production". The mode of production means nothing more than the manner and mode by which man earns a living. As Marx and Engels bluntly said: man must eat and drink before he can philosophize. All other things follow and are conditioned by the way he procures food and drink. This simple knowledge is the foundation of the materialistic explanation of history. With this, idealism was overthrown, the idealistic world-view was driven from its last refuge and completely vanquished. Feuerbach had driven God and the spirits from nature; Marx and Engels drove God and the spirits from history too. Of course, the God of the historical idealists was not crudely conceived as a personal God determining all historical events, but he was something more refined. Thoughts or ideas, lesser gods, so to speak dominated history and were supposed to determine historical events. Just as

God, according to the religious writings of the Jews, is said to have created the world out of his mind, out of nothing, so, according to the conception above, the world-spirit is supposed to bring forth history. With this conception Marx and Engels made a radical and fundamental break. They recognized neither great nor small, neither crude nor refined gods in history, but they understood that in history, just as in nature, the material foundation determines the ideal, determines thought. Thus for the first time the conception of supersensual and higher beings or forces was completely destroyed. The last refuge of higher, super-sensual forces and powers was demolished. Through this advance the supersensual creative role of the Spirit, which even Hegel had acknowledged, was definitely played out, and, at the same time, religion and philosophy as a special kind of interpretation of life were completely discredited.

The second decisive advance of Marx and Engels over Feuerbach consisted in the fact that Marx and Engels again took up the dialectical method, which Feuerbach had dropped. But they did not take up this method in the form in which Hegel had left it. In Hegel we have an idealistic dialectics. We have already seen what this was. In Marx we have a materialistic dialectics; that is, Marx conceived of dialectics as the sum of the universal laws of motion of the real, material world and the laws of thought in the minds of men corresponding, to these universal laws. In other words, the real, material world is dialectical; it follows the laws of dialectics; and dialectics also operates in the human mind since the human mind is also a part of the material world. Thus Marx and Engels retained the positive contribution of the history of philosophy. The history of philosophy which, as you have seen, embraces more than two thousand years, is not simply a mass of errors in the light of dialectical materialism. As long as philosophy sought a special kind of world explanation opposed to the natural-science, materialistic explanation of the world, its attempt was fruitless and it only piled error upon error. Philosophy, however, did make one real substantial contribution: the knowledge of man's capacity for thought. In the two or three thousand years in which man has pursued philosophy, real progress has been made. The outcome is dialectics, theory of knowledge, and logic. Dialectics was lost upon Feuerbach; with Marx and Engels it is preserved and further developed into materialistic dialectics. Concerning this materialistic dialectics we shall speak in greater detail in the next chapter.

Thus one can say that Marx and Engels discovered dialectics, and at the same time they did not discover it. I will now turn to the chief problems of the theory of knowledge from the point of view of dialectical materialism.

The first problem to be solved is the fundamental problem presented by the idealistic and the materialistic world-views. This is the problem of the relation of thought to the external world which we can perceive through the senses, and thus the problem whether the external world, this table, this tree, this lamp - whether all this exists independent of my existence, whether all this has an objective existence independent of my existence, or *is present* only in my consciousness. This is the so-called problem of the objectivity of the external world. This is one of the basic problems of the theory of knowledge. Common sense has an immediate answer at

hand. Of course the lamp-post exists independent of my consciousness, and I note this when I hit it with my nose. Likewise I am impressed with the fact that a tree exists independent of my consciousness if it falls upon my head.

But common sense is not the ultimate arbiter in questions of science. Against this doctrine of common sense the idealistic philosophers have posed very weighty, significant objections. They say that in the last analysis the tree does not physically enter my head - this can happen, but it puts an end to thinking - but rather the tree enters my head only as an idea; it enters only into my consciousness. And if I inquire into everything that happens to me, I find, according to the idealistic conception, that all that I know are conscious states, ideas which I have in my head. And hence idealism comes to the conclusion that there is no world independent of human consciousness, but that everything exists only in my consciousness. I cannot know what is not contained in my ideas. Accordingly, idealism says, consciousness is all, and if I think that anything else exists outside of me, then I am making an error of common sense. This applies not only to the tree, the lamp-post, etc., but it also applies to other men, and in the last analysis, this line of reasoning leads me to the conclusion that only I exist, only *my* consciousness exists, and that all other men exist only in my idea. This is the final logical conclusion of this idealistic world-view.

A few more interesting consequences follow from the contention that the world exists only in my idea. If this is the case, the earth can have had no existence before the arrival of man. This consequence is unavoidable. A second consequence: Whenever a man is asleep - and I am assuming that he sleeps without dreaming - the world always comes to an end, since, if no consciousness exists, no world can exist. These are important consequences. But the question is: How can one refute the conception or the idea that everything that exists, exists only in the ideas of men?

If we cannot answer this, then we must accept the doctrine of idealism. But we must try. One might perhaps answer: I know that the tree exists independent of me when I run into it. To this idealism can reply: if I run into a tree, I know this also only through my consciousness. The pain which I feel is an idea, a part of consciousness. Or let us take another case: I am struck by a bullet. According to the common notion, this exists quite independent of me. But when I become aware of this bullet, I become aware of it, too, only through my idea. Hence, this argument is not worth very much. One must go deeper. We come to closer grips with the problem if we formulate the matter thus: according to the idealistic conception everything that I know, that I feel, that I can sense, is present in consciousness, in thought, in my head. Now I pose the question differently: is what exists in my head, in my consciousness, everything? The conclusion of continuous investigation of human consciousness is that this consciousness itself contains in its very essence the knowledge that my consciousness is not everything, but only a part of the world. This consciousness is the first condition and the point of departure of every thought. In self-consciousness itself we find the solution. It consists in the knowledge that my consciousness is not everything, but that a world confronts me which is different from my consciousness. Or, otherwise expressed: thought is a part of Being and stems from Being, but not the reverse. Thus, in the last analysis, the problem is solved in line with common

sense, but not with the means of common sense. It is solved on the basis of the results of thousands of years of research into human thought, research which constitutes the real substance of philosophy.

I should like to discuss further the example of the tree which we have already used. The tree is, as I have already said, in my consciousness. Only in this way do I know of it. But at the same time I distinguish it from myself in my consciousness; I know that I am something different from a tree. Only through this distinction is thought possible. Then there is another little problem to which I wish to refer. There are not only ideas which correspond to actual things, but there are also purely subjective ideas. At night I look, for example, at the heavens and discover in some spot the glimmer of a star. This star can actually exist, or the impression can simply be the result of some disturbance in my eye. How can I distinguish whether it is really a star or merely some disturbance in the eye that arouses the impression of a star?

I will give another example in order to make this question clear. As you know, there are mentally deranged persons who have certain erroneous sense impressions. Such a person believes, for example, that he hears certain noises which of course are not present. He simply imagines them. How am I to distinguish a real noise from such an imagined noise?

I might tell you of something which once happened to me. I was going to bed. Suddenly it seemed to me that the wall shook and the pictures on the wall began to rattle. For this different explanations are possible: 1. The person who experiences this is not sober, and 2. an earthquake may have occurred. How shall I distinguish?

Here is the final determinant: I convince myself that my sense perception is either a subjective illusion or that it is true by checking whether all men observed it. If, for example, I am an astronomer and I see a star in the heavens, then I relay this observation to all other astronomical observatories to see if they observe it. If no one else sees it besides me, then it is a delusion. This is the determining factor by means of which distinguish subjective from objective facts. Subjective experiences are limited to those who have them; objective experiences are had by all.

In the above-mentioned case of the earthquake, there is a simple means of determining whether one is quaking oneself or whether the earth is quaking, if one looks out of the window. If other men are also looking out of the window to determine whether the earth is quaking, one can accept the fact that there is an earthquake. But if one is alone in making this test, the assumption must be that the unsteadiness comes from one's own feet.

We now turn to the second question: is this external world whose objectivity and independence from thought we have now proved - is this external world of a material, corporeal nature? This is the contention of materialism. Or is the external world of a spiritual nature? This is the contention of idealism. Hegel, for example, says that things exist outside of human consciousness, but also that things are not of a material, corporeal nature, but spiritual. This is objective idealism. Materialism

maintains that the external world is of a corporeal nature. This has been adequately proved by natural science.

One more question and I will close. We have already said that natural science has established that the external world is of a material nature. It consists of matter in its various forms and motions. Now the question is, what is thought itself? Is it something material or is it something else? The answer is: we observe that thought itself is bound to a material substance, to the human brain. It is a function of it, just as there is a function of the muscles, or just as it is a function of the glands to secrete fluids. Moreover, thought functions only in connection with material stuff, with sense perceptions. In this double sense thought is material too. Sensation in general, the simplest kind of consciousness, is bound up with the existence of the organism. The most highly developed stage, understanding and reason, is bound up with man and a special organ, the brain.



## 9 - The Materialistic Theory of Knowledge

In the last chapter we discussed whether the world has a material or spiritual nature. We came to the conclusion that all phenomena in the world are phenomena of moving matter or material movement. We further said that even thought is a material quality, a quality which is bound up with a special organ, the brain. It can be said of this matter that it is as infinitely manifold as it is absolutely unitary. Chemists and physicists are approaching ever nearer to the unity of matter through the separation of matter into atoms and of atoms into smaller, homogeneous particles. On the other hand we see how this unitary matter is infinitely varied to form various substances. And nature is not the only source of an unlimited number of different substances; there is also man, who has added still more substances to those of nature. This happens, as you know, in the chemistry laboratory, where matter is created which is not present in nature. What is true of matter is also true of motion, which is inseparably linked with matter. Motion too is absolutely unitary as well as absolutely manifold, infinitely multiform. From the simplest locomotion up to thought runs an infinitely manifold chain of material forms of activity.

We come now to the next fundamental problem, to the problem of the relation of thought to reality. These are the questions: are things knowable as they are in themselves? Is the *essence* of things knowable or are only *phenomena* knowable? Otherwise expressed: is truth knowable? Further: is this truth knowable as a whole or only in part? Can thought know things without limit, or are there bounds, limits of knowledge which are resident in the nature of thought itself?

And the next question, which is connected with the above: has truth certain distinguishing marks and what are they?

I will first give the objections which the idealistic world-view makes against our being able to know things as they are in reality, or our being able to know the essence of things. The idealistic world-view says: it is not possible to know the essence of things in themselves because all knowledge comes about only through the medium of thought. Through thought, however, things are not absorbed as they are in themselves, but they become changed. Thought is a tool, and like every tool thought alters the matter to which it is applied. Just as the potter changes the clay which he works by giving it a certain form, so thought recasts the things which it wants to know. To this one might reply: we will know things as they are in themselves if we remove the form which thought gives to them. But if we remove this form, then they remain outside of thought. Hence, the dilemma, the contradiction, appears thus: either things remain outside of thought, in which case they are not accessible to knowledge, or they enter into thought, in which case they become transformed by thought so that we can in no instance know how they exist in reality. This is the position of the idealistic world-view.

To this we answer: what you idealists demand is something meaningless, something which contradicts the nature of things. Since thought is associated with things, what occurs is no different from what occurs in any association of two things: when two

things become associated they mutually affect each other. Thing A acts on thing B, and B on A. The sun attracts the earth and the earth attracts the sun. The sun influences the earth and the earth influences the sun. No action without reaction. Through action and reaction the nature of both things becomes manifest. To reject the effect of a thing upon other things is to reject the thing itself. Things act on thought and thought acts on things. The relationship of thought is no different from the interaction between two things in general. It is absurd to ask that knowledge arise without thought working upon things, that is, to ask that a reaction occur without the occurrence of an action. With the rejection of the reaction the action is rejected, and with both together the thing itself or the essence of the thing is rejected. This is a contradiction, and not dialectical, but metaphysical. It is just as if it were expected that the stomach digest food without eating it and without acting on it.

Idealism further says: man cannot know the essence of things as they are in themselves because his sense organs are of a very special kind and apprehend things in a very special way. We know that certain color vibrations are apprehended by human eyes as blue, but to a bee or an ant this color may appear not as blue but somewhat like grey, or perhaps some other color. Human sense organs perceive things in their own peculiar way, a way which is different from the perception of these things by other organisms.

Or let us take another example, an example from the sense of smell. We know that there are certain plants which have certain smells which attract particular kinds of insects. There are plants which have a smell like decayed meat, like carrion. This smell repels men, but certain animals are drawn to these plants by such smells. It can therefore be assumed that this smell affects these animals differently from man. These examples can be piled up; we could go on, for instance, to the feeling capacity. It can certainly be assumed that a certain temperature which to men feels cold, is otherwise felt by a cold-blooded animal, by a fish, for example. Similarly in the realm of tones. Certainly the tone-sensation of the insect or the fish is different from that of man. I cite all these things in order to point out that human sense organs (eyes, ears, etc.) have a peculiar character and are different from those of other organisms in their mode of apprehending things. From this follows the objection of idealists that human knowledge is not an apprehension of things as they are, but a peculiar transformation which conforms not only to the nature of human thought, but also to human sense organs.

The second point is that not only are the sense organs of man of a peculiar type, different from those of other organisms, but also that these sense organs are limited in their perception. And one might raise the question: are there not things, phenomena, which are not at all accessible to human senses; For example: we know that there are colors which cannot be perceived by human eyes, but whose presence can be established by other means. These are the colors at the extremes of the so-called color spectrum, ultra-violet and infra-red. This applies not only to the perception of colors and differences in colors, but also to the perception of differences in brightness. Night-animals like the owl or the cat observe differences in

the degree of brightness at night which cannot be observed by human eyes. Similarly for the other realms of sense perception. The range of perception of every sense organ has upper and lower limits, quantitative and qualitative, just as *within* its range it has quantitative and qualitative limits of discrimination.

To this we answer that man has a peculiar means of overcoming the limitation and peculiarity of his sense instruments. This means is thought. It may be that the dog has a sharper nose, the eagle a sharper eye than man, and that other animals can perceive other things better than man. Nevertheless the intellectual capacity of man extends far beyond that of any other organism because he is able to elevate himself, through thought, above the peculiarity and limitations of his senses, and not only through thought, but also through his hand directed by thought, through the construction of artificial organs, through tools. I need not enumerate the telescope, the microscope, the instruments and apparatus by means of which man artificially extends his sense organs, makes them keener and more exact. The main point here is that human thought overcomes the peculiarities of human sense organs.

For example: colors, as the physicist conceives them, are reduced to vibrations of a certain material medium, to something which no longer has direct relation to human vision. Or in the case of tones and noises, the physicist reduces them to air vibrations. This too is no longer bound up with direct perception through the ear. Thus science, through thought, knows how to overcome the peculiarities of human sense perceptions. But one may ask the question: what about the limitation of human senses? Is it not possible that there are certain qualities of things which are not perceivable through human senses? I have already said that there are certain colors which man cannot see with the naked eye, ultra-violet and infra-red. But how does one know of these colors, how does one perceive them?

Through special physical instruments. In the last analysis all properties of things are accessible to man, if not directly, then indirectly, if not with the naked eye, then through artificial organs. This is the case because there are no properties in things which do not have some effect or other, and because the effects form a connected chain which can follow from one link to another. Still another example: above a certain temperature I cannot perceive heat with my bare hand, with my skin, but as a physicist or a technician I measure this heat with a specially constructed thermometer. And how do I perceive this thermometer? I read off the degrees by eye, so that in the last analysis I do not perceive the heat with my skin, but with my eye. It must be added that this unlimited perceptibility of things is realized only through an unlimited process - the continuous extension of previous limits. Seen as a whole this extension of limits is a continuous process; viewed closely it is a series of large and small steps.

The further question which we raise is the question of the characteristics of knowledge, the question as to the criterion by which I determine that a proposition which I set up is true. The usual answer is this: I accept it as true when it is not contradictory. Contradiction is the criterion of error. What could be clearer, simpler, and more certain? This self-styled criterion of truth collapses as soon as it is seriously

tested. I shall give a few examples: you know that we ascribe three dimensions to space: breadth, length, and height. But the physicist adds time to the three space-dimensions to form four cosmic dimensions. Moreover, if I imagine that the world has ten dimensions, no inner contradiction is involved. Nevertheless, I would not accept such a proposition as a statement of the physical structure of the world.

As you know, there are legends about the sea-serpent. It is said to be a serpent-like animal that swims in the sea and is a hundred to a thousand yards long. In the conception of the sea-serpent there is no contradiction. There is certainly no contradiction in the concept of serpent if I suppose its length to be merely ten to a hundred yards. Or let us take a figure from folk-lore or religion, say the idea of dragons or ghosts. All these ideas are not in themselves contradictions. I can logically conceive of them. The criterion of their falsehood lies not in inner contradictions, but in something else. There is also the reverse situation: I have already pointed out that even in a science like mathematics contradictions occur without necessarily being the kind of inner contradiction which is the criterion of true and false, that is, there can be contradictions without falsity.

I find the actual characteristics of truth not when I compare concepts with each other, but when I compare the concept with reality. This can only be done by observation. It may well be that the idea of ghosts contains no contradiction in itself, but it contains a contradiction when compared to the common experience that mental functions are bound up with bodies. Or take the dragon. I can well conceive of such an animal, but there is none, none exists in reality. This is just another example of fantasy.

The laws according to which the planets move were first set forth by the astronomer, Kepler. I test their correctness and the degree of their exactitude by observing the course of the planets. One of the best ways of determining whether I actually know things is experiment research. If I wish to know whether I have truly discerned that water consists of two elements, of oxygen and hydrogen, which are combined in certain proportions of weight, how do I determine that my contention is correct? Through experiment - of two kinds: first, by bringing oxygen and hydrogen together under certain conditions of temperature and of pressure, and thus producing water; second, by reducing water, through chemical means, into hydrogen and oxygen. Through this experiment I discover that this idea is no delusion but corresponds to the actual nature of the thing. Such experiments are made on a small scale in the chemical laboratory; they are made on a large scale in industry. Industrial practice is likewise a test of the truth of my perception. Such experiments are not only appropriate in nature, but also in society. Politics in the last analysis is nothing but a series of experiments in the realm of society. If, for example, I set up the law that the small farmers must be won for the revolution in order to partition the land of the great landed proprietors among them, this can be false or true. I learn whether it is true by putting the matter to a test.

We now conclude: practice, the activity of man, is the test of the possibility and extent of his knowing things. If from oxygen and hydrogen I can compose water, then

to this extent I have correct knowledge of the nature of water.

The further question arises, is complete or absolute knowledge of things possible? The answer is: I cannot *know* any single thing fully and conclusively *all at once*. The process of knowing a single thing as well as knowing the whole world is endless; that is, complete knowledge of things is realized only through a series of relative and incomplete bits of knowledge. But this series represents absolute or complete knowledge. Accordingly, you arrive at a measure for the relation of the concepts, true and false. In everyday life these opposites are placed absolutely and sharply against each other. A statement is either false or true. There is no third alternative. Knowledge which comes progressively closer to things always contains a bit of truth, but also a bit of untruth, of falsity. I will give a well-known example: the law of gravity, the universal law which governs the motion of the planets around the sun, was first recognized by the great English natural scientist, Newton, in the seventeenth century. Until the twentieth century this was considered satisfactory and correct - until Einstein presented a more exact formulation of this law. But it would be childish simply to say that Newton's law is now false, that Einstein's law is true. Newton's law contains an extraordinarily great approximation to the truth and at the same time an element of inexactitude. The Einstein law contains a greater element of truth and a lesser element of untruth or inexactitude. The true and the false are contained in both. But the last, the Einsteinian, is a greater approximation to absolute truth than the Newtonian law.

Closely connected with this is the question whether I can fully know the world as a whole, as distinguished from the question whether I can fully know a single part of the world. Can I fully know the world as a whole? To this we say: yes, it is possible. But one cannot swallow the world as a whole all at once; it is too big. One knows the whole of the world through its individual parts. One must penetrate into the special sciences in order to know the world. With the progress of science the picture becomes ever more manifold. Inversely, I can say that the universal idea of the world as a whole is the premise of every individual science. Without the premise that all things form a unitary world, I have no starting point for the individual science. The relation is such that the individual sciences like physics and botany presuppose the science of the world as a whole, and inversely this science of the world as a whole is realized only through the individual sciences. The *universal* world-concept is a matter of dialectics, and accordingly we can say: the individual sciences presuppose dialectics, and dialectics presupposes the individual sciences. Each conditions the other.

Finally, the last question which I will briefly answer is a question which agitated thinkers for many centuries: are there innate ideas in the human mind? Has man certain concepts in his head with which he comes into the world and which he does not first have to learn through experience? The answer is: there are no innate particular concepts of the cat or the dog or the donkey or the tree or the camel. Man learns everything through experience. There also are no innate general concepts but there is an "innate" fundamental quality of thought, a natural fundamental characteristic of thought, just as salt, water, and ice have their characteristics. Of this

fundamental quality or fundamental function of thought we will speak in greater detail in the next chapter. But I wish to add this: this basic function of thought operates only in relation to sensory experience. Moreover, thought behaves just like the other organs, for example, the stomach. The stomach digests only when it is given something to digest. The basic function of thought manifests itself only when matter is at hand for it.

## 10 - Dialectics I

In this chapter we will discuss dialectics proper. Previous chapters have shown that dialectics has a history which embraces many thousands of years and that it has passed through various stages of development. Disregarding the beginnings of dialectics in Indian and Chinese philosophy, the following main stages can be distinguished: (1) the dialectics of the old Greek philosophers of nature, Heraclitus; (2) the second and higher stage, the dialectics of Plato and Aristotle; (3) Hegelian dialectics; and (4) materialistic dialectics. Dialectics itself has undergone a dialectical development. Heraclitus, representing the first stage, develops the dialectics of one-after-the-other; Plato and Aristotle, representing the second stage, develop the dialectics of one-beside-the-other. The latter is in opposition to the dialectics of the first stage, being its negation. Hegel embraces both preceding stages of development and raises them to a higher stage. He develops the dialectics of the one-after-the-other and the one-beside-the-other, but in an idealistic form; in other words, he develops an historico-idealistic dialectics. The dialectics of antiquity was limited. I pointed out earlier where the basis of this limitation is to be found: namely, in the mode of production and the class relations of ancient Greece, particularly in the slave economy and in the social relations resulting from this slave economy. Not until the advent of materialistic dialectics were these limitations completely overcome. This new dialectics is not restricted; it is universalized. And here too I will briefly point out the relation of this universalized dialectics to the fundamental relations of class and production. Materialistic dialectics is developed by workers who have the working-class point of view, the point of view of the proletarian revolution. This point of view demands the elimination of classes, and consequently the elimination of class society. As a result of the elimination of classes and class society, the last limitation on social development and on the idea of development in general collapses. For Aristotle as well as for Plato and even Hegel, class society itself was something that development could not transcend. For Plato and Aristotle slave economy was the final and absolute limitation; with Hegel it was bourgeois society. In dialectical materialism, however, or from the viewpoint of the working class, class society is not in itself ultimate or final; it is by no means the absolute limit of social development. It is itself subject to dialectical development and is part of the stream of social evolution. The generalized and at the same time materialistic form of dialectics is a natural result of the generalization of this point of view. Incidentally, bourgeois scholars have of late again turned to dialectics. In one form or another Hegel's dialectics has been revived in Germany. In France the philosopher Bergson has developed a peculiar form of dialectics. However, this bourgeois form of dialectics, as it has reappeared in recent years, is idealistic throughout; or, as in the case of Bergson, it is an idealistic dialectics which at the same time reverts to the first stage of dialectics, i.e., to the point of view of Heraclitus.

Dialectics may be characterized as the science which treats of the general relations in nature, in history, and in thought. The opposite of dialectics is the isolated consideration of things, and the consideration of things only in their fixity. Dialectics, on the contrary, considers all things in their most general relations, in their mutual

relations of dependency, not in their fixity but in their development. The question might be raised: How do we know of this mysterious science of dialectics? Whence do we procure this wisdom? There are three sources from which dialectics has been derived. The first source is nature, the observation of natural processes. This is how Heraclitus first came upon the idea of dialectics. The second source is the observation of human history, of changes which occur from one historical period to another, changes in the mode of production, in the forms of society, and in the social ideologies associated with them. This is the second source. The third source is the examination of human thought itself. And here a further question is raised: what is the guarantee that the laws of dialectical thought that we find in our minds correspond to the laws of reality, to the laws of change in nature and in history? This correspondence is not particularly remarkable, for man, after all, is only a part of nature. Human thought is in the last analysis a natural process, of the same kind as any other process in nature. That human thought corresponds to the laws of nature and history is, therefore, not astonishing. Rather, one could say that the opposite would be inconceivable.

I cannot, of course, develop all the details of dialectics in a work of this scope. What I propose to do is to develop its fundamental laws. I shall give several examples as a basis of elucidation. Further, I shall point out the inner relation of these fundamental laws of dialectics. If these things are a bit difficult, it must be realized that they can only be understood through repeated study. Yet you will find that they are not incomprehensible secrets, that ultimately anyone can grasp them because everyone has the proof of dialectics in his daily experience as well as in his own mind. In this respect human thought is exactly the same in all minds.

The most general and the most inclusive fundamental law of dialectics from which all others are deduced is the law of the permeation of opposites. This law has a two-fold meaning: first, that all things, all processes, all concepts merge in the last analysis into an absolute unity, or, in other words, that there are no opposites, no differences which cannot ultimately be comprehended into a unity. Second, and just as unconditionally valid, that all things are at the same time absolutely different and absolutely or unqualifiedly opposed. This law may also be referred to as the law of the polar unity of opposites. This law applies to every single thing, to every single phenomenon, and to the world as a whole. Viewing thought and its method alone, it can also be put this way:

The human mind is capable of infinite condensation of things into unities, even the sharpest contradictions and opposites, and, on the other hand, it is capable of infinite differentiation and analysis of things into opposites. The human mind can establish this unlimited unity and unlimited differentiation because this unlimited unity and differentiation is present in reality.

A few examples will make this universal law clearer. Take the example of night and day. There is the twelve-hour day and the twelve-hour night, a period of light and a period of darkness. Day and night are opposites; they are mutually exclusive. This, however, does not prevent their being, at the same time, parts of a 24-hour day. Take



another example: male and female. These particular opposites played a decisive rule in ancient Chinese philosophy. The opposition between male and female was made the fundamental law of the philosophy of Yih-king or *Book of Transformations*. Male and female are opposites. But this does not prevent man and woman from being identical, from coinciding as forms of the more general concept, mankind. Insofar as they both are forms of mankind they are completely identical. Take other opposites, opposites in nature such as rest and motion. Common sense regards rest and motion as absolutely different processes. Whatever rests, rests, and whatever moves, moves. The physicist, however, conceives of rest merely as a special kind of motion and vice versa. He can look upon every motion as a kind of rest. Those who are acquainted with modern physics will have a better comprehension of these things. Let us consider another opposition which appears to be absolute: it is customary to oppose art and nature. As opposed to the creations of nature, art is a creation of man. Art, however, is also a part of nature, since the man who produces art is himself nothing but a part of nature. These examples could be multiplied indefinitely, and their implications are much more far-reaching than these simple examples indicate. I cite these, however, so that you will have as clear a conception as possible of this law.

Where only simple objects of direct perception are involved, and where strong social interests are not involved, this conception which asserts the identity of opposites will usually meet with no difficulties. Obstacles to this conception present themselves when social interests oppose it or when it is no longer a question of ideas or concepts closely related to direct sense perception but of general concepts far removed from sense perception. Here too I will give a few examples. It is very easy for us to realize today that the slave as well as the slave-owner is a human being, although socially they are the most extreme opposites conceivable. But if you had told a Greek, even the most intelligent, that the slave and the slave-owner were alike as human beings, he would not have accepted it under any circumstances and would have answered that they were absolutely opposed to each other and that there could be no identity between them. Or take a modern instance, the capitalist and the proletarian, the employer and the worker. Every bourgeois will take for granted that the capitalist and the proletarian are opposed. In fact, he will maintain that this opposition has always existed and will always exist, and that it cannot be bridged. In order to understand that this opposition is historical and transitory, one must have the point of view of the revolutionary working class. Or take another matter which is closer to you: we spoke before of man and woman. Everyone will admit that man and woman, from the point of view of natural science, are members of the same species, that man and woman are homogeneous, human in the same way. But as soon as I come to the social realm, contradictions immediately arise. A whole series of major historical revolutions would be necessary for mankind to conceive and apply the idea that woman should have the same human rights that man has. I don't have to tell you that in a great many countries of the Orient practical recognition of the equality between man and woman has not yet been realized. In all these cases a person who has not learned to think dialectically and who is moved by particular interests will maintain that these opposites are absolute. Only a person trained in dialectics will perceive the permeation of opposites. Of course, this does not depend only upon

training in dialectics, but also upon the class viewpoint, the social viewpoint which the individual adopts. I should like to consider one more question which belongs in the same field. You know that in the United States a social distinction is made between white and colored people, and in Europe between the European, who is supposed to represent a higher class, and the colored, black and yellow races. To comprehend, both theoretically and practically, that these are not absolute opposites but that they are united in the concept of mankind which is shared equally by the white, the black, and the yellow - to comprehend this requires not only a dialectically-trained mind, but also a definite class viewpoint. The untrained mind, however, is confronted with peculiar difficulties when general concepts are in question, difficulties which increase the more abstract, the more obscure, and the farther removed these concepts are from sense perception. That both day and night are parts of the twenty-four-hour day is easily understood. But it is more difficult with such opposites as true and false, and still more difficult with the concepts of being and non-being, which are the most general of all, the most inclusive, and, at the same time, the poorest in content. The average person will say: how can one unite such absolute opposites as being and non-being? Either a thing is or it is not. There can be no bridge or common ground between them. In the treatment of Heraclitus I have already shown how the concepts of being and non-being actually permeate each other in everything that changes, how they are contained in changing things at the same time and in the same way; for a thing which is developing is something and at the same time is not that something. For example: a child which is developing into a man is a child and at the same time not a child. So far as it is becoming a man, it ceases to be a child. But it is not yet a man, because it has not yet developed into a man. The concept of becoming contains the concepts of being and non-being. In this concept they permeate each other. Or let us take another example which I have already given, the example of ordinary locomotion, i.e., when a body moves from one place to another. While it is moving it is at a certain place, and at the same time it is not at this place. I will take a third opposition, a great stumbling-block for common sense, the opposition of material and mental, of materiality and thought, or of materiality and consciousness. The average untutored mind believes that these two opposites have nothing in common. The material is not mental, and the mental is not material, and that is that. We have already demonstrated how both become a unity; how thought, the mental, is a material activity and is therefore bound to the material.

Now I will show you the obverse side of the medal, the other aspect of the proposition of the permeation of opposites. We said at the outset that there were no opposites which could not be united, no opposites between which there was no identity. Now we maintain at the same time that there are no two things between which there is not some difference, some opposition. In other words: the opposition of things is just as unlimited as their identity. To make this clearer I will tell you a little anecdote taken from the history of philosophy. German philosopher, Leibnitz, who lived at the end of the seventeenth and during the first half of the eighteenth century, formulated the proposition that there are no two things which are not different. One day he was out walking with a group of courtiers. The conversation

turned upon this proposition and someone proposed to see whether or not there were two identical leaves on a certain tree standing by the wayside. The ladies and gentlemen of the court examined the tree and, of course, could not find two leaves which were perfectly identical. It is in the nature of things as well as in the nature of mind that no two things exist which do not differ. The same can be said of two rain drops. One will never be exactly like the other. Or take the smallest components of matter: two electrons which form parts of an atomic system can never be absolutely identical. We can say this with certainty even though we are not yet in a position to know anything about the individual peculiarities of electrons. (As far as atoms and molecules are concerned, we can at least determine differences in kind.) This is based on the proposition of the permeation of opposites, the proposition which says that the identity of things is just as unlimited as their difference. The capacity of the mind infinitely to equate things as well as to differentiate and oppose, corresponds to the infinite identity and difference of things in nature. This is primary. You will also find the same thing if you compare all the most general concepts, such as being and non-being, materiality and thought, etc. We have previously shown that being and non-being exist simultaneously in becoming, that they constitute identical elements of becoming. But this does not preclude their being opposites at the same time, i.e., being and non-being are different.

This law of the permeation of opposites will probably be new to you, something to which you have not previously given thought. Upon closer examination you will discover that you cannot utter a single meaningful sentence which does not comprehend this proposition. Except for sentences such as, "A lion is a lion," where the subject and predicate are identical, a meaningless sentence, this proposition can be found everywhere. Let us take a rather common sentence: "The lion is a beast of prey." A thing, A, the lion, is equated with a thing B. At the same time a distinction is made between A and B. So far as the lion is a beast of prey, it is equated with all beasts of that kind. At the same time, in the same sentence, it is distinguished from the kind. It is impossible to utter a sentence which will not contain the formula, A equals B. All meaningful sentences have a form which is conditioned by the permeation of opposites. This contradiction contained in every meaningful sentence, the equation and at the same time the differentiation between subject and predicate, had already been noticed by the so-called "sophists" of the classic period of Chinese philosophy when they argued whether or not "white horse" was really a horse.

Now our question is: what is the origin of this basic law? And this is the answer: in the first place, it is a generalization of experience. In daily life and in science we constantly have to search for the identities as well as the differences of things, and experience shows that there are no rigid, fixed limits to the discovery of either. Existing limits are mobile, relative, and temporary; they are constantly being broken, reset, and rebroken.

Secondly, this law of the permeation of opposites may be deduced from the examination of thought itself. It is a law of thought as well as of nature. In thought this law is inherent in the basis of consciousness, and this basis consists in the fact

that I know that I am a part of the universe, a part of being, and, on the other hand, in the fact that I know myself to be distinct from the external world, distinct from other things. The basic structure of thought is, from the very beginning, a polar unity of opposites, and from this all other laws of thought are derived. Furthermore, this polar unity of thought corresponds to the nature of all things.

## 11 - Dialectics II

So far we have discussed the most general and most fundamental law of dialectics, namely, the law of the permeation of opposites, or the law of polar unity. We shall now take up the second main proposition of dialectics, the law of the negation of the negation, or the law of development through opposites. This is the most general law of the process of thought. I will first state the law itself and support it with examples, and then I will show on what it is based and how it is related to the first law of the permeation of opposites. There is already a presentiment of this law in the oldest Chinese philosophy, in the *Book of Transformations*, as well as in Lao-tse and his disciples - and likewise in the oldest Greek philosophy, especially in Heraclitus. Not until Hegel, however, was this law developed.

This law applies to all motion and changes of things, to real things as well as to their images in our minds, i.e., concepts. It states first of all that things and concepts move, change, and develop; all things are processes. All fixity of individual things is only relative, limited; their motion, change, or development is absolute, unlimited. For the world as a whole absolute motion and absolute rest coincide. The proof of this part of the proposition, namely, that all things are in flux, we have already given in our discussion of Heraclitus.

The law of the negation of the negation has a special sense beyond the mere proposition that all things are processes and change. It also states something about the most general form of these changes, motions, or developments. It states, in the first place, that all motion, development, or change, takes place through opposites or contradictions, or through the negation of a thing.

Conceptually the actual movement of things appears as a negation. In other words, negation is the most general way in which motion or change of things is represented in the mind. This is the first stage of this process. The negation of a thing from which the change proceeds, however, is in turn subject to the law of the transformation of things into their opposites. The negation is itself negated. Thus we speak of the negation of the negation.

The negation of negation logically results in something positive, in thought as well as in reality. Negation and affirmation are polar concepts. Negation of the affirmation results in negation; negation of the negation equals affirmation. If I negate yes, I get no, the first negation. If I negate no, I get yes, the second negation. The result is something positive.

Thus even in ordinary speech an affirmation results from a double negation. However, and this is the distinctive feature, the old and the original are not re-established by the double negation in dialectics; it is not simply a return to the starting point, but something new arises. The thing or the condition with which the process started is re-established on a higher plane. Through the process of double negation new qualities and a new form emerge, a form in which the original qualities are retained and enhanced.

If the expression, law of the negation of the negation, sounds strange to you, you may also use the expression, law of the creation of the new out of the old, which is quite simple. This law has also been given a special formulation as a law of thought. As such it assumes the following form: the starting point is the positive proposition or the thesis. All thinking starts with some kind of proposition, some kind of statement. This proposition is negated or transformed into its opposite. This new proposition, which negates the first, I call the opposite or antithesis. This is the second stage. Then this second proposition, the antithesis, is again negated, and, as you know, we then (get the third proposition or synthesis, the negation of thesis and antithesis into a higher positive proposition effected by the further negation.

To understand this law correctly one must guard against two misinterpretations or distortions.

Thesis and antithesis are dialectically united in the final proposition, the synthesis. The dialectical union must not be mistaken for the mere summation of those qualities of two opposite things which remain after mutually exclusive qualities are cancelled. Dialectical development does not occur this way; this would simply be a mixture or effacement of opposites, a hindrance to dialectical development. It is a necessary characteristic of dialectical development that it fulfill itself through negations. Without negation there is no process, no development, no emergence of the new. In society this negation is expressed in struggle which abolishes the old. False dialectics or pseudo-dialectics says that a mutual understanding, a compromise is attempted between the old and the new, that an attempt is made to unite the old and the new, *without rejecting the old* (I do not wish to imply, of course. that all compromise is a negation of struggle. A compromise may even be a weapon of struggle.)

This misunderstanding of the dialectics of development is due to the fact that the role of negation as an essential factor in unification is forgotten. But there is also an opposite misunderstanding arising from a disregard of the fact that the new which emerges from the process of development not only negates or neutralizes the old, but also retains the old. If this is ignored, the dialectics of development is distorted, as, for example, in the case of the French philosopher, |Henri Bergson. With Bergson development becomes an incomprehensible, mystical process in which the relations between the old and the new are conceived of only as oppositions and not, at the same time, as identities.

The fundamental error in Bergson's conception of dialectics is his disregard of the fact that the new which has developed from the old, stands not only in opposition to the old, is not only its negation, but has, at the same time, something in common with the old. If one follows the thought of Bergson, it becomes evident that it cancels itself. There is only one kind of negation in which the thing negated has nothing more to do with that from which the development proceeded. This is complete or unconditioned negation or destruction. If I completely negate a thing, I destroy it, and development is completely stopped. If development is forced beyond its limits, as it is with Bergson, if it is made absolute, it is transformed into its opposite, into

fixity or lack of development. Negation in the dialectical process is not absolute, unconditioned, or complete; it is relative, conditioned, and partial. Dialectics concerns itself with definite, concrete negation. The first distortion of dialectics, the distortion which disregards negation, may be called the opportunistic distortion. The second in which the retention of the old in the new is disregarded may be called the anarchistic distortion. These two opposed distortions of dialectics, the opportunistic as well as the anarchistic, are alike in that both put an end to development - the first because it puts an end to negation as the moving force of development, and the second because it puts an end to the connection between opposites.

To make this general abstract law a little clearer, I will give a few examples. Take a grain of rice. Suppose I am giving you the problem of starting a developmental process with this grain of rice. How will you do it? You will put the grain of rice into the earth or into water according to whether you wish to plant wet or dry rice. What will happen? The first negation of the grain of rice occurs. The grain dissolves and out of it a rice plant develops. First negation: the grain of rice dissolves and changes into a plant. The original grain of rice is thereby destroyed. The second act proceeds of itself. The rice plant grows and finally develops rice grains; and as soon as it reaches the point where it produces seeds, grains of rice, it perishes. Second negation: The rice plant is destroyed and the grain is re-established, not the old but new grain, not *one* but many, and in all probability not of the old quality but with new characteristics. These slight variations connected with reproduction are, as a rule, inconsiderable and inconstant. However, their accumulation and consolidation result, according to the Darwinian theory, in the formation of new species from old. This process is an example of the negation of the negation. The double negation re-establishes the original state but on a higher plane and in a different quantity. The Bergsonian distortion of dialectics, it is obvious, is very closely connected with the present historical position of the bourgeoisie. The mystical or falsified dialectics of the Bergsonian type rejects historical regularity and replaces it by miracle, arbitrariness, and incomprehensibility whereby nothing is impossible.

I will illustrate the two misunderstandings or distortions of dialectics of which I have spoken by using the same example. The first distortion, the Bergsonian, or as one could say, the anarchistic distortion, may be illustrated thus: the law of dialectics demands that I negate the grain of rice. This can be done more thoroughly, it might be said. Instead of planting it in the earth, I can put it into a mortar and break it to pieces. As a consequence its negation will be so thorough that further development becomes impossible. This is the first distortion. It is apparent from this that for each thing there is a particular kind of negation which initiates a developmental process, a negation appropriate to the nature of the thing.

The second or opportunistic distortion of dialectics occurs when negation is ignored. The person to whom I give the grain of rice may say that it can develop "of itself". He neither crushes it nor puts it into the ground. He will let it lie on the table. And, of course, it will not develop into a plant. It will finally perish as an organism. This illustrates, incidentally, how these two opposed distortions of dialectics have the same result. No development occurs and the object is destroyed. On the other hand,

if I negate purposively and initiate a developmental process, the thing will be destroyed and, at the same time, it will develop into something new and higher. I will give you a second example drawn from the history of social or economic forms. You know that the very first mode of production of which we have any knowledge was primitive communism, i.e., the collective ownership of the decisive means of production by a small community of people. This primitive communism is the point of departure of all social development; it represents the thesis, the proposition. Primitive communism was dissolved, negated. In the place of collective ownership of the means of production and collective production, there appeared private production, slave economy, feudalistic production, simple commodity production, and finally capitalistic production. This is the antithesis. The negation of primitive communism is private production in its various historical forms. Then comes the third stage: the negation, in its turn, of private production, the re-establishment of collective property, of communism on a higher plane. Through this twofold negation the development returns to its starting point, but on a higher plane. Socialist or communist production, as it emerges from capitalist production, is no longer primitive communism, but communism at a much more developed stage since it retains the technical achievements of capitalism. Man is now in control of nature, whereas in the stage of primitive communism it controlled him. And the compass of modern communist society is vastly greater than primitive communism. At most, primitive communism could bring just a few communities together into an economic unit, whereas modern socialism or communism is capable of embracing the entire world economy. I have just emphasized the extent to which modern communism differs from primitive communism. Nevertheless, primitive communism is retained in modern communism. Common ownership of the means of production is re-established. Capitalism is negated, dissolved into communism. But this negation is not absolute or abstract; it is relative, concrete, conditioned. Capitalist technology as well as co-operation in the factory are retained. Finally, I wish to illustrate the two distortions of dialectics in terms of this same example. The first distortion, which disregards the necessity of dissolving or negating capitalism in order to attain socialism, is the well-known reformist or opportunistic conception. The second distortion of dialectics in this field, the distortion which overlooks the fact that elements of capitalism are taken over for the construction of socialism, is the conception of anarchists. For these reasons I have called the first the opportunistic and the second the anarchistic distortion of dialectics. History shows that these two distortions alternate and replace each other.

We now ask, where does the law of the negation of the negation come from? What is its relation to the first main proposition of the permeation of opposites? Obviously, it is related directly to the law of the permeation of opposites. It is the permeation of opposites as a process, a process in time, in sequence. The permeation of opposites as a process results in the law of the negation of the negation or the law of development through opposites. The first main proposition, the law of the permeation of opposites, represents the most general relations of things from the point of view of structure or static being. The second proposition of the negation of the negation represents the relation of things as a process, i.e., dynamically. These



two propositions are so related that they hold true for ever: process, for everything at the same time and to the same extent. The two propositions permeate each other; they form a coherent whole. The first gives a cross-section of the world, the second a longitudinal section.

We now come to the third main proposition of dialectics, the proposition of the transformation of quality into quantity and of quantity into quality. The proposition states that the mere augmentation of a thing or things produces a change of quality, of characteristics, and, conversely, that a qualitative change produces a quantitative one.

I should like to illustrate this with a few examples. Let us take the first one from physics - water. Water has a definite temperature and if you raise the temperature to a certain point you will not get hotter and hotter water, but at a certain point you will get steam. And, likewise, if you lower the temperature, the water does not become colder indefinitely; at a certain point it becomes ice. It freezes because of the decreased quantity of molecular motion. The temperature is merely an expression of the motion of the smallest particles, the molecules. If you change the quantity of the molecular motion or the speed with which the molecules move about, the characteristics will change at certain points, from gas to liquid, liquid to solid. Conversely, ice can only be changed to water or water to steam if the quantity of molecular motion is changed. The finest example of the law of transformation of quantity into quality is now being given by atomic research. The various qualities of the atoms of chemical elements are correlated with the simple numerical relations of their components of the next lowest order, the electrons.

An additional example from zoology and botany: you know that all plants and animals are composed, in the last analysis, of small elementary units, of cells. Every living being develops from one or several small cells. All differences of living creatures derive from different quantities of cells. If I increase the cells, other organisms emerge with different characteristics and forms.

Then there is the reverse process: it is possible to take a certain number of cells away from an organism without harming it. It will remain the same. But as soon as this is continued beyond a certain point, the organism is harmed. If a man's hair is cut off, he does not suffer, but if his arm or leg is cut off, he will undergo a qualitative change. In fact, he will probably die. You may draw a certain amount of blood from a person, but beyond a certain point, death will result - a qualitative change.

A last example from political economy: you have learned in political economy that a sum of money can only function as capital after it has reached a certain minimum amount. One dollar, for example, is not capital, and neither are ten dollars; 10,000 dollars, however, may function under certain conditions as capital. A mere change in quantity changes a sum of money into capital; it takes on different characteristics, produces a different effect - a qualitative change occurs. If capital is allowed to grow through concentration and centralization a new qualitative change takes place, namely, a change to monopoly capital. You know from your political economy that

monopoly capital has characterized an entire period of capitalist development, i.e., the imperialist period. And, on the other hand, as soon as you have monopolistic capitalism, this new quality is in turn transformed into quantitative relations and characteristics. Monopoly capital realizes a higher rate of profit than non-monopoly capital. Monopoly prices are generally higher than prices under free competition, etc.

We ask, finally, what relation obtains between this third proposition of dialectics and the first two. And the answer is clearly that the law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa merely represents a special application of the first proposition, the law of the permeation of opposites. Quality and quantity are polar opposites. Quality is quantity analyzed; quantity is quality analyzed. An apple, a pear, and a plum all have different qualities. They can only be counted together if their different qualities are abstracted from them or negated. I cannot add an apple, a pear, and a plum; I can only say: three pieces of fruit. In other words, negated quality is quantity; negated quantity is quality. These opposites are contained in each thing. Each thing has a definite size, quantity, or degree, and at the same time definite characteristics. All things have, at the same time, quality and quantity. As opposites they permeate each other and are transformed into each other.

This brings me to the end of dialectics. Of course, it must not be assumed that knowledge of these few propositions makes one completely familiar with dialectics. A long list of other propositions, which we cannot discuss here, derive from these few main propositions. Nor must it be assumed that the mere memorization of formulas is the key to dialectics. The important thing is to be conscious of the dialectical nature of things and of thought. Dialectical thinking is not magic. Neither is it part of everyone's natural equipment. It is an art which must be learned and practised. The most general characteristic of dialectical thought is the study of things in their interrelations, in both one-beside-the-other relations and one-after-the-other relations, - that is, in their changes.

## 12 - Theory of History and Dialectical Materialism I

We now turn from dialectics to the theory of history in dialectical materialism. Like dialectics, the theory of historical materialism is not a means of mere *contemplation*, but it is an instrument for action. Revolutionary theory is an indispensable means of revolutionary practice, of revolutionary politics. For the revolutionary politician historical or dialectical materialism is what the compass, watch, and sextant are for the captain, or the laws of physics for the technician. Dialectics is the universal instrument; theory of history is a special instrument, the instrument, namely, which makes possible scientific orientation to social relations, which makes possible the establishment of their laws of motion. Only through knowledge of laws of motion is scientific prediction of the future possible, and only on this basis is appropriate revolutionary action possible. The materialistic theory of history is epoch-making precisely because it is the first to permit us to foresee the main features of historical development and purposively influence it, and, within certain limits to master it. Thus it is not only, and not chiefly, the explanation of past history, but also, and above all, *the theoretical basis of the way man makes history*. Understanding of the laws of nature is the basis for free command over it. Understanding of the material laws of history opens the road to human freedom. Divorced from revolutionary practice the materialistic theory of history would be lifeless. It has been said: he who understands only chemistry, does not understand even it. He who seeks to understand materialistically only the past, does not understand even it.

In one of the previous chapters we have already formulated the basis of historical materialism by saying that the manner and mode in which men earn their living determines all other aspects of social life. This manner and mode determines, above all, social viewpoints, thoughts, or ideas, i.e., "social consciousness". In other words, material social life determines ideal social life; or, to use a Marxist expression, social being determines social consciousness. Since the material determines the ideal - even in social matters - this doctrine is called historical materialism. From what has already been said about dialectics it should now be evident that this doctrine is a special application of materialistic dialectics to the social relations of man.

At first glance this doctrine appears very reasonable, but one must not overlook the fact that it runs directly counter to so-called common sense. Common sense postulates the matter thus: all human action clearly proceeds from the mind, from aims which man sets. In accordance with the aims man sets for himself, the plans he has, he will act thus and thus, so that one can say that common or everyday sense is in no way disposed to the materialistic theory of history. But if one looks more closely, one discovers that this conception only touches the surface; for immediately the further question is raised, how the aims, the ideas in the human mind according to which man acts, emerge. Whence comes this or that content of social thought? Or, to take a concrete example, how does it happen that the Chinese peasant in the period of Kung-tse in the sixth century B.C. thought very differently from the peasant in the year 1927? Or how does it happen that the Chinese entrepreneur has a wholly different attitude towards strikes and trade unions from the Chinese worker? As soon

as we ask such questions, we at once emerge from the realm of mere ideas and are forced to look for the reasons why men a thousand years ago had other ideas than they have today, and why today the peasant class has ideas different from the entrepreneur or the worker. Merely to explain these different ideas through other ideas is not to explain, but to abandon explanation. In order to understand how in the course of history certain social ideas have been destroyed, how one set has been superseded by another, or how in one and the same society different classes can have diametrically opposite ideas concerning what is right, what is good, etc. - to understand this we must go back to the material bases of the ideas. We must go from social consciousness back to social being. Historical materialism does not deny the fact and the influence of thought and consciousness. On no account does historical materialism maintain that men have no thoughts in their minds, or that they do not act according to certain ideas, but it explains the ideas and aims by the material structure of society. Contrary to all idealistic theories of history, it does not consider thought basic and primary, but derived, dependent, secondary - something which is an effect of certain material relationships.

We now want to determine more exactly the nature of this foundation, this manner and mode in which men earn their living, or, as Marx called it, the *Mode of Production*. What is the mode of production? By mode of production dialectical materialism understands the reciprocal relations into which men enter with each other when they produce or work; or, to put it very tersely, the reciprocal relations of men through their work. In the last analysis it is a question of how men are grouped in regard to the means of production. In other words: to whom do the means of production belong, and how are they utilized?

We will best understand the meaning of "mode of production," if we take some one form of production and determine its foundation and essence. Let us take the capitalistic mode of production. Its characteristic is that the means of production, the machines, factories, raw material, etc., are separated from the person who produces, the worker. We have a class of men who are the owners of the means of production, but who do not operate them. We have, on the other side, a class of men, the workers, who own no means of production at all, but only their labor power, men who can only work when they are employed by the owners of the means of production, the capitalists. The second characteristic is that these are legally free men, and the third characteristic is that the means of production, machines, tools, raw materials, are socially operated; that is, there are always a number of workers working together at a machine, in a factory.

Let us contrast this with simple commodity production, as we have it in a small handicraft or in a small or medium-sized agricultural economy. Here the relation of men to each other is different from that under capitalistic conditions. The person who does the work is also owner of the means of production; the farmer owns the land, the farm buildings, the agricultural instruments, and the cattle; the handicraftsman owns his shop, his tools, and his raw materials. The second criterion of this simple commodity production is that there is no collective work by many in a single enterprise as is the case with capitalism, but the individual producer works

with his own tools. These means of production are the private property of the producer and are managed by him privately. In agricultural or handicraft enterprise we have co-operation of the producer with the tool belonging to him. But - and this is characteristic - we have no direct, planful co-operation of these individual producers in a collective economy. Society is broken up into a vast number of producers, each one of whom works independently of the others. In capitalistic production conscious co-operation of many men extends to the factory or to a number of factories which are bound together in an economic unit. In simple commodity production planning embraces, at most, an artisan and a few journeymen or a farmer and his family.

A third characteristic example is primitive communism in its different forms. Here the society collectively owns the important means of production. Individual ownership of the means of production is here only of minor importance. Labor is directly social. This is true neither in simple commodity production nor in capitalistic economy. These are a few examples of the relation of men to the means of production which characterize the different production systems or modes of production. They are, of course, only examples and not complete presentations.

The production system or the relation of men directly in production is also determined by the *apportionment* of the products. For this the terms distribution and circulation are used. This kind of determination is very clear under capitalist relations. The class to whom the means of production belong is accordingly also the proprietor of the labor products, the commodities. The working class, not being the owner of the means of production, has therefore no claim to the products of its labor. It receives only a part of production, it gets its living only in the form of wages directly from the hands of the class which owns the means of production. On the other hand, we see that in primitive communist relations, where there was no private ownership of the means of production, the collective product just as inevitably belongs to society and is partly consumed in common, and partly divided among individuals according to set rules. Thus the mode of production, the relation of men to the means of production, also determines the mode of distribution in the given society.

The mode of production or form of production must not be confused with the concept of branches of industry. Capitalist mode of production, feudal mode of production, primitive communism, slave economy, are all forms of production or modes of production, because at their base lies a thoroughly distinct mode of social behavior in production. But one cannot speak of hunting, fishing, or agriculture as modes of production. Hunting, fishing, agriculture are not different forms of production, but only different branches of industry or sources of livelihood, since every one of these branches of industry can be socially conducted in highly varying manner. You have agriculture under primitive communist relationships; you have agriculture carried on by slave owners; you have agriculture of the feudal variety throughout the Middle Ages; you have agriculture under the relationships of simple commodity economy, and finally you have agriculture under capitalistic relationships. The oldest fishing enterprise was certainly communistic, carried on co-operatively by a group of fishermen. Then you have fishing as simple commodity production where

the individual fisherman goes out with his own net. Today, fishing is a modern capitalist industry in which a capitalist is the owner of fishing boats with the necessary nets, etc., and hires wage laborers.

The mode of production or the system of production must also be distinguished from another concept which is confused with it, the concept of technology. The mode of production is a relationship of men to each other, a social relationship. Technology pertains to the relation of men to nature. Therefore, such expressions as machine production, etc., betoken, not mode of production or production system, but a certain technology of production. This is the case when we speak of Stone Age, Copper Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age. These are different periods of historical and prehistorical times in which stone, copper, bronze, and iron tools were employed. This is not a classification according to the mode of production, but according to kinds of technology.

We have seen that the mode of production is decisive and basic for the establishment and development of all other social relationships. It is, so to speak, the motor which drives the entire social development. But one can pose the further question: what determines the development of the mode of production? What determines society's transition from primitive communism to simple commodity production or to feudalism, from feudalism to capitalism, from capitalism to socialism?

The general law which governs the changes of the mode of production is the development of the productivity of labor. Productivity of labor may also be designated as the fruitfulness or yield of labor. If one surveys the whole range of forms of production which humanity has passed through, one finds that the progress from one mode of production to another is governed by the increase of the productive forces. This is the general law. The foundation and presupposition of this law is that each mode of production reaches a definite peak of productive forces, a definite peak of technology. The dynamic impetus from one mode of production to another, the impetus which pushes development forward, is the opposition developed within a given mode of production, the contra-diction between the mode of production and the productive forces. I will further explain what we mean by productive forces. They are all those forces which contribute towards the manufacture of a certain number of products. Every previous mode of production permitted the development of the productive forces or the yield of labor only up to a certain point. As soon as this point was reached, this mode of production, formerly an improvement, became a hindrance. This obstacle is cleared away by a transition to a new and higher mode of production - a transition which, as soon and as long as society is divided into classes, into ruling and ruled, takes place through a social revolution.

An example taken from the development of agriculture makes this clear: the first, primitive agriculture was carried on communistically; it was a community enterprise. This primitive communistic agriculture went through a series of stages of technical and economic development. It developed agricultural economy up to the point

where it became a hindrance. There followed the transition to another form of production, let us say, to peasant economy, to simple commodity production. Communal ownership of arable land was replaced by individual ownership of the land and the means of agricultural production. This individual ownership of land made possible a much more intensive cultivation which increased the forces of production. China is probably the country in which the increase in the productivity of peasant economy has reached its highest point. In its turn this peasant economy also reaches its limits, and appears backward as soon as higher methods are developed, as soon as agriculture can be mechanized. Under peasant relationships one cannot employ steam power, electricity, or any of the discoveries of modern technology. This already presupposes the transition to capitalistic enterprise. The latter in turn develops its own particular bounds or limits which are conditioned by peculiarities of the capitalistic mode of production. The particular economic limits which the capitalistic system of production imposes upon the development of agriculture you probably know from discussions of ground-rent in political economy. The next step towards a broader development beyond this stage will be the transition to a socialist agriculture. The persistent force that governs the transition from one mode of production to another in agriculture is the advance in the productivity of labor.

The advance from one mode of production to another does not occur of itself; it is not automatic. It is made by men, and as a rule it is made by that part of society or that class in society to which the existing mode of production has become a hindrance to development and whose productive role already supplies the pattern for a higher mode of production.

We may now consider classes. One speaks of oppressed or exploited, of feudal, and of capitalistic classes. Classes have not always existed and one can foresee that they will not exist forever. A division of society into classes appeared only after a relatively long development in consequence of the division of labor which was introduced into the primitive classless society. The class structure was historically introduced through the disintegration of primitive communism, and it is intimately bound up with the establishment of private property. Class membership is determined by one's relation to the means of production. If we examine contemporary capitalist society, what chief classes do we distinguish and *on what basis* do we distinguish them?

1. The owners of the means of production, who do not themselves work and who set these means of production in motion through outside labor power - the capitalist class
2. Those who do not own the means of production, who place their labor power at the disposal of the capitalist - the workers.

These are the fundamental classes of contemporary capitalist society. Their difference is determined by their relation to the means of production.

3. We also distinguish a class which is still pre-capitalist, but which exists under capitalistic conditions; the class which owns its means of production and itself works, the small farmers, the handicraftsmen, or simple commodity producers.

Or let us take Greek or Roman antiquity. Here you can distinguish on one hand slave-owners, owners of the means of production and of slaves, and on the other, the slaves, those who do not own the means of production. They were not even free sellers of their labor power; they were simply a commodity. More-over, in antiquity there were also handicraftsmen and free farmers, simple commodity producers. Here too, as under capitalist relationships, class membership was determined by one's relation to the means of production.



### 13 - Theory of History and Dialectical Materialism II

As I have already explained, the formation of classes grows out of the social division of labor. But it is not true that every social division of labor coincides with the formation of classes. Division of labor is manifest in an Australian horde, for example, but there are no classes. There is certainly division of labor in a peasant family which employs no outside labor power, but this division is certainly not based on class differences. Classes do not emerge until the division of labor reaches the point where a surplus product beyond what is necessary is regularly produced and a social group or social groups regularly appropriate, in whole or in part, the surplus product of another group. Economic exploitation of one part of society by another is the foundation of the class structure. In isolated, irregular cases, there also occurs exploitation of one communistically producing society by another. This is actually one of the most important starting points for exploitation and class structure within the same society.

For class structure it is essential that the exploitation occur within *the same* society and that it no longer be sporadic and irregular, but regular, periodic and self-generating. The basis of castes and ranks is likewise the class structure, though here other determining factors are involved, such as heredity, marriage only within the group, etc. The class structure is a *general* foundation which does not prevent the structure of castes and ranks from deviating, in individual cases, more or less widely from this foundation. At the same time, it consolidates and guarantees exploitation. It is in the nature of every class structure to be grouped about these two poles: about those who produce surplus product or surplus value and about those who, without working themselves, appropriate the surplus product. In short, class opposition revolves about the opposition between groups of exploiters and groups of exploited.

Accordingly, when I say classes, I necessarily mean *class opposition*; that is, the presence of economic groups with opposing interests. A given class society need in no way be limited to two classes, to an exploiting and an exploited. There can also be more classes, and as a rule there are. But because of its opposite relation the role of exploiter or exploited is decisive. It must be carefully noted that class opposition signifies no more than that in a given class society there are classes with opposing economic interests; and this means, in the last analysis, that there are classes with opposing functions or roles, in production, in exchange, and in social life generally. Class opposition is thus something objective, actual, something independent of the consciousness or the recognition of men. It is as objective as the opposition between positive and negative electricity. This latter opposition does not depend on whether the electric particles know they are positive or negative. Neither does it depend on whether men observe this opposition or not.

The opposing interests of classes or class opposition necessarily produces the struggle of classes or class struggle. Class struggle thus means no more than class opposition breaking out into action. Class opposition as process or as occurrence is class struggle. Class struggle is thus the mode of existence, the mode of life of a class

society. Class society without class struggle is as inconceivable as matter without motion, or as a piece of matter without molecular heat vibrations.

The class struggle, therefore, is not an invention of Karl Marx. In the first place, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were not the first to discover that there is a class struggle in history and that there are classes; this discovery was made before them. What Marx and Engels established was not the presence of classes and the presence of class struggles, but their *fundamental significance* for the course of history in class society. They perceived in the class struggle the key to all history since the emergence of classes. This is what is new in the theory. In the second place, it is, naturally, ridiculous to assume that there was no class struggle before Marx and Engels, that these two first provoked the class struggle. There have been class struggles as long as there have been class societies. They already existed several thousands of years before the birth of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It was the contribution of Marx and Engels that they first of all brought to the working class as well as to other exploited classes a *clear consciousness* of their interests and of the opposition of their interests to those of the exploiting classes, and that they thereby introduced planning, consciousness, and organization into the class struggle of the workers. When one speaks of the relation of Communists and Socialists to the class struggle, one always implies certain forms and a certain content of the class struggle: the higher, conscious, organized forms of the class struggle, in contrast to the elementary and unorganized forms.

The class struggle embraces a whole host of different forms. These forms of the class struggle are as various as the forms of motion of a piece of matter. Let us take a piece of ice. At a low temperature the molecular motions slow; at a high temperature it is fast. At a certain temperature and pressure, the physical condition of ice changes; it becomes fluid or gaseous. Its forms of motion can be varied. We speak of mechanical motion, heat motion, chemical motion, etc. Within mechanical motion we further distinguish different degrees: faster, slower, rest, etc.

Just as you have different forms and degrees here, so you have different forms of the class struggle. I will cite a few examples of the different forms of class struggle of the working class. The most primitive form in which the working class rebelled against its oppression by newly established capitalism was the destruction of machines, the Luddite movement. The destruction of machinery was accompanied by sabotage; houses of the manufacturers were set on fire, etc. This was only an early form of motion. There to follow forms of struggle such as the individual strike, strike in one factory, strike in one branch of industry, strike in all industries in a locality, and, as the most highly developed form of strike, the political or economic general strike. Further, we have the class struggle in the political realm: verbal and written agitation and propaganda, election struggles, demonstrations; and, finally, the struggle proceeds to different forms of armed struggle: partisan struggle, armed insurrection, and revolutionary war. Every one of these forms of struggle in turn has its peculiar divisions, phases, and sub-forms. That sometimes peace treaties are concluded and pauses occur in the class struggle does not alter the fact that class struggle is a *perennial phenomenon* in class society. A war does not cease being a war even

though battles are not always raging: sometimes there are marches, there are pauses in the fight, armistices are declared, but this does not alter the fact that a war is a unitary, connected action.

The same is true of the class struggle. It not only has various forms and sub-forms, and various degrees. It too is interrupted by armistices, peace treaties, etc. These interruptions do not as a rule apply to the class struggle in general, but only to *particular forms* of the class struggle. Even the reformists, who in principle are for class collaboration between bourgeoisie and proletariat, are unable to abolish the class struggle in its entirety. They try to limit it, to check it, to disperse it; above all they try to prevent its sharpening into the armed struggle of the working class for power. But they too cannot abolish it.

Thus the "recognition" or "non-recognition" of the class struggle has very little practical significance. The forms of struggle, the forms in which a class struggle is enacted, are not arbitrary; they are determined by the peculiar nature of the class which struggles, as well as by the nature of the classes against which the struggle is waged, and also by those allied with these; that is, by the total interrelation and degree of maturity of *all* classes. For example: the strike is a natural form of struggle for the working class, because it corresponds to its role in production. On the other hand, the strike was impossible as a weapon for the bourgeoisie when it struggled for power against the feudal classes. The bourgeoisie, when it struggled for power against feudalism, employed wholly different means in the preparatory stage of the struggle: chiefly, the means of refusing to assent to taxes. The bourgeoisie used its money power to extort, to buy, or to acquire underhandedly certain rights from the feudal classes or the absolute monarchy. In 1905 in Russia and today in China we see sections of the bourgeoisie seizing upon the weapon of the strike. This is a sign that the working class already occupies the leading role in the struggle and that the proletarian forms of struggle are carried over to sections of the bourgeoisie. Thus the forms of struggle of the different classes - of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the feudal classes, and the agricultural classes - are not arbitrary but they depend on the economic and social role of each individual class and on its relation to all other classes.

Just as various and manifold as the forms of the class struggle are the contents or the objects of the class struggle. These contents can be economic, political or cultural. They can consist of a struggle for higher wages, or a struggle for the bettering of working conditions. They can be a struggle for the election of a parliamentary representative or of a president of the state. The struggle for the development of schools has a cultural content; the struggle for the control of the army, a politico-military content; the exposition of a philosophy, a cultural content. Thus very different contents or objects can lie at the basis of the class struggle, can be the aim, the purpose, of the class struggle. I want to stress that these contents, just like the forms of the struggle, are determined by the nature of the class. The bourgeoisie in its struggle against feudalism will choose contents different from those of the working class in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, or the peasantry in its struggle against feudalism.

Class opposition produces the class struggle; the class struggle *at a certain level* produces class consciousness or class ideology. Class consciousness and class ideology react upon the class struggle. Now we pose the question: what is class consciousness? Class consciousness is the consciousness, first, of the community of interests and of the position of the members of a class, and second (and this is linked with the first), the consciousness of the opposition of the interests of this class to the interests of another class.

This consciousness that all workers have common interests, or all small farmers have common interests. This consciousness of the oppressed and exploited classes, is not present from the outset. It emerges only through the struggle. The class struggle of the oppressed and exploited classes is at first carried on planlessly, instinctively, without a common consciousness. Class opposition which has broken out into struggle produces first of all the consciousness of the opposition of the oppressed to the oppressing classes, and then this produces the consciousness of the community of interests of the oppressed class or classes. This is no wonder, since the exploited or oppressed classes are ruled not only by authority, but also by intellectual power; they are ruled by the ideas of the ruling classes. Class consciousness is first developed in struggle; in the course of the struggle it becomes clearer and sharper, at the same time extending itself to an ever greater section of the class. At first, as a rule, only a small minority understands that the members of a class have common interests. Gradually this class consciousness becomes more and more clearly defined. There arises a need for special organs which will embody the most enlightened consciousness of a class. From these interests there spring up what we know as political parties. Political parties constitute that part of a class which through an especially clear consciousness defines its position and tasks and is able to lead the struggle of the class planfully, consciously, and in an organized fashion.

Class consciousness can reflect the interests of a class more or less correctly or falsely. Therefore, to avoid confusion, we must distinguish between class consciousness in its narrower and wider senses. Class consciousness in its wider sense embraces the false as well as the correct consciousness of the interests and position of the class. For this the expression, class ideology, is used; that is, collective ideas which a class builds up about its interests, regardless of whether its ideas are true or false. In the narrower sense, class consciousness means correct class consciousness, the correct conception of the interests and position of a class. In this sense it is used in connection with the working class. When we speak of more or less class conscious workers, we mean that they see, more or less clearly, the unity, the identity of interests of the working class and their opposition, in principle, to the interests of the bourgeoisie.

False class consciousness is also called class illusions; that is, fancies which a class has of its position and its interests. Such fancies, such class illusions, occur just as often as a single individual has illusions concerning himself. As a dialectical materialist one must distinguish between what a class really is and what it believes itself to be. These are two different things, which must be kept rigidly separate. One of the best known and most frequent of these illusions is the assumption of exploiting and exploited

classes that as long as they struggle in common against a third class, they have no interests opposed to each other. Furthermore, I should like to point out that there are not only self-deceptions; there are also, of course, conscious deceptions, ideas which one class sets in circulation to deceive and misguide other classes. Self-deception proceeds very easily into conscious deception of others. All ruling classes have used and use certain means to set false ideologies in motion, to deceive oppressed classes in regard to their interests. As a rule they do not thereby deceive themselves. Fundamentally the entire press, literature, and the schools of the ruling class are a means of spreading false ideologies, of confusing the class consciousness of the oppressed classes. As the highest degree of class consciousness we can designate the scientific comprehension of the nature of class and its laws of motion on the basis of dialectical materialism.

Class position or class membership determines *in general* the class consciousness or the class ideology, as well as class illusions. This law is valid for the great mass of every class, for the class average. To make this clearer, I shall give you an example from physics. You know that in the theory of gases one makes certain declarations of law about the collective motion of a gaseous mass and about the average motion of a particle of gas. But one is not able to give an account of the motion of every single particle of gas.

Such laws one calls laws of averages or statistical laws. Something similar is found in the theory of the average behavior of the smallest part of the atom, although the motion of every one of the smallest parts of the atom cannot be followed. Laws in the realm of the social have a similar character. The determination of class consciousness through class position is valid for the average of the membership of a class, for the class as a collectivity. This does not mean that individual class members do not shift from one class to another or do not assume the consciousness of another class - either above or below.

As an example of such phenomena we may take the case of Marx and Engels, the founders of the dialectical-materialistic world-view. Marx and Engels both came from the bourgeois class and became advocates of the working class. They changed their class consciousness; they elaborated scientific socialism and for decades led the struggle of the working class. They crossed from one class to another. On the other hand you have a number of individual cases of workers who go over to the bourgeoisie and develop not proletarian but bourgeois class consciousness and become propagandists of this class consciousness. These individual cases do not undermine the general law. Rather, they are a part of this general law, just as accidents or individual deviations are part of regularity in general. Such phenomena as the passage of individuals from one class to another are frequent at crises in revolution, at such crises, for example, as the transformation of a bourgeois revolution into a proletarian revolution. This applies to Marx and Engels; it also applies to the history of the Russian Revolution, and, last but not least, to the history of revolutionary movements after the war.

Classes are not the only groupings of men in a given class society. Besides class groupings there are numerous other groupings. I refer to groups which are formed around occupations, groupings of men according to religion, according to level of culture, according to race, according to national citizenship, etc. Of these groupings the last named, those according to race and national citizenship, are especially important, and these groupings have also been made the point of departure for certain theories of history. There is a theory of history which claims that race is the decisive factor. Historical materialism does not deny that alongside of class groupings there have existed and still exist numerous other groupings. But it maintains that class grouping is decisive for the course of the history of class society, whereas national, religious and other groupings play a secondary role.

In conclusion I will consider two other concepts which play an important role in the theory of history, the concepts of revolution and evolution. The relation of these two concepts is correctly understood only if understood dialectically; that is, if it is understood that these two concepts, revolution and evolution, are opposites and at the same time constitute a unity.

By revolution one means fundamental change in the relations of power between classes so that the previous ruling class is overthrown and replaced by a class formerly oppressed. Every transition from one mode of production to another is accomplished in class society by political and social revolution. The external characteristic of a revolution is suddenness and violence, but one cannot say conversely that every violent or sudden act represents a revolutionary event. Revolution depends upon a fundamental change in the power relations of the classes. It achieves the violent solution of existing fundamental social contradictions, of existing fundamental class oppositions. It is the dialectical or progressive impulse of history under class relationships.

Now let us take the second concept, evolution or development. Evolution designates social development *within* a given power relation of classes. The relation of the two concepts in class society is as follows: revolution extracts the essence of accomplished evolution; evolution or development prepares the way for revolution. On the other hand, every completed revolution, every transformation of a given fundamental power relation of classes, brings about a new evolution. Revolution is the form of the passage from one form of society to another under the conditions of class society. Mark well the last qualification: *under the conditions of class society* the passage from one social form to another is accomplished through revolution. This does not apply when there is no class society. We have had a number of forms of society before the emergence of class society which dissolved each other without social revolution. And, moreover, after contemporary class society is abolished, we shall have a social development which will not be accomplished in revolutionary forms.

## 14 - Ancient Chinese Philosophy I

Now that we have concluded with the materialistic theory of history, I want to present a brief survey of ancient Chinese philosophy, the Chinese philosophy of the classical period. Of course I cannot launch into a detailed discussion; I can only outline the most important points of view. I approach this topic from the standpoint of our general theme, therefore, with the question: in what relation does Chinese philosophy stand to the modern world-view, to dialectical materialism? Can some of its ingredients be imported into dialectical materialism? Can we, through recasting, through reforming, bring it into line with dialectical materialism, or is it necessary to make a radical break with it?

To find the answer we will consider the following questions in detail: (1) In what relation does ancient Chinese philosophy stand to religion? (2) Under what economic and social conditions did this ancient philosophy flower? What was its historical role and what historical role can it play today? And (3.) what is the place of ancient Chinese philosophy in history generally, what fundamental tendencies of philosophy are represented in it and what permanent contributions has it made?

The first question I want to deal with is the relation of ancient Chinese philosophy to religion. In this regard there is a fundamental difference between Chinese philosophy, on the one hand, and Greek and part of Indian philosophy on the other. In Greece and to a certain extent in India, philosophy marked the beginning of a criticism of popular religion, the beginning of the search for a natural, materialistic explanation of the world. This was especially true in Greece. But we have also seen that a materialistic school of philosophy developed in India. With the exception Yang-tse, the theoretical and practical materialist, who was, however, an isolated phenomenon and established no school, Chinese classical philosophy left the popular and state religion untouched. Confucius dealt with the popular and state religion chiefly as a means of regulating political and social life. He fixed the conditions of traditional religious rituals and ceremonies, those of ancestor-worship, as well as those associated with the worship of the nature gods. As for Lao-tse philosophic speculation was linked with the tradition of soothsaying and with the germs of philosophy or philosophic lore to which it gave rise, germs such as were contained in Yih-king. Accordingly, one must guard against reading things into the earliest ideas of Chinese popular and state religion which were not originally there. Christian missionaries and sinologists sought and found monotheism, the belief in a single god. They considered Shang-ti, the lord of heaven, to be this single god.

The wish to find Christian ideas, or at least footholds for Christian ideas, in Chinese popular religion was here father to the thought. Actually, this Shang-ti was no more the sole and exclusive god than Zeus was among the Greeks or Jupiter among the Romans. In ancient Chinese religion Shang-ti was never more than the *highest* god; he was not the *only* god. In this very early period this highest god was thought of as a person. Traces of this are still found in the Yih-king, the earliest collection of Chinese songs.

The songs of Yih-king come from a period corresponding to the period of the epic poems of the Greeks, the Iliad and Odyssey. The oldest religious ideas of the Chinese belong to the most primitive that we know: worship of the spirits of the ancestors, or animism. With this earliest stage, with the belief in the spirits of deceased ancestors (which is the first religious stage of all peoples), is linked a later stage, the culture of nature spirits - spirits of the mountains, of the earth, of heaven, of the rivers, etc. The worship of these spirits and the ideas held about them are adapted to the needs of a primitive agricultural people. It is also characteristic that the worship of these powers of nature was restricted to the ruling feudal nobility and officialdom. All this means that the ideas of nature spirits and their worship were the product of a much higher stage of development. The fact that the worship of ancestral spirits, the earliest and most primitive stage of Chinese popular religion, was the starting point of Chinese philosophy is, of course, significant for its development - the more so since it did not critically oppose popular and state religion as did ancient Greek natural philosophy and Indian materialism.

I want to stress this: even discounting these very definite facts which contradict the idea that monotheism prevailed in ancient China, all historical experience would still oppose the notion that monotheism came first in the religious development of a people and that belief in ancestors and nature spirits did not develop until later. Yet this notion is upheld by a new ethnographic school in Europe led by Father W. Schmidt and allied with the Vatican and Catholic missionary activity. Basically we have here simply an old missionary yarn poorly concealed in the cloak of science.

I now turn to the question of why there was this uncritical relation between ancient philosophy and the popular and state religion in China. Why is there no evidence of conflict with religion? The first and basic reason I find in the fact that in ancient China no special priestly caste or class was established. Priestly functions in ancient China were, as you know, joined with those of the father of the family, the elders of the tribe, the feudal lords, and the feudal monarchs and officials. Together with political functions they practised priestly duties. Priestly functions in ancient China were an appendage of family and tribal government and of political power. This, in one respect, is plainly connected with the fact that in ancient China the state and state authority developed from the functions of management and control of irrigation, of canal-building, etc.

The second reason: in ancient China, in contrast with Greece, we have a very weak and insignificant development of commodity production and, accordingly, of manufacture and of industry as well - i.e., of factors which impel a natural explanation of the world. The economy of classical China was very predominantly a nature economy, agriculture on a primitive communistic base with a feudal superstructure. Ancestor worship and the worship of nature spirits in this period corresponded completely with economic and social relations. Ancestor worship secured and consecrated the social bonds within the broad kinship of families and tribes. The worship of nature spirits provided the spiritual means of unifying the feudal state which transcended the tribal organizations; it also provided the means of binding these tribal organizations to the state. Ancestor worship and worship of



nature spirits corresponded perfectly with the economic and class structure of ancient Chinese society; it molded itself to this structure in the closest possible fashion.

Thus is explained, I believe, the peculiar behavior of Chinese philosophy towards the popular and state religion. It is a fact that this behavior was not one of conflict. I now turn to the second question, namely, the question of the social and political role of ancient Chinese philosophy and its various tendencies. I shall try to sketch in a few strokes a general picture of the period in which ancient Chinese philosophy bloomed. First a few dates: in round numbers, it is the period of the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ, a time, incidentally, of great religious and philosophical crisis both in India and in Greece.

Confucius appeared in the sixth century B.C.; he was born in 551 and died in 478. Lao-tse's birth is now set in 604. As for the technical aspect of this period, it is very important to keep in mind that it marked the boundary line between the bronze age and the iron age, between the period when bronze was the chief material for making tools and the period when iron was chiefly used. The bronze age in China stretched from 2000 to 5000 B.C.; the Iron Age from 500 on. Iron was first used only for utensils and tools for women, such as needles, and not until later for weapons. This was evidently because not until later was it learned how to temper iron so that it could be used for making weapons as well.

These centuries were extremely turbulent. It was the crisis of feudalism, the period of the overthrow of the central feudal power, of violent conflict among feudal states for supremacy. It was a period in which the border states, through great struggles, conquered new territories from the neighboring barbarian hordes. The struggles with the border peoples, which were undertaken by the border states, developed the military power of these states. It was therefore no accident that it was precisely the state of Tsin, which had long waged such wars, that was later able to establish the centralized absolute monarchy.

As far as the feudal classes were concerned, the period of feudal wars was a time of the greatest uncertainty in all vital relationships, a time of violent turns of fate. Many feudal groups succumbed in war; their fate hung continually in the balance. One day a feudal lord would be in power; the next banished or dead. For the great masses of the people these centuries were a period of increasing oppression, increasing exploitation. Oppressive compulsory labor was imposed upon them. To this was added the burden of military service. To compulsory labor were added taxes in kind, chiefly from the harvest yield. We also have the introduction of a salt and iron impost as early as the seventh century. This salt and iron impost was the invention of one of the older philosophers, Kuant-sie. A clear description of the military service which the peasants had to perform may be found in the songs of Yih-king.

There are songs in which the peasants bewail the fact that they have been separated from their families for years, that they must perform military service against the barbarians, etc. The feudal lord of this period rode to war on a war-chariot (like the

ancient Homeric heroes), each chariot having an escort of foot soldiers. These foot soldiers were peasants.

The feudal wars were of course waged to the neglect of the most important of all governmental functions in China: the maintenance of the irrigation works - of the canals, dams and irrigation ditches. Irrigation in ancient China was *the* vital problem for the great masses of the people.

If we wish to group the class struggles of this period, we find two main groups: first, the struggles among feudal lords, struggles for supremacy; second, the struggles between the feudal lords and the peasants, struggles over compulsory labor and taxes. Finally, we have the middle class of ancient China, the literati. The literati play a role intermediate between the two main classes, the feudal lords and the peasant masses. This middle position between the feudal lords and the peasantry determines their ideological role.

Lao-tse, as the earliest, will be considered first. The nucleus of his philosophy in its social and political aspect is the concept of *Wu-wei*, of "inaction". This concept of inaction, of letting things go their own way with the least possible interference, is equivalent to the concept that the state should interfere as little as possible in the affairs of the peasant masses, in the self-government of the tribal villages. Lao-tse says that that government is best of which the people are least aware. He is against urban and courtly culture; he is for a simple, primitive life and against knowledge and erudition, which under the existing conditions was impossible without the exploitation of the people. In contrast to Confucius, he is against tradition, and, very characteristically, against the use of force. Things ought to develop of themselves, he felt. It is not an accident that Lao-tse came from the half-barbaric border state of Chu. This was one of those half-barbaric southern states which bred a mixture of Chinese and non-Chinese peoples. Lao-tse is made most clear when compared with a modern thinker, Leo Tolstoy, whose doctrine resembles his in its essential features. The doctrine of Tolstoy, as you know, likewise opposes the use of force. It is inspired by hate and enmity against the state and the great feudal landowner. Leo Tolstoy was a penitent nobleman. Himself a landowner, he sided with the peasantry against the landowners. As Lenin has shown, Leo Tolstoy reflects the peasants' resistance against feudalism and against the feudal state. The village, according to Tolstoy, should govern itself. The state should not interfere. Tolstoy's resistance, however, was of the passive sort; he rejected conflict, the use of force. This is consistent with the fact that at this time the peasant revolution was not yet joined with the revolution of the urban proletariat and that Tolstoy himself had no understanding of the proletarian revolution. But the position of the peasant class is such that it alone can never combat the centralized power of the state, because rustic life is not congenial to close-knit organization. The peasantry, although it comprises many millions, is divided, split into countless small units. Here one peasant family, there another; here one village, there another, without organized alliance. Hence the peasant class can accomplish a revolution in only two ways: either by joining another class which supplies the organizational leadership (the bourgeoisie, as in the French bourgeois revolution, or the working class, as in Russia), or by attaining their revolutionary

objective through a centralized monarchy or through a dictator such as Napoleon III in France or Shi Hoang-ti in ancient China. Through comparison with Tolstoy the historical role of Lao-tse will become apparent. Lao-tse embodies the passive protest, the passive resistance of the peasant village against the feudal state and the feudal landlords. The state should keep its hands off the village. The village should govern itself and supervise its own farming. This attitude of Lao-tse does not correspond to a revolutionary position; it corresponds to a position of passive resistance, of non-cooperation, withdrawal, separation from the state. The conception of Lao-tse has been called anarchism. Well, anarchism is also Tolstoy's political position. But the word anarchism signifies little. It can have various sources: it can arise from the conditions of the peasantry at a certain stage of development (the conditions in Russia at the time of Tolstoy and in China at the time of Lao-tse), or even from a certain condition of the working class as in present-day Italy and France. Thus the mere word anarchism does not make one understand the theory of Lao-tse. One must comprehend the totality of class relations of the time, and the condition of the peasant class in particular, in order to understand Lao-tse's peculiar role.

Before I turn to Confucius, I will interpret one more general idea common to both Lao-tse and Confucius, an idea which hearkens back to much earlier conceptions: the idea of the unity of the natural and social orders. This idea is contained in Yih-king, for example; it is called Lung-fan, the supreme rule, and runs:

"Through deferential conduct, rain will come at the proper time. If one knows how to speak appropriately, the sky will clear. If one's management is judicious, it will be warm in good time. If one attends to prudent advice, look at the right time it will grow cold. But if the ruler can call upon a holy one, then favorable winds will blow."

European sinologists have called this idea "universism", the doctrine of the universal unity of natural and social orders. They find it very odd. But as soon as one considers the social relationships from which it arose, its meaning becomes clear. In countries where irrigation is crucial to the entire economy, where irrigation is the most important activity of state government, where the yield of harvest and the existence of the people depend on it, this idea is quite natural. This unity is so urgent and fundamental that in countries where the culture has been conditioned by irrigation, a collapse of the ruling power has been accomplished by a collapse of the irrigation system, and areas which once supported a dense population have fallen into complete disuse and have been transformed into waste-land. I think of Spain where the Arabian rulers built canals which were allowed to go to ruin under their Christian successors. The most striking example is Mesopotamia between the Euphrates and the Tigris, a country which in antiquity was one of the most fertile producers of grain, but which today, after the deterioration of its system of irrigation, is a bare and dreary desert. In a land like China, with its huge irrigation system, the close connection between the functions of the state government and the thriving of agriculture, the close connection between the social and natural orders, is clear and self-evident to every peasant. Here the state government is for peasant economy a natural force of the first order which determines the operation of other natural forces important to the peasant and which is crucial to his economic existence.

I now come to Confucius. In contrast to Lao-tse, Confucius came from an old noble family of the north, from the province of Shantung. His historical role is quite different from that of Lao-tse. His goal was a profound, far-reaching reform and thereby a re-establishment of the traditional feudal order. For this purpose Confucius projected an ideal picture of feudalism. He placed this ideal picture in antiquity. In the last analysis this picture of the earliest emperors projected by Confucius and his disciples is merely an historical poem, not true history - a poem in which they presented their conception of the perfect feudal order. Their political and social goal was to free the feudal order of its *excrescences*. It is a conception according to which the government official should be the intermediary between the feudal lord and the people - an intermediary, however, charged with the interests of the feudal lord. A fundamental concept in Confucius is that the people cannot govern themselves, but they must be governed by wise and judicious officials. The people are inevitably political minors. His great ambition was to reconcile the people to the reformed feudal order. To this end he created a whole structure of ceremonies to consolidate the foundations of this order. As a pillar of the feudal order, Confucius set forth a vindication of patriarchal authority, the authority of the husband over the wife and children, the domination of the elder brother over the younger brother, the doctrine of filial affection. Quite justly he says that sovereignty in the state is built upon the authority of the father in the home. Under the social conditions of the time, the regulation and consolidation of paternal authority meant the consolidation of the whole structure of the feudal order. The deep and lasting influence of Confucius is explained by the fact that the patriarchal family is the cell, the substructure of feudalism. At the end of the Tshau dynasty the shaken superstructure of feudalism was overthrown and for the time being the doctrine of Confucius was shaken. But since the patriarchal family remained the undisturbed basis of the life of the Chinese people even after the fall of feudalism, the basis upon which successive superstructures were raised, the doctrine of Confucius was able to recover and continue up to the most recent times as the dominant Chinese world-view.

## 15 - Ancient Chinese Philosophy II

Now that we have discussed Confucius and Lao-tse, I will turn to Mo'-ti'. Mo'-ti' lived after Confucius and Lao-tse, probably from 500 to 420 B.C. The instability of the period, the collapse of feudalism and the increasing oppression of the people provided the impetus for his philosophy also. To the main currents in Chinese philosophy represented by Lao-tse and Confucius, Mo'-ti' added a third. For Lao-tse the fundamental concept is, as I have already explained, *Wu-wei* or inaction, passive resistance against the encroachments of the feudal authority of the state, self-government of the tribal village. Confucius is the reformer, the reformer within the bounds of feudal relationships. In contrast to Confucius, Mo'-ti' is a revolutionary. He may be described as a utopian agrarian socialist or agrarian communist. He preached the return to agrarian communism. As a means of achieving this end he urged mutual love, universal human love. He was a utopian socialist or communist because he did not expect salvation to come through a revolution from below, but through the discernment of the ruling class, through wise lawgivers. With these ideas Mo'-ti' obtained a powerful contemporary following among the people. Mong-tse, a disciple of Confucius and contemporary of Mo'-ti', says: "Mo'-ti' and Yang-tse are the two who have the ear of the people; they are the two to whom the people listen." Mo'-ti' is the only one who can be called a revolutionary in the sense mentioned. Not, of course, a revolutionary in the modern sense. He led a passionate denunciation of the feudal class. He fought against the luxury and dissipation of the feudal lords, against the music which at that time was a courtly luxury. He opposed the ceremonies of mourning which imposed great expense upon individuals and kept them away from work for long periods of time. His disciples led an ascetic life. They formed a sort of religious community.

The fourth main current is represented by the sophists, or, as they are called, the dialecticians, the Mingkua. They stressed the subjective nature of knowledge. Stimulated by Mo'-ti', they introduced the first investigation of mental processes. Their historical role is quite obvious. Historically viewed, they were agents who hastened the disintegration of feudalism and prepared the way for the monarchy of Shi Hoang-ti. In this regard Hsun-tse was of particular importance. The connection was indeed very close and would even have been openly avowed. If ideas are subjective or conventional, he claimed, then it becomes the concern of the monarch to establish the right ideas. The overthrow of feudalism by Shi Hoang-ti (246-210 B.C.) was ideologically prepared and justified by the sophists or dialecticians. In this connection I have something further to say about Yang-tse, the contemporary of Mo'-ti'. I have already mentioned that Mo'-ti' and Yang-tse had the largest number of followers among the people. Not a single letter of Yang-tse's own writing is preserved; he is known only through citations in Meng-tse. Confucianist orthodoxy took the trouble to suppress the doctrine of Yang-tse. According to the meager accounts which we have from his opponents he was a materialist and an Epicurean. He preached individualism and egoism. In him can be seen the expression of commodity production rearing its head within feudalism, as well as the expression of commercial and finance-capital.

I will now turn to the third point of view from which we may consider Chinese philosophy. The first point of view was its relation to religion, the second its relation to the class relationships of the time. The third point of view considers its relation to the fundamental trends of philosophy. First I will very briefly consider Confucius. Characteristic of Confucius is the demand for the "rectification of names". By names (*ming*) he means concepts. Social relationships, moral conduct, should conform to previously instilled ideas or names. Confucius says: "If names are not right, judgments will not be appropriate, and if judgments are not right, actions will not fulfil their purpose." Reality (especially social reality) ought to be determined by the idea, material life by the ideal life. To Confucius, therefore, we can justly attribute a fundamental idealistic philosophic trend. This is supported further by his attitude towards popular and official religion, which was certainly not critical and hostile.

Lao-tse also belongs to the idealistic trend. He can be designated as an objective or absolute idealist. The highest principle which he propounded, *Tao*, is a transcendental spiritual principle. As you know, the name is taken from a word which originally meant way or direction, or the right way. In modern physics the technical term vector is used in the sense of a directed magnitude. Originally the way or course of the constellations was designated by *Tao*. Later it was applied to earthly things. Its meaning is transcendental or spiritual world-law, world-order. Like other peoples the Chinese first derived the concept of lawfulness from the movements of the constellations. In Lao-tse we have far deeper penetration than in Confucius, but he was handicapped by the difficulties inherent in a language which expresses abstract ideas with words having perceptive reference. This explains his extraordinary obscurity, an obscurity signifying not only the depth of his thought but the inadequacy of his means of expression as well. I will give a few examples of how he tries to express the non-materiality or spirituality of *Tao* in perceptive language. At one place he says: "Mind activates things. Invisible, inconceivable. Inconceivable, invisible, are the images therein." Or another very simple figure in the fourteenth chapter: "Meeting it one does not see its visage. Following it one does not see its back." Of course, these figures are intended to express merely the simple idea that *Tao* is not to be apprehended through the senses. The comparison of *Tao* with water is very frequent. As water permeates all, so does *Tao* permeate the world; it is the cosmic principle. He undoubtedly had a definite notion that water was somewhat less corporeal than a solid, and was therefore more akin to the abstract, the transcendental. I will cite one more sentence from the *Tao-te-king*, where he says: "Without going beyond the door, one can explain the world; without looking out of the window, one can explain the meaning of heaven." Here is indicated the possibility of knowledge without sensory experience, knowledge a priori, as Kant calls it. This is also a typically idealistic position. At another place he says: "In *Tao* there are images. They are the seeds of things." This is a doctrine that bears a most striking similarity to that of the Greek philosopher, Plato, the doctrine of ideas or mental prototypes of material things.

I will now speak of the elements or presentiments of dialectics in Lao-tse. These elements of dialectics we find in two persistent ideas. The first is the idea of the eternal variability or fluctuation of things, of the flux of all things. The second, expressed in various concrete examples, is what you already know as the first principle of dialectics, namely, the permeation of opposites. But before I turn to what Lao-tse himself says, I might first mention that Lao-tse is not the first in China to have such ideas. We already find the elements of these concepts in the oldest book of China, in the philosophical ideas contained in the Yih-king. The symbol *Yi* means change, fluctuation; it consists of the sign of the sun placed opposite that of the moon. The Yih-king is much older than Lao-tse and Confucius. It dates from 1143B.C. Its author or compiler is thought to be the King, Wan, the founder of the Tshau dynasty. The Yih-king was originally believed to be a prophetic book. Men used to seek clues to determine which positions of the constellations were favorable for a proposed undertaking and which not. For this purpose diagrams were drawn of single or broken lines. What interests us here is that these diagrams were based on the idea of the permeation of opposites, of the polarity of concepts. Examples of such polar concepts are Yang and Ying, heaven and earth, male and female, light and dark, strong and weak, father and mother, etc. These are only a few examples of the polar opposites which are listed in the Yih-king, and through whose development changes in heaven and on earth were to be explained. When one examines the symbol Yih-king and its meanings more closely, one comes to the conclusion that they originated in the thoughts and conjectures of peasants about constellar positions favorable for agricultural undertakings. The main concepts are heaven, earth, mountains, water, etc. Similar notions are to be found among the ancient Greeks and Romans. Among the Greeks, for example, a work of the poet Hesiod is very reminiscent of the way good and bad days are determined in the Yih-king. Hesiod's book is called *Works and Days*, its main purpose is to determine for the peasants which days are favorable and which unfavorable for certain agricultural tasks. The Romans, too, had similar techniques. The Yih-king very early became an oracle book for princes and states-men. The link between the Yih-king and Lao-tse was created by the philosopher Kuan-tse (7th century) I have already told you that Kuan-tse was likewise a great business man, having introduced the salt and iron monopoly.

I will now cite a few examples from Lao-tse of the permeation of opposites. In the very first chapter of the *Tao-te-king* we have the following: "When everyone on earth declares beauty beautiful, ugliness is thereby postulated. When everyone on earth recognizes the good in goodness, thereby is evil postulated. Being and non-being produce each other. Heavy and light complete each other. Long and short compose each other. High and low invert each other. Voice and tone wed each other. Before and after follow each other." This idea in Lao-tse attains abstract expression because he states his position on the opposite relation of being and non-being, even making the point that each is transformed into the other. He says that all things come from being; that being, however, comes from non-being. Things revert to non-being. This reminds one strikingly of what Hegel developed in the dialectics of origin. In the following sayings of Lao-tse one can find elements analogous to the Hegelian thesis,

antithesis, and synthesis, where he says, for example: "Mind creates unity. Unity generates duality; duality generates trinity. Trinity generates all things." The symbol of unity is the unbroken line, of duality the broken line (negation), and the sign of trinity the broken and straight line placed one under the other. Another very profound conception of Lao-tse which reminds one of Hegel is that the impulse in things comes from non-being. In Hegel's view the moving force of things is ascribed to negation. For this Lao-tse uses various metaphorical expressions, as when he says that the usefulness of the jar depends upon non-being, upon empty space, or when he says that the wagon-hub is useful only by virtue of its hollowness.

If we can designate Confucius and Lao-tse as idealists, then we can find in Mo'-ti' the third main current of Chinese philosophy, a straightforward even though primitive and undeveloped materialism. Besides this Mo'-ti' performed another service. He initiated the independent development of logic in China. In order to indicate the type and nature of his materialism, I cite the following statement by him concerning the characteristics of truth. He says in chapter 29: "My view of being and non-being rests on what the actual experience of the eyes or ears of the people accept as existent or non-existent, that is, on what is seen and heard. Thus, that which is seen and heard I call being; that which has never been seen or heard I call non-being." In contrast to Confucius, therefore, he does not consider conception to be the characteristic of truth, but rather perceptual experience, that which is seen or heard. Moreover, he means general perceptual experience, not individual but universal; or, as he himself expressed it, "that which the entire people sees and hears." As further marks of truth he includes the testimony of ancient sages and the actual operation of things. Yet how primitive his concept of materialism still was is proved by some of his conclusions. He says: "I acknowledge the spirits of ancestors as well as the spirits of nature, for the people acknowledge them, and I acknowledge no destiny contrary to theirs." On the other hand, it was characteristic of his materialist conception that he rejected Confucius' principle of the rectification of concepts. He says (and this is an objection in line with historical materialism) that it is not the ideas, the concepts of men that determine their behavior, but something that lies behind these ideas. He means the material causes, the impulsions of will. One cannot on this account call him a dialectical materialist, but he did have presentiments in this direction. An utterance ascribed to Kao-tse, a student of Mo'-ti', points the same way. It is the sentence cited in Mong-tse: "Whatever words cannot grasp is not in the interests of the spirit, and whatever the spirit cannot grasp is not in the interests of life." In other words, only that which has reference to the interests of life can be an object of knowledge, and only that which is within the sphere of knowledge can be a subject of speech, of verbal communication. Another saying by Mo'-ti' runs: "Only when one makes use of conformities and distinctions at the same time is one in a position to know what is and what is not."

In conclusion, I will mention the fourth main current, the sophists. They can be classed with the subjective idealists. The sophists were especially adept at pointing out contradictions in concepts, just as the Greek sophists were. In this pursuit they fell upon all sorts of interesting phenomena in the dialectics of ideas and turned up



many things quite similar to the findings of the Greeks, especially the Eleatics. There is the instance of the arrow at rest. It was said that an arrow in flight could at any given moment be considered at rest. This is a statement which we have already found among the Greeks. Another statement of a different sort runs as follows in the Chinese: "When I break a staff in two parts, and each of these parts into two parts, and so on, I will never reach an end of breaking." Here we have the contradiction between the finite and the infinite. One example of the great contributions of the sophists is their discovery of the contradiction hidden in every statement, the contradiction, for example, that a white horse is not a horse. The sense of the matter is that a white horse is a particular horse. The predicate horse is the general horse. In the sentence the particular and the general are equated.

Most of these sophists were, as I have said, subjective idealists. Some, however, were materialists. Characteristic of their type of subjective idealism are such sayings as: "Fire is not hot. . . . The eye does not see." That is to say: the nature of temperature and vision is not objective but subjective.

I will now conclude. Can the modern world-view, by which I mean dialectical materialism, be squared with this ancient philosophy? Today adherence to the doctrines of Confucius and Lao-tse would be positively reactionary. The support of the doctrine of Confucius has today a counter-revolutionary, reactionary significance. It would mean the defense of patriarchal authority in the state. Likewise one cannot adhere to Lao-tse, for we cannot brook a doctrine which today would have to appear as a form of anarchism. The doctrine of Lao-tse, if revived, would at best result in a passive tolerance of the reactionary forces in the state and society, or it would result in individual escape from the world. But the revolution now in process in China demands not individual but collective behavior from the masses of the people, not passivity and contemplation, but the greatest activity. I wish, moreover, to mention that China offers practical proof how anarchism at a certain point is transformed into counter-revolution, in the same way as has already been demonstrated in Russia. We can no more adhere to Lao-tse than to Confucius because both are idealistic, because both stand in opposition to materialism. No more can we hold to the subjective idealism of the sophists.

Mo'-ti' comes closest to dialectical materialism. His doctrine is a primitive materialism. And Mo'-ti' assumes a revolutionary position towards the ruling classes of his time. Nevertheless, one cannot recommend reviving Mo'-ti's doctrine as such. It is socially impossible today to return to the primitive communism of the village community. It is possible only to advance to socialism on the basis of the achievements of capitalist technology. Obviously, Mo'-ti' could not have had such a perspective, living as he did at a time which had no inkling of capitalism. Dialectical materialism is on a much higher level than the primitive materialism of Mo'-ti'. It has incorporated and developed the results of two thousand years of natural and social science. We cannot turn back; our prospect must be ahead.

## 16 - Pragmatism

I would like to continue with a survey of the main currents in the contemporary bourgeois philosophy of Europe and America, but through limitations of space I must confine myself to a brief characterization of one of these trends, namely, pragmatism. It is the dominant school in America and has also had a powerful influence in England and, to a lesser degree, in other European countries. I select this particular school because it is the best known of the foreign world-views or philosophies and because it has a particularly progressive, democratic, and unprejudiced quality. It is therefore not so easy for the uninitiated to recognize that the true character of this philosophy is reactionary and idealistic.

The bourgeois philosophy of Europe which followed classical philosophy (in Germany this would mean philosophy subsequent to Feuerbach) still maintains an extensive superficial existence. There is an immense amount of philosophical literature in Germany and in other countries. Every university has one or more professors of philosophy. But Feuerbach marks the beginning of the end of bourgeois philosophy and of philosophy in general in the historical sense of the word. What has appeared since then as bourgeois philosophy of one kind or another must be termed philosophical poems, poems supported by concepts. These have been more or less interesting historically, but they evince no scientific progress. In fact, it will be discovered that all the various schools and sects of bourgeois philosophy after Feuerbach revolve about just one problem, namely, how bourgeois society and the capitalist order can best be defended against the socialist revolution, how in some universal and fundamental way it can be vindicated and supported, how the most powerful ideological enemy of the existing order, dialectical materialism, can be most successfully staved off. Besides fending off its enemy, dialectical materialism, the bourgeoisie must strengthen its belief in its own order. These are actually the problems about which the various schools of modern bourgeois philosophy revolve. They cope with it through deception and by the demand for "unprejudiced science". As a rule the perpetrators of this kind of philosophy are completely unconscious of its objective. The capitalist order and everything that belongs to it is the unexpressed and usually unconscious assumption and purpose behind research - it is the natural matrix. This doesn't help the situation, however; it only makes it more dangerous. To be sure, there are still many *individual* accomplishments of a scientific nature even in bourgeois philosophy. In this category belongs the accumulation of material on the history of philosophy, the elaboration of certain problems in logic, the mathematical development of logic, etc. But these are only the last buds of a dying stalk. Bourgeois philosophy in its various schools represents just such a dying stalk. One must not be deceived by its extensive superficial existence. The philosophy of the Middle Ages, the scholastic, likewise had a wide influence, and possessed schools, teachers, and literature galore. It too made certain positive contributions. As *a whole*, however, it was fruitless; it was tied down, the "hand-maiden" of the church, the defender of the church's established dogmas. Modern bourgeois philosophy is no less closely bound to capitalism than this scholasticism was bound to the church and its dogmas. But

what was open and understood in scholasticism is carefully concealed and hidden by our modern scholasticism.

Now a few more comments on the general nature of post-war philosophy. Naturally, I refer to both Europe and America. The war and, related to it, the beginning of the world revolution, very profoundly disturbed bourgeois society. We therefore have a universal quest for spiritual supports for bourgeois society, stronger and more potent supports than those offered by earlier philosophy. We have a revival of the various forms of metaphysics. The way was already prepared for this before the war, but after the war it received a much sharper impetus. We have the creation of a transcendental world of fantasy, a much greater concentration upon religious ideas which is in part a regression to the crudest superstition - to spiritualism, for example. There is also an intrusion of such transcendental concepts and ideas into the natural sciences, especially those natural sciences which deal with the phenomena of life. There is the doctrine of vitalism, for example, the doctrine of life-force.

From the point of view of the proletarian revolution or a national revolution one can hardly regret that the bourgeoisie of the principal countries abandon themselves in the name of philosophy to the crudest superstition, to the most absurd religious fantasies and to the greatest spiritual confusion. It is not our misfortune if the modern capitalistic bourgeoisie snatch up the ideas of the Australian jungle. Only we must see to it that these ideas are not carried over to the masses of people. We must help the working masses free themselves from the various forms of bourgeois as well as pre-bourgeois world-views, from both crude and refined forms of religious fantasy. In this connection, a question might be raised: how does it happen that there are still so *many* schools of philosophy in modern times when the same problem, the same impulse, underlies them all? To this I believe the answer must be: first, the various historical stages of bourgeois society as a whole are involved; then there are the differences in class relations between countries. Take England, Germany, America - the class relations of these countries have their local peculiarities. In the third place, in every country and at any given point in time we must take into consideration the various groupings of the great and petty bourgeoisie, groupings which find expression in this or that philosophical conception. And finally, the ideological traditions of particular countries and the personal whims of philosophizing individuals play an appreciable, if not decisive, role. But in spite of great temporal and local differences between particular schools, the universal counter-revolutionary and reactionary class character of the modern American and European bourgeoisie expresses itself in a host of characteristics which are common to all schools of bourgeois philosophy. Foremost is their aversion and opposition to materialism, especially dialectical materialism, and hence their fundamentally idealistic point of view, sometimes clear, sometimes obscure, but always present. Another common and extremely characteristic feature is the effort to restrict the scope and significance of reason and to extend the province of free will, anarchy, and the unconscious, the province of "irrationality". Since the light of reason reveals to the bourgeoisie only the road to destruction, they prefer to shut or half shut their eyes and give

themselves up to more pleasant fantasies - for fantasies they truly are when viewed with the clear eye of reason.

I now come to the school of pragmatism. This school or trend originated in America. It then spread to England and Italy and, in lesser degree, to France and Germany. It reflects the characteristic spirit of the American bourgeoisie. Hence the democratic and pseudo-radical touch, as well as the distortion of cause and effect, and the tendency towards commerce. Pragmatism is literally the philosophy of commerce. The first impulse towards this philosophy came from the American philosopher Peirce. In 1868 he wrote a short paper which can be looked upon as the germ of pragmatism. But the well-known American psychologist, William James, must be looked upon as the founder and leader of this school. For a long period William James was a professor at Harvard University. His father had been a theologian of a school which was partial to spiritualism - a Swedenborgian. William James first taught as a natural scientist. His philosophy is a cross between theological and natural-scientific concepts and methods in which theology has become dominant over natural science. It was the French philosopher Renouvier who gave to James the decisive stimulus which led to the philosophy of pragmatism. In England the chief exponent of pragmatism was a certain Schiller who for many years had been professor at Oxford. In America the best known representative of the school is now John Dewey, formerly of Chicago and latterly of New York. In 1919, immediately after the war, he visited first Japan and then China, where he propagandized for his doctrines, engaging in a higher sort of missionary expedition in the interest of America and Americanism.

We are now to investigate the relation of pragmatism to the fundamental trends of philosophy. Pragmatism, as a philosophic trend, is apparently very radical. Indeed it is sometimes called radical empiricism or the radical theory of experience, and it claims to be superior to both idealism and materialism. But this is a false pretension. Upon closer examination one sees that what the pragmatists call experience, what they consider to be the ultimate and the primary, is nothing but the idealists' ultimate, namely, the mental; the pragmatists merely talk about it in terms of sensation and emotion, that is, in terms of the simplest, most primary psychical functions, whereas other idealists take higher psychical functions as their primary. They maintain that in sensation and emotion the psychical and the physical compose an inseparable unity and that the corporeal cannot be found except in union with the mental. They accordingly deny the existence of an external world independent of human sensations, ideas, or feelings. They carry this marvelous jugglery to the point where they say: the relation of the mental to the corporeal is only a sham problem, not a real one. Naturally, if the existence of a material world independent of human consciousness is reasoned away, there can no longer be a problem of the relationship of such a world to human thought. This utterly simple and staggering "solution" is merely a sleight-of-hand by which the problem itself is made to disappear. In its fundamental conception pragmatism is therefore *idealism*. The battle which it wages against the idealism of other schools is actually only a sham battle. The true and sincere opponent of pragmatism - the openly avowed opponent - is materialism, and

dialectical materialism in particular. The fundamental conception of pragmatism shows an extremely close affinity with the conception of Ernst Mach, the Austrian philosopher and naturalist, and with Avenarius: the so-called school of empirio-criticism. That we have not done pragmatism an injustice by calling it idealistic, is supported by the testimony of the Encyclopedia Britannica, that great dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon world, which says, in the article on William James, that he defends the idealistic position from the empirical point of view. And the French historian of pragmatism, F. Leroux, characterizes pragmatism as an empirical or experiential idealism.

I should like to cite one more fundamental concept of pragmatism. This is the fundamental concept of a "pluralistic universe. It assumes that the world consists of component worlds which have no connection with each other. I need not labor the point that this concept is a nonsensical self-contradiction. To be sure, it is not self-contradictory to postulate a world which is at the same time a unity and a plurality, but to affirm a world, a universe, which is a plurality without unity is plainly a meaningless contradiction. If one asks oneself how a school of philosophy can achieve such palpable nonsense, one does not have to seek far for the answer: the prototype of the world which consists of parts having nothing to do with each other is the world of the high priests of all schools, a world composed of the earthly vale of tears and the heavenly hereafter which are utterly and absolutely separate and different from each other. The "pluralistic universe" is merely a new "higher" label for this ancient and insipid clerical nonsense. A further characteristic of pragmatism is its concept of truth. For pragmatism there is no objective measure of truth. Since it recognizes no reality external to the human mind, it can have no touchstone for truth. According to pragmatism truth is what "works," what is useful. The measure is thus subjective. The undefined subject who is the measure of truth is not man in general but the bourgeois in particular and his particular ends. The bourgeois mind governed by bourgeois interests is made the supreme judge of truth. That this is very convenient for the bourgeoisie certainly cannot be disputed.

The purpose of all these maneuvers of pragmatism is the "scientific" salvation and vindication of the old religious nonsense. William James himself wrote a sizeable book on *The Will to Believe* and another on religion experience in which he tries to prove that every form of belief, no matter how insane, contains some element of truth as long as it gives man a certain amount of power and effectiveness. For William James the Christian religion in which he was reared, is such an "effective" truth. For the African Negro it may be a wooden idol studded with nails. The whole trick lies in calling something "experience" that used to be known as belief or fantasy. William James, for example, says that the visible world is a part of a more spiritual universe from which it derives its meaning - a statement that immediately reminds one of belief in ghosts. What William James passes off as religious truth or experience is a conglomeration of the creeds of the hundred or more Christian and non-Christian sects existing in America. It is the laboratory in which the fantastic products of various religions and sects are standardized into a normal or average bourgeois faith. If some sect began to believe that the moon was green cheese and if

this belief gave them strength, then pragmatism would mix this ingredient into the general religious brew.

So much for this American. I should now like to give you a sample of the English pragmatist, Schiller. It may suffice to give you his own statements of the contents of certain sections and paragraphs of his book *Riddles of the Sphinx*. Thus, one section is called "Man and his cause-God. . . . (a) As the first cause, but only of the phenomenal world.... (c) As personal, (d) as finite, because only a finite God can be inferred." In paragraph 24 of the same chapter he says: "God not = 'Nature,' and hence 'Nature' can contain an element which resists God." The "element" that "resists God" used to be called the devil or Satan. Can one ask more of pragmatism than that it prove, in addition to the existence of God, the existence of the Devil? Chapter 12, Paragraph 2: Here we find the kingdom of heaven pragmatically described as seems appropriate and plausible to the average mind of the English philistine. In this paragraph we have "The ultimate aim of the process (i.e., the development of the world) is the perfecting of a society of harmonious individuals." Paragraph 3: "If so, its starting point must have been a minimum of harmony. This implies a pre-cosmic state when no interaction, and hence no world, existed. It preceded Time and Change and does not admit of further inquiries." Which is quite understandable, for the things which happened when there was no time, no things and even no happenings are of the same nature as the dragons of Chinese fables. Just as good is what this pragmatist and teacher from that most famous English university, pious Oxford, has to say about the end of the world. "The end of the world-process is the attainment of perfect harmony or adaptation - the perfection and aim of all the activities of life."

How does this ultimate state appear?

This state is "distinguished by its metaphysical character from the becoming of the time-process, a changeless and eternal state of perfect being". A wonderful "state," where there is no change, no transformation, no time, and yet everything is wonderfully perfect. One is forced to admit that in comparison the Christian or Mohammedan paradise is backward, for in these something still happens. There are music, dancing, and other "happenings". The pragmatist paradise is prolonged into eternity and filled with eternal boredom - an English Sunday whose bliss, as is well known, consists in absolute boredom. "This includes a solution of all difficulties, evil, time, divergence of thought and feeling, etc." All people obviously think the same in this perfect state. How will they entertain themselves there? This same Mr. Schiller wrote an address for the Pan-Anglican Church Congress (1908) in which he says: "If all religions work, all are true." He recommended pragmatism to the gathered clergy of England as an especially good preservative for religion, as a better protection than idealistic philosophy - the latest American patent, so to speak, for protecting religion.

With this we leave the pragmatist Sunday preachers. I will simply add that the American, John Dewey, is a bit more artful than these other pragmatists, but that there is no fundamental difference between him and the others.

In conclusion, I should like to recommend some literature. Friedrich Engels' little essay on Feuerbach offers the best beginning. This little book contains a very clear and concise exposition of dialectical materialism, its development and its relations to bourgeois philosophy. Then another book by Engels: *Anti-Dühring (Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science)*. So far this is the most comprehensive and forceful presentation of dialectical materialism and its widest application to various fields. I cannot specify any particular book by Marx; all his books are written according to the method of dialectical materialism. Further, I might mention the philosophical writings of Plekhanov. Then there is Lenin's book, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. A popular text on historical materialism has been written by Bukharin. Further, I should like to call your attention to the writings of A. Labriola, the deceased Italian Marxist, on historical materialism, as well as the writings of Franz Mehring, who was the most important materialist historian.

Naturally I take for granted that you will not merely study dialectical materialism from books, but that you have already turned to practical activity. This is thoroughly consistent with the nature of dialectical materialism. Dialectical materialism is born of revolutionary activity; it strives to afford general guidance for revolutionary activity. Karl Marx once said: "The task of philosophy [and by philosophy he meant materialism] is not to explain the world anew, but to change it." No one who lives in a great revolutionary period can remain merely a theorist.

## Notes

[←1]

As a matter of convenience these marginal notes in the German text have in large measure been used in the Analytical Table of Contents in the English edition, rather than where originally intended.

[←2]

Translation from Radhakrishnan, S., Vol. I, *Indian Philosophy*, pp.282-3. Quoted in German by Thalheimer from P. Deussen, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Erster Band, dritte Abteilung, die nachvedische Philosophie der Inder, p. 212.