

Contradiction, reflection and cognition: THREE ARTICLES ON PHILOSOPHY

By Gerry Healy

1. THE DIALECTICS OF CONTRADICTION

Idealist and metaphysical thinking tends to describe contradiction in a formal way – as a word form without a content. In his book *In Defence of Marxism* Trotsky emphasised that Hegel in his *Logic* “established a series of laws”, amongst them “development through contradiction”.¹

He explained that because Hegel wrote before Darwin and before Marx “... he operated with ideological shadows as to the ultimate reality. Marx demonstrated that the movement of these ideological shadows reflected nothing more than the movement of material bodies”.²

Lenin further emphasised this when he wrote “I am in general trying to read Hegel materialistically: Hegel is materialism which has been stood on its head (according to Engels) – that is to say, I cast aside for the most part God, the Absolute, the Pure Idea, etc.”³

On the question of **contradiction**, Lenin quotes from Hegel extensively and approvingly. We reproduce for the benefit of the anti-Hegel, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky brigade, the following quotations on contradiction:

“Ordinarily Contradiction is removed, first of all from things, from the existent and the true in general; and it is asserted that there is nothing contradictory. Next it is shifted into subjective reflection, which alone is said to posit it by relating and comparing it.”⁴

By “subjective reflection” Hegel is referring to the “self created” thought images of individuals, which by comparing contradiction to equally sceptically created “thought images”, “posit it” within these “self created” images by relating it and “comparing it”. Hegel continues:

“But really it does not exist even in this reflection, for it is said that * it is impossible to imagine or to think anything contradictory. Indeed, Contradiction, both in actuality and in thinking reflection, is considered an accident, a kind of abnormality or paroxysm of sickness which will soon pass away.”⁵

Lenin uses a heavy rule on the side margin for emphasis where Hegel writes that:

“Contradiction is the ***root of all movement and vitality***, and it is only insofar as it contains a Contradiction that anything ***moves and has impulse and activity***.”⁶

Contradiction, therefore, cannot be regarded as an “empty word form” or by a “subjective” external impression, because it is contained within the very essence of all material objects and processes. It is the **dialectical unity of external and internal contradiction**. Thus the infinite self-movement of matter is contradictory.

Hegel is again quoted with obvious approval by Lenin when he writes:

“We must grant the old dialecticians the contradictions which they prove in motion; but what follows is not that there is no motion, but rather that motion is *existent* Contradiction itself.”⁷

* the words underlined (it is said that) are missing from *Volume 38* – see *Hegel's Science of Logic*, Allen & Unwin, 1969, p.439

AN EXHIBITION OF CONTRADICTION

On the side margin of his notebooks, Lenin takes a quotation from Hegel and says of it: “**This is very important** for understanding dialectics.” ⁸ [emphasis GH]

“... But the Other is essentially not the empty negative or Nothing *which is commonly taken as the result of dialectics*, it is the Other of the first, the negative of the immediate; it is thus determined as mediated, – and altogether contains the determination of the first. The first is thus essentially *contained* and *preserved* in the Other. – To hold fast the positive in *its* negative, and the content of the presupposition in the result, is the most important part of rational cognition.”

The development of **Contradiction** in the essence of objects manifests itself as **IDENTITY** of the infinite source of sensation in the external world. As active participants in the class struggle, internationally and in Britain, this will include an important source for our sensations.

Because it contains **DIFFERENCE** already in the external world, as a self-related concept, **IDENTITY** is negated into finite **DIFFERENCE** in thought. Since **IDENTITY** contains **DIFFERENCE** **it is a negative only “in itself”**. As Hegel explains: “It is the Other of the first, the negative of the immediate ... and altogether contains the determination of the first. [INFINITE IDENTITY – GH] The first is thus essentially *contained* and *preserved* in the Other.” ⁹

IDENTITY as a **Negative** now becomes a **POSITIVE** image on the **Negative** of the finite negative of **Difference** in thought. That **image** is called **Sensation**, whose as yet unknown properties incorporate the **antithesis** of **IDENTITY** (Negative) and **DIFFERENCE** (Positive) as well as **Contradiction** derived from the first negation of **IDENTITY** into **DIFFERENCE**. “The dialectical,” writes Lenin, “= ‘comprehending the antithesis in its unity ...’ [Hegel]” ¹⁰

When Trotsky emphasised in *In Defence of Marxism* that “Marxism without the dialectic was a clock without a spring”, this antithesis “comprehended in its unity” is the **dialectical spring of contradiction** which as Hegel so correctly wrote is the “*root of all movement and vitality*”. ¹¹

Let us now examine how the dialectical spring as antithesis works. Hegel writes:

“Thus although Imagination everywhere has Contradiction for content, it never becomes aware of it; it remains an external reflection, which passes from Likeness to Unlikeness, or from negative relation to intro-reflectedness of the different terms. It keeps these two determinations external to each other, and has in mind only these and not their transition, which is the essential matter and contains the Contradiction.” ¹²

Lenin comments: “Ordinary imagination grasps difference and contradiction, but not the **transition** from the one to the other, *this however is the most important*.” ¹³

The transition of “difference” into contradiction is through the law in which the **antithesis** as the **dialectical spring** negates the first negation as “negation of the negation”.

NEGATION, CONNECTION AND TRANSITION

Lenin defines negation materialistically in the following way:

“Not empty negation, not futile negation, *not sceptical* negation, vacillation and doubt is characteristic and essential in dialectics, – which undoubtedly contains the element of negation and indeed as its most important element – no, but negation as a moment of connection, as a moment of development, retaining the positive, i.e., without any vacillations, without any eclecticism.” ¹⁴

Dealing with this question 25 years later, Trotsky was to write:

“Dialectic training of the mind, as necessary to a revolutionary fighter as finger exercises to a pianist, demands approaching all problems as *processes* and not as *motionless categories*.” ¹⁵

Lenin is training the Bolshevik cadre in the dialectical materialist method of resolving problems as the outer form whose internal essence is Contradiction. In the paragraph he makes three main points:

1) He warns against the danger of ignoring negation as “empty” and “futile”. In this way the contradictions build up, thus appearing to idealists as insoluble under conditions where they become politically paralysed and drift rapidly rightwards into the swamp of reformism and subservience to the capitalist state.

2) “Vacillation and doubt is characteristic and essential in dialectics” so we must avoid “**sceptical** negation”. This is especially important because the **IDENTITY** of this sceptical source may reveal itself after being negated into the many **DIFFERENCES** which have emerged through negation of the negation into the theory of knowledge. We must avoid the tendency to posit sceptical images derived from what has already been proved in past knowledge.

3) We must train ourselves to understand “Negation as a moment of connection” between the **IDENTITY** of the **external source of sensation** and the **negative of finite Difference** upon which we retain the positive, i.e. “without any vacillations, without any eclecticism”, such as **imaginary positives**.

Lenin continues his dialectical training on how to mentally and physically apprehend contradiction at the very essence of objects in the external world. He writes:

“Dialectics consists in general in the negation of the *first* proposition, [**IDENTITY** (infinite and objective) into **DIFFERENCE** (finite and subjective) – GH] in its replacement by a *second* (in the transition of the first into the second, in the demonstration of the connection of the first with the second, etc.) The second can be made the predicate of the first.” ¹⁶

The second records the changes in the first and Lenin quotes Hegel to demonstrate the source of these changes:

“... for example, the finite is infinite, one is many, the individual is the universal”. ¹⁷ This is possible because we are dealing with law-governed connections between the external world (object) interpenetrating with law-governed thought (subject).

HEGEL AND LENIN ON CONTRADICTION

Hegel writes: “The first or immediate term is the Notion *in itself* [which is Nature as a **law-governed** process – GH], and therefore is the negative only *in itself*.” ¹⁸ On the side margin, Lenin notes: “‘*in itself*’ = potentially, not yet developed, not yet unfolded.” Hegel continues: “The dialectical moment with it therefore consists in this, that the *distinction* which it *implicitly* contains is posited in it.”

IDENTITY which contains **DIFFERENCE** exists in the external world of Nature. Hegel continues:

“The second term on the other hand is itself the *determinate entity*, the *distinction* or relation; hence with it the dialectical moment consists in the positing of the *unity* which is contained in it ...” ¹⁹ This **unity** is antithesis.

Lenin submits these paragraphs from Hegel to the analysis required for Trotsky's “dialectical training of the mind”. “In relation to the simple and original, ‘first’, positive assertions, propositions etc., the ‘dialectical moment’, i.e., scientific consideration, demands the demonstration of difference, connection, transition.”

Nature and the **class struggle in society** exist **independently** in the external world, the identity of our first positive assertions start here and contain **Difference**. Since the **IDENTITY** of the source of our sensation is in the external world this is also the source of external reflection and **negation** as a moment of **connection**. Identity is negated into Difference as a process of

transition. Identity now becomes a negative negated as a **positive** image on the negative of **difference**, which also contains contradiction as the result of the first negation (IDENTITY).

Lenin continues: “Without that the simple positive assertion is incomplete, lifeless, dead. In relation to the ‘second’, negative proposition, the ‘dialectical moment’ demands the demonstration of ‘*unity*’, i.e., of the connection of negative and positive, the presence of this **positive** in the **negative**.” [emphasis GH]

The Negative here is IDENTITY which has been negated as a **Positive** image on the Negative of DIFFERENCE.

Lenin concludes this vital paragraph: “From assertion to negation – from negation to ‘unity’ with the asserted – without this dialectics becomes empty negation, a game, or scepticism.”

2. DETERMINATIONS OF REFLECTION

The unbridgeable gulf between the various forms of idealism and materialist dialectics centres upon the objective material content of sensuous reflection. Materialism declares that sensation is an **image** of the external world, and that the latter exists independently of its image.

As Lenin explains in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*,²⁰ “an image cannot exist without the thing imaged, and that the latter exists independently of that which images it”. He further emphasises this point when he writes: “The recognition of objective law in nature and the recognition that this law is **reflected** with approximate fidelity in the mind of man is materialism.”²¹ [emphasis GH]

The objective IDENTITY of the source of sensation is simultaneously negated into its relative finite DIFFERENCE. As a self-related concept it constitutes the “antithesis” in dialectical thought: the **unity** of this antithesis of **negative** IDENTITY into a **POSITIVE** image on the **negative of difference** which contains contradiction is **Essence**.

The “antithesis” drives on to negate the negation into the theory of knowledge.

Lenin approvingly reproduces the following quotation from Hegel's *Logic* which describes the antithesis as follows:

“It is the simple point of negative self-relation, the internal source of all activity, vital and spiritual self-movement, the dialectic soul which all truth has in it ...”²²

In the side margin, Lenin describes this as the “kernel of dialectics”. Hegel continues:

“... for the transcendence of the opposition between the Notion and Reality, and that unity which is the truth, rest upon this subjectivity alone. – The second negative, the negative of the negative, which we have reached, is this transcendence of the contradiction ...”

Lenin comments on the side margin, “the criterion of truth” and in brackets he explains this “truth” as “the unity of the concept and reality”.

Lenin further approvingly comments on this paragraph from Hegel:

“Important here is:

- 1) the characterisation of dialectics: self-movement, the source of activity, the movement of life and spirit; the coincidence of the concepts of the subject (man) with reality;
- 2) objectivism to the highest degree (‘der objektivistische Moment’ [the most objective moment – GH])”.²³

Lenin is here explaining the “coincidence” of dialectical nature, society (class struggle) and thought which apprehends the external world (dialectical logic) and the “theory of knowledge”.

THE ROLE OF CONCEPTS IN DIALECTICAL LOGIC

Concepts are terms which enable us to use the method of dialectical logic to analyse the relation between the universal and the individual and vice versa. For the idealist, only the sensuously perceived image of sensation is concrete.

Materialist dialectics analyses the “antithesis” or “thing-in-itself” negated into the “theory of knowledge”; concepts establish the concrete relation between the universal and the individual in the form of internal contradictions in dialectical abstract thought.

Lenin emphasises that:

“The abstraction of *matter*, of a *law* of nature, the abstraction of *value*, etc., in short *all* scientific (correct, serious, not absurd) abstractions reflect nature more deeply, truly and *completely*.”

From living perception to abstract thought, and *from this to practice*, – such is the dialectical path of the cognition of *truth*, of the cognition of objective reality.”²⁴

Living perception of the “universal whole” must be the content of our reflection, and not sensations as an image of that “whole”. However, mere IDENTITY of the object or objects which provide the source of our “sensations” is inadequate for establishing their interconnection in the external world and in dialectical thought. Only abstract **scientific thinking in concepts** reveals the real living unity of things in the external world which in their constant interaction are concretely connected through the operation of the dialectical law “from the abstract to the concrete”.

The process of cognitive interaction manifests itself most clearly when an object at the source of sensation in the external world discovers in an adjacent object something which it itself needs. Whilst our starting point is the material universal “whole” existing independently outside of us, we reflect the many-sidedness of the source of our sensation in the **particular** relation between the universal and the individual. The “in-itself” unity of opposites contained in the “antithesis” will be negated into the theory of knowledge through the law of the negation of negation.

The “thing” contained in the “antithesis” is an individual manifestation of the universal external source of sensation. Concepts of these “parts” (particulars) emerging in phenomena must be understood concretely through their interaction in abstract dialectical thought.

Concepts scientifically exist and interact as phenomena with one another only through the self-relation between the universal and the individual and through the individual back to the original source of sensation in the external world. Therefore, the individual concept of the “part” contains the “universal” as its content. Both are in constant interaction with one another and in continuous change. The universal external source of sensation constitutes the material connection of all the parts at the source.

Concepts, seen in this dialectical way, theoretically manifest the external world, scientifically apprehending it through the concepts of its “parts”. In this way the abstract analysis of those “parts” is reproduced in new **concrete** “wholes”, although since “time is a form of being of objective reality”²⁵, they are **opposites**. Therefore a “new whole” is a “unity of opposites”.

They express, what Lenin describes in his essay on Dialectics when he writes:

“The splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts ...is the *essence* (one of the ‘essentials’, one of the principal, if not the principal, characteristics or features) of dialectics. That is precisely how Hegel, too, puts the matter...”²⁶

THE ROLE OF REFLECTION IN DIALECTICAL LOGIC

Determinations of Reflection enable us to analyse through the use of concepts the abstract internal contradictory sides of living perception. Lenin, again quotes Hegel approvingly when the latter writes:

“If now the primary Determinations of Reflection – Identity, Variety and Opposition – are established in a proposition, then the determination into which they pass over as into their truth (namely Contradiction) should much more so be comprehended and expressed in a proposition: *all things are contradictory in themselves*, in this meaning, that **this proposition** as opposed to the others expresses much better the **truth and essence of things**.”²⁷

These Determinations of Reflection firstly “express the concept of things and their relations” in the external world as the IDENTITY of the sensation. We shall explain this further in the next section on the “union of analysis and synthesis”.

“Thinking reason (understanding) sharpens the blunt difference of **variety**; [second determination – insertion & emphasis added GH] the mere manifold of imagination, into *essential* difference, into *opposition* [third determination – insertion GH]. Only when raised to the peak of contradiction, do the manifold entities become active (regsam) and lively in relation

to one another, – they receive/acquire that negativity which is the *inherent pulsation of self-movement and vitality*.”²⁸

THE UNION OF ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

Lenin writes:

“The result of the negation of the negation, this third term is ‘not a quiescent third term, but, as this unity’ (of contradictions), ‘is self-mediating movement and activity ...’ ”²⁹

So far we have had 1) the Negation of the Identity of the source of sensation into 2) **Difference** as a negative containing the **positive** image of Identity together with Contradiction as a result of the first Negation 3) The transition of DIFFERENCE into CONTRADICTION which drove forward to Negation of the Negation.

In analysing Hegel, Lenin says:

“The result of this dialectical transformation into the ‘third’ term, into the synthesis, is a new premise, assertion, etc., which in turn becomes the source of a further analysis. But into it, into this ‘third’ stage, has already entered the ‘*content*’ of cognition (‘the content of cognition as such enters within the sphere of contemplation’) and the *method* is extended into a *system*.”³⁰

“The beginning,” emphasises Lenin, “of all consideration, of the whole analysis – this first premise [proposition – insertion GH] – now appears indeterminate, ‘imperfect’; the need arises to prove, ‘derive’ it and it turns out that...”

Lenin immediately goes on to quote Hegel approvingly:

“ ‘this may seem equivalent to the demand for an infinite *backward* progress in proof and derivation’ but, on the other hand,” writes Lenin, “the new premise drives *forward* ...”

He returns to Hegel who writes:

“... Thus, cognition rolls forward from content to content. This progress determines itself, first, in this manner, that it begins from simple determinatenesses and that each subsequent one is *richer* and *more concrete*. For the result contains its own beginning, and the development of the beginning has made it the richer by a new determinateness.”³¹

Content to content is “antithesis to antithesis”. “Simple determinateness” is the **first** “antithesis” which through negation of negation (third term) is now the “theory of knowledge”. This is negated back to the external source of the original sensation and negated as a new “part” of that “external source”, with the result that, as Hegel puts it, “each subsequent one is *richer* and *more concrete*. For the result contains its own beginning, and the development of the beginning has made it the richer by a new determinateness.”³²

WHOLE AND PARTS

The dialectical conception of the union of analysis and synthesis is expressed in the following process.

Analysis enables us to identify the properties at the external source of sensation, that make it a “part” of a new emerging “whole”, while in **Synthesis** the “new whole” is understood as consisting of these parts as a **unity of opposites** standing in certain relation to one another. Thus synthesis is carried out through analysis and analysis through synthesis. Both synthesis and analysis are interdependent upon each other.

Cognition of the “new whole” and its “parts” is a simultaneous process. By dialectically reflecting the parts from “the concept of things and their relations” in the external world, we analyse them as “a unity of opposites” in a new “whole”. This “new whole”, therefore consists of a summation of “parts” which are opposite, being negated from the Identity of the original source of sensation at different times.

3. COGNITION OF OBJECTIVE LAWS

The cognition of dialectical “parts” contains many dangers of a bourgeois idealist origin. These arise particularly in the form of superficially plausible “left phraseology” used in arguments as a kind of shortcut in arriving at insufficiently worked-out dialectical concepts.

Not only are events in the class struggle taken out of context and lumped together in a kind of “sophisticated package deal”. It happens also in the misuse of the dialectical method through the transfer, both in theory and practice, of laws peculiar to one set of ideas to others of an entirely different origin. In the case of history, by confusing quotations derived from one historical period of events with another, entirely different period, without proof of their historical interconnection.

A typical example of this eclectic method is provided by Lenin in *State and Revolution*. For Marx and Engels, “Force” was “the midwife of every old society which is pregnant with the new”.

The history of German social democracy (1878–1894) eclectically combined the theory of revolutionary force with the theory of the “withering away” of the state to form a **single** theory.

Lenin most emphatically denounces this eclectic method as follows:

“Usually the two [‘force’ and ‘withering away’ – insertion GH] are combined by means of eclecticism, by an unprincipled or sophistic selection made arbitrarily (or to please the powers that be) of first one, and then another argument, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if not more, it is the idea of the ‘withering away’ that is placed in the forefront.

“Dialectics are replaced by eclecticism – this is the most usual, the most widespread practice to be met with in present-day official Social-Democratic literature in relation to Marxism.

“This sort of substitution is, of course, nothing new; it was observed even in the **history of classical Greek philosophy** [emphasis GH]. In falsifying Marxism in opportunist fashion, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the easiest way of deceiving the people. It gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all trends of development, all the conflicting influences, and so forth, whereas in reality it provides no integral and revolutionary conception of the process of social development at all.”³³

THE CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVE LAWS

In a dialectical concept, the object at the source of sensation in the external world is reflected in a “particular” or one-sided “part” of the “object” at the external source.

As the Soviet philosopher E.V. Ilyenkov explains: “Each separate element of any dialectically divided whole, expresses one-sidedly, the universal nature of this whole precisely through its difference with other elements rather than abstract affinity to them.”³⁴

Lenin refers to this dialectical process as follows:

“The universal exists only in the individual and through the individual. Every individual is (in one way or another) a universal. Every universal is (a fragment, or an aspect, or the essence of) an individual. Every universal only approximately embraces all the individual objects. Every individual enters incompletely into the universal, etc., etc. Every individual is connected by thousands of transitions with other **kinds** of individuals (things, phenomena, processes), etc. *Here already* we have the elements, the germs, the concepts of *necessity*, of objective connection in nature, etc.”³⁵

The **IDENTITY** of the objective source of our sensation in the “external world” is a **quantitative infinite**, law-governed process of dialectical nature, human society (the class struggle) and thought.

Its self-related negation into **qualitative finite** DIFFERENCE in subjective thought as a “particular” or “part” is the interpenetration of opposites (object into subject). The “antithesis” is the unity of negative infinity (IDENTITY) into **finite** (DIFFERENCE) and is a negative with **a positive** image, which as a result of the first negation contains contradiction. The “antithesis” whose unity of negative and positive is the essence of “something” whose source is in the external world.

Hegel explains that:

“**Something**, taken from the point of view of its immanent Limit – from the point of view of its **self-contradiction** [emphasis GH], a contradiction which drives it (this Something) and leads it beyond its limits, is the *Finite*.”

Hegel emphasises that:

“It is the nature of the finite to pass beyond itself, to negate its negation and to become infinite”. Lenin adds, “Not external power converts the finite into the infinite, but its (finite's) nature.” ³⁶

Lenin comments approvingly in the box on the side-margin: “The dialectics of things themselves, of Nature itself, of the course of events itself.”

At the top of the same page Lenin writes “Ought or Should-be; and Bound or Boundary – Moments of the Finite” followed by a reference to Hegel who notes “... At Ought the transgression beyond finitude, Infinity, begins.” ³⁷

This is the manifestation through, as Lenin explains, ³⁸ “the first universal concept (also = the first encountered, universal concept)” of the objective laws of (1) Quantity (infinite) into Quality (FINITE); (2) Interpenetration of opposites (object into subject); (3) Negation of Negation and **vice versa** which is now **Quality into Quantity** – to the external **infinite source of sensation**. Referring to this dialectical materialist process Lenin emphasises: “In fact, however they are (the finite and the infinite) inseparable. They *are a unity*.” ³⁹ This is an objective law-governed process.

The development of the theory of knowledge here, through negation of negation, means the passage from one concept of a given object at the **source** of sensation to **another** concept at the **same** source. In this dialectical way, we deepen our knowledge of the essence of the original object, first as “opposites” or “parts” of the same external source of sensation, thus opening the way for the union of analysis and synthesis, through the determinations of Reflection.

PROBLEMS OF SPECULATIVE THINKING

“Dialectics”, wrote Lenin, “as *living*, many-sided knowledge (with the number of sides eternally increasing), with an infinite number of shades of every approach and approximation to reality (with a philosophical system growing into a whole out of each shade) – here we have an immeasurably rich content as compared with ‘metaphysical’ materialism, the fundamental *misfortune* of which is its inability to apply dialectics to the Bildertheorie (theory of reflection), to the process and development of knowledge.” ⁴⁰

The “**infinite** number of **shades**” [emphasis GH] are dialectical (antithesis) which, as Hegel wrote, go from “content to content”. In each content, the Infinite is “inseparable” from, and contained in the finite. As Hegel explains, “the universal is the foundation; the progress therefore must not be taken as a flow from **Other to Other**.” ⁴¹ [emphasis GH]

OTHER to OTHER is Infinity to Infinity or IDENTITY to IDENTITY, with self-related Qualitative finite Difference **omitted**, or incorporated into an eclectic “unity”.

“Speculative thought” is prepared to consider the “Infinite” as a “Unity” with the finite but ignores their inseparable self-related connection.

In *Volume 4* of the *Collected Works* of Marx and Engels in the section on the Holy Family, they deal with the “Mystery of Speculative Construction” when they write:

“If from real apples, pears, strawberries and almonds I form the general idea ‘**Fruit**’, if I go further and imagine that my abstract idea ‘**Fruit**’, derived from real fruit, is an entity existing outside me, is indeed the **true** essence of the pear, the apple, etc., then in the **language of speculative** philosophy – I am declaring that ‘**Fruit**’ is the ‘**Substance**’ of the pear, the apple, the almond, etc. I am saying, therefore, that to be a pear is not essential to the pear, that to be an apple is not essential to the apple; that what is essential to these things is not their real existence, perceptible to the senses, but the essence that I have abstracted from them and then foisted on them, the essence of my idea ‘**Fruit**’.” ⁴²

By separating the FINITE pear from the finite apple or a finite almond and replacing them with the **abstraction Fruit in general** we fall “into the most irrational and unnatural **bondage** to the object.” ⁴³

THE CONCRETE AND THE MOST SUBJECTIVE

Lenin comments on a lengthy paragraph from Hegel which we have already referred to (see page 15). “This extract,” he writes, “is not at all bad as a kind of summing up of dialectics.” He continues: “But *expansion* requires also *deepening* (‘going into itself’) ...” Lenin completes the sentence with a quotation from Hegel: “... and greater extension is also higher intensity.” ⁴⁴

On the top of the next page of his notebooks Lenin quotes Hegel:

“... The richest consequently is also the most concrete and *subjective*, and that which carries itself back into the simplest depth is also the most powerful and comprehensive.” Lenin comments: “This N.B.: the *richest* is the *most concrete* and most *subjective*.” ⁴⁵

Lenin proceeds to quote the next paragraph from Hegel with approval:

“In this manner it comes about that each step in the progress of further determination in advancing from the indeterminate beginning is also a *rearward approach* to it, so that two processes which may at first appear to be different (the regressive confirmation of the beginning and its progressive further determination) coincide and are the same.” ⁴⁶

Immediately underneath in a one-sentence paragraph Lenin emphasises: “It is impermissible to depreciate this indeterminate beginning.” The “indeterminate beginning” is the “**antithesis**” before it negates the negation that started at the external source of sensation.

Negation of negation is from the finite indeterminate beginning in “a rearward approach” to the infinite external source of the original sensation. A new “part” is negated and analysed (see box on page 143, *Volume 38*) through dialectical logic and is enriched by going more and more deeply as “part” and as an “opposite”.

As a new unity of opposites consisting of a variety of “parts” builds up, “the regressive, rearward confirmation of the beginning” “and its progressive further determination coincide and are the same”. A new “whole” consisting of new parts as a unity of opposites is ready to appear in the form of “Essence-in-Existence”.

These articles were written in July 1986. They were first printed in the daily *News Line*; then republished in *Marxist Review*, August 1986. See *Gerry Healy, A Revolutionary Life*, Lupus Books, 1994 by Corinna Lotz & Paul Feldman pp. 51 – 54

Notes

¹ Trotsky: *In Defence of Marxism*, New Park Publications, p.66

² Ibid.

³ Lenin, *Collected Works Volume 38*, Progress Publishers, 1972, p.104

⁴ Ibid, p.139

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- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid, p.140
- ⁸ Ibid, p.226
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p.98
- ¹¹ Ibid, p.139
- ¹² Ibid, p.142
- ¹³ Ibid, p.143
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p.226 (box)
- ¹⁵ *In Defence of Marxism*, p.70
- ¹⁶ *Volume 38*, p.226
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, pp.226/227
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p.227
- ²⁰ Lenin: *Collected Works Volume 14*, Progress Publishers, 1962, p.69
- ²¹ Ibid, p.155
- ²² *Volume 38*, p.229
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid, p.171
- ²⁵ Ibid, p.228
- ²⁶ Ibid, p.359
- ²⁷ Ibid, p.138
- ²⁸ Ibid, p.143
- ²⁹ Ibid, p.230
- ³⁰ Ibid, pp.230/231
- ³¹ Ibid, p.231
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Lenin: *Collected Works Volume 25*, Progress Publishers, 1972, pp.399/400
- ³⁴ E.V. Ilyenkov: *The Dialectics of the Abstract and Concrete in Marx's Capital*, Progress Publishers, 1982, p.98
- ³⁵ *Volume 38*, p.361
- ³⁶ Ibid, pp.110–111
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid, p.225
- ³⁹ Ibid, p.112
- ⁴⁰ Ibid, p.362
- ⁴¹ Ibid, p.231
- ⁴² Marx & Engels: *Collected Works Volume 4*, p.57
- ⁴³ Ibid, p.61
- ⁴⁴ *Volume 38*, p.231
- ⁴⁵ Ibid, p.232
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.