

Appendix

June — July 1906

Source : *Works*, Vol. 1, November 1901 - April 1907

Publisher : Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954

Transcription/Markup : Salil Sen for MIA, 2008

Public Domain : Marxists Internet Archive (2008). You may freely copy, distribute, display and perform this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit "Marxists Internet Archive" as your source.

ANARCHISM OR SOCIALISM? DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

I

We are not the kind of people who, when the word "anarchism" is mentioned, turn away contemptuously and say with a supercilious wave of the hand: "Why waste time on that, it's not worth talking about!" We think that such cheap "criticism" is undignified and useless.

Nor are we the kind of people who console themselves with the thought that the Anarchists "have no masses behind them and, therefore, are not so dangerous." It is not who has a larger or smaller "mass" following today, but the essence of the doctrine that matters. If the "doctrine" of the Anarchists expresses the truth, then it goes without saying that it will certainly hew a path for itself and will rally the masses around itself. If, however, it is unsound and built up on a false foundation, it will not last long and will remain suspended in mid-air. But the unsoundness of anarchism must be proved.

We believe that the Anarchists are real enemies of Marxism. Accordingly, we also hold that a real struggle must be waged against real enemies. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the "doctrine" of the Anarchists from beginning to end and weigh it up thoroughly from all aspects.

But in addition to criticising anarchism we must explain our own position and in that way expound in general outline the doctrine of Marx and Engels. This is all the more necessary for the reason that some Anarchists are spreading false conceptions about Marxism and are causing confusion in the minds of readers.

And so, let us proceed with our subject.

— — — — —

Everything in the world is in motion. . . . Life changes, productive forces grow, old relations collapse. . . . Eternal motion and eternal destruction and creation — such is the essence of life.

— Karl Marx

(See *The Poverty of Philosophy*)

Marxism is not only the theory of socialism, it is an integral world outlook, a philosophical system, from which Marx's proletarian socialism logically follows. This philosophical system is called dialectical materialism. Clearly, to expound Marxism means to expound also dialectical materialism.

Why is this system called dialectical materialism?

Because its method is dialectical, and its *theory* is materialistic.

What is the dialectical method? What is the materialist theory?

It is said that life consists in constant growth and development. And that is true: social life is not something immutable and static, it never remains at one level, it is in eternal motion, in an eternal process of destruction and creation. It was with good reason that Marx said that eternal motion and eternal destruction and creation are the essence of life. Therefore, life always contains the new and the old, the growing and the dying, revolution and reaction — in it something is always dying, and at the same time something is always being born. . . .

The dialectical method tells us that we must regard life as it actually is. Life is in continual motion, and therefore life must be viewed in its motion, in its destruction and creation. Where is life going, what is dying and what is being born in life, what is being destroyed and what is being created? — these are the questions that should interest us first of all.

Such is the first conclusion of the dialectical method.

That which in life is born and grows day by day is invincible, its progress cannot be checked, its victory is inevitable. That is to say, if, for example, in life the proletariat is born and grows day by day, no matter how weak and small in numbers it may be today, in the long run it must triumph. On the other hand, that which in life is dying and moving towards its grave must inevitably suffer defeat, i.e., if, for example, the bourgeoisie is losing ground and is slipping farther and farther back every day, then, no matter how strong and numerous it may be today, it must, in the long run, suffer defeat and go to its grave. Hence arose the well-known dialectical proposition: all that which really exists, i.e., all that which grows day by day is rational.

Such is the second conclusion of the dialectical method.

In the eighties of the nineteenth century a famous controversy flared up among the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia. The Narodniks asserted that the main force that could undertake the task of "emancipating Russia" was the poor peasantry. Why? — the Marxists asked them. Because, answered the Narodniks, the peasantry is the most numerous and at the same time the poorest section of Russian society. To this the Marxists replied: It is true that today the peasantry constitutes the majority and that it is very poor, but is that the point? The peasantry has long constituted the majority, but up to now it has displayed no initiative in the struggle for "freedom" without the assistance of the proletariat. Why? Because the peasantry as a class is *disintegrating day by day*, it is breaking up into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, whereas the proletariat as a class is *day by day growing* and gaining strength. Nor is poverty of decisive importance here: tramps are poorer than the peasants, but nobody will say that they can undertake the task of "emancipating Russia." The only thing that matters is: Who is growing and who is becoming aged in life? As the proletariat is the only class which is steadily growing and gaining strength, our duty is to take our place by its side and recognise it as the main force in the Russian revolution — that is how the Marxists answered. As you see, the Marxists looked at the question from the dialectical standpoint, whereas the Narodniks argued metaphysically, because they regarded the phenomena of life as "immutable, static, given once and for all" (see F. Engels, *Philosophy, Political Economy, Socialism*).

That is how the dialectical method looks upon the movement of life.

But there is movement and movement. There was social movement in the "December days" when the proletariat, straightening its back, stormed arms depots and launched an attack upon reaction. But the movement of preceding years, when the proletariat, under the conditions of "peaceful" development, limited itself to individual strikes and the formation of small trade unions, must also be called social movement. Clearly, movement

assumes different forms. And so the dialectical method says that movement has two forms: the evolutionary and the revolutionary form. Movement is evolutionary when the progressive elements spontaneously continue their daily activities and introduce minor, *quantitative* changes in the old order. Movement is revolutionary when the same elements combine, become imbued with a single idea and sweep down upon the enemy camp with the object of uprooting the old order and its *qualitative* features and to establish a new order. Evolution prepares for revolution and creates the ground for it; revolution consummates the process of evolution and facilitates its further activity.

Similar processes take place in nature. The history of science shows that the dialectical method is a truly scientific method: from astronomy to sociology, in every field we find confirmation of the idea that nothing is eternal in the universe, everything changes, everything develops. Consequently, everything in nature must be regarded from the point of view of movement, development. And this means that the spirit of dialectics permeates the whole of present-day science.

As regards the forms of movement, as regards the fact that according to dialectics, minor, quantitative changes sooner or later lead to major, *qualitative* changes — this law applies with equal force to the history of nature.

Mendeleyev's "periodic system of elements" clearly shows how very important in the history of nature is the emergence of qualitative changes out of quantitative changes. The same thing is shown in biology by the theory of neo-Lamarckism, to which neo-Darwinism is yielding place.

We shall say nothing about other facts, on which F. Engels has thrown sufficiently full light in his *Anti-Duhring*.

* * *

Thus, we are now familiar with the dialectical method. We know that according to that method the universe is in eternal motion, in an eternal process of destruction and creation, and that, consequently, all phenomena in nature and in society must be viewed in motion, in process of destruction and creation and not as something static and immobile. We also know that this motion has two forms: evolutionary and revolutionary. . . .

How do our Anarchists look upon the dialectical method?

Everybody knows that Hegel was the father of the dialectical method. Marx merely purged and improved this method. The Anarchists are aware of this; they also know that Hegel was a conservative, and so, taking advantage of the "opportunity," they vehemently revile Hegel, throw mud at him as a "reactionary," as a supporter of restoration, and zealously try to "prove" that "Hegel . . . is a philosopher of restoration . . . that he eulogizes bureaucratic constitutionalism in its absolute form, that the general idea of his philosophy of history is subordinate to and serves the philosophical trend of the period of restoration," and so on and so forth (see *Nobati*,

No. 6. Article by V. Cherkezishvili). True, nobody contests what they say on this point; on the contrary, everybody agrees that Hegel was not a revolutionary, that he was an advocate of monarchy, nevertheless, the Anarchists go on trying to "prove" and deem it necessary to go on endlessly trying to "prove" that Hegel was a supporter of "restoration." Why do they do this? Probably, in order by all this to discredit Hegel, to make their readers feel that the method of the "reactionary" Hegel is also "repugnant" and unscientific. If that is so, if Messieurs the Anarchists think they can refute the dialectical method *in this way*, then I must say that *in this way* they can prove nothing but their own simplicity. Pascal and Leibnitz were not revolutionaries, but the mathematical method they discovered is recognised today as a scientific method; Mayer and Helmholtz were not revolutionaries, but their discoveries in the field of physics became the basis of science; nor were Lamarck and Darwin revolutionaries, but their evolutionary method put biological science on its feet. . . . Yes, *in this way* Messieurs the Anarchists will prove nothing but their own simplicity.

To proceed. In the opinion of the Anarchists "dialectics is metaphysics" (see *Nobati*, No. 9. Sh. G.), and as they "want to free science from metaphysics, philosophy from theology" (see *Nobati*, No. 3. Sh. G.), they repudiate the dialectical method.

Oh, those Anarchists! As the saying goes: "Blame others for your own sins." Dialectics matured in the struggle against metaphysics and gained fame in this struggle; but according to the Anarchists, "dialectics is

metaphysics"! Proudhon, the "father" of the Anarchists, believed that there existed in the world an "immutable justice" established *once and for all* (see Eltzbacher's *Anarchism*, pp. 64-68, foreign edition) and for this Proudhon has been called a metaphysician. Marx fought Proudhon with the aid of the dialectical method and proved that since everything in the world changes, "justice" must also change, and that, consequently, "immutable justice" is metaphysical fantasy (see Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*). Yet the Georgian disciples of the metaphysician Proudhon come out and try to "prove" that "dialectics is metaphysics," that metaphysics recognises the "unknowable" and the "thing-in-itself," and in the long run passes into empty theology. In contrast to Proudhon and Spencer, Engels combated metaphysics as well as theology with the aid of the dialectical method (see Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and Anti-Duhring*). He proved how ridiculously vapid they were. Our Anarchists, however, try to "prove" that Proudhon and Spencer were scientists, whereas Marx and Engels were metaphysicians. One of two things: either Messieurs the Anarchists are deceiving themselves, or they fail to understand what is metaphysics. At all events, the dialectical method is entirely free from blame.

What other accusations do Messieurs the Anarchists hurl against the dialectical method? They say that the dialectical method is "subtle word-weaving," "the method of sophistry," "logical and mental somersaults" (see *Nobati*, No. 8. Sh. G.) "with the aid of which both truth and falsehood are proved with equal facility" (see *Nobati*, No. 4. V. Cherkezishvili).

At first sight it would seem that the accusation advanced by the Anarchists is correct. Listen to what Engels says about the follower of the metaphysical method : ". . . His communication is :

"'Yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' For him a thing either exists, or it does not exist; it is equally impossible for a thing to be itself and at the same time something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another . . ." (see *Anti-Duhring*, Introduction). How is that?—the Anarchist cries heatedly. Is it possible for a thing to be good and bad at the same time?! That is "sophistry," "juggling with words," it shows that "you want to prove truth and falsehood with equal facility! . . ."

Let us, however, go into the substance of the matter. Today we are demanding a democratic republic. The democratic republic, however, strengthens bourgeois property. Can we say that a democratic republic is good always and everywhere? No, we cannot! Why? Because a democratic republic is good only "*today*," when we are destroying feudal property, but "*tomorrow*," when we shall proceed to destroy bourgeois property and establish socialist property, the democratic republic will no longer be good; on the contrary, it will become a fetter, which we shall smash and cast aside. But as life is in continual motion, as it is impossible to separate the past from the present, and as we are *simultaneously* fighting the feudal rulers and the bourgeoisie, we say: in so far as the democratic republic destroys feudal property it is good and we advocate it, but in so far as it strengthens bourgeois property it is bad, and therefore we criticise it. It follows, therefore, that the democratic republic is simultaneously both "good" and "bad," and thus the answer to the question raised may be both "yes" and "no." It was *facts* of this kind that Engels had in mind when he proved the correctness of the dialectical method in the words quoted above. The Anarchists, however, failed to understand this and to them it seemed to be "sophistry"! The Anarchists are, of course, at liberty to note or ignore these *facts*, they may even ignore the sand on the sandy seashore—they have every right to do that. But why drag in the dialectical method, which, unlike the Anarchists, does not look at life with its eyes shut, which has its finger on the pulse of life and openly says: since life changes, since life is in motion, every phenomenon of life has two trends: a positive and a negative; the first we must defend and the second we must reject? What astonishing people those Anarchists are: they are constantly talking about "justice," but they treat the dialectical method with gross injustice!

To proceed further. In the opinion of our Anarchists, "dialectical development is catastrophic development, by means of which, first the past is utterly destroyed, and then the future is established quite separately. . . . Cuvier's cataclysms were due to unknown causes, but Marx and Engels's catastrophes are engendered by dialectics" (see *Nobati*, No. 8. Sh. G.). In another place the same author says that "Marxism rests on Darwinism and treats it uncritically" (see *Nobati*, No. 6).

Ponder well over that, reader!

Cuvier rejects Darwin's theory of evolution, he recognises only cataclysms, and cataclysms are *unexpected* upheavals "due to *unknown* causes." The Anarchists say that the Marxists *adhere to Cuvier's view* and therefore *repudiate Darwinism*.

Darwin rejects Cuvier's cataclysms, he recognises gradual evolution. But the same Anarchists say that "Marxism rests on Darwinism and treats it uncritically," therefore, the Marxists *do not advocate Cuvier's cataclysms*.

This is anarchy if you like! As the saying goes: the Sergeant's widow flogged herself! Clearly, Sh. G. of No. 8 of *Nobati* forgot what Sh. G. of No. 6 said. Which is right: No. 6 or No. 8? Or are they both lying?

Let us turn to the facts. Marx says: "At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations. . . . Then begins an epoch of social revolution." But "no social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have developed . . ." (see K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Preface). If this idea of Marx is applied to modern social life, we shall find that between the present-day productive forces which are social in character, and the method of appropriating the product, which is *private* in character, there is a fundamental conflict which must culminate in the socialist revolution (see F. Engels, *Anti-Duhring*, Chapter II, Part III). As you see, in the opinion of Marx and Engels, "revolution" ("catastrophe") is engendered not by

Cuvier's "unknown causes," but by very definite and vital social causes called "the development of the productive forces." As you see, in the opinion of Marx and Engels, revolution comes only when the productive forces have sufficiently matured, and not *unexpectedly*, as Cuvier imagined. Clearly, there is nothing in common between Cuvier's cataclysms and the dialectical method. On the other hand, Darwinism repudiates not only Cuvier's cataclysms, but also dialectically conceived revolution, whereas according to the dialectical method evolution and revolution, quantitative and qualitative changes, are two essential forms of the same motion. Clearly, it is also wrong to say that "Marxism . . . treats Darwinism uncritically." It follows therefore that *Nobati* is lying in both cases, in No. 6 as well as in No. 8.

And so these lying "critics" buttonhole us and go on repeating: Whether you like it or not our lies are better than your truth! Probably they believe that everything is pardonable in an Anarchist.

There is another thing for which Messieurs the Anarchists cannot forgive the dialectical method: "Dialectics . . . provides no possibility of getting, or jumping, out of oneself, or of jumping over oneself" (see *Nobati*, No. 8. Sh. G.). Now that is the downright truth, Messieurs Anarchists! Here you are absolutely right, my dear sirs: the dialectical method does not provide such a possibility. But why not? Because "jumping out of oneself, or jumping over oneself," is an exercise for wild goats, while the dialectical method was created for human beings. That is the secret! . . .

Such, in general, are our Anarchists' views on the dialectical method.

Clearly, the Anarchists fail to understand the dialectical method of Marx and Engels; they have conjured up their own dialectics, and it is against this dialectics that they are fighting so ruthlessly.

All we can do is to laugh as we gaze at this spectacle, for one cannot help laughing when one sees a man fighting his own imagination, smashing his own inventions, while at the same time heatedly asserting that he is smashing his opponent.

II

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."

— Karl Marx

What is the materialist theory?

Everything in the world changes, everything in the world is in motion, but how do these changes take place and in *what form* does this motion proceed?—that is the question. We know, for example, that the earth was once an incandescent, fiery mass, then it gradually cooled, then the animal kingdom appeared and developed, then appeared a species of ape from which man subsequently originated. But how did this development take place? Some say that nature and its development were preceded by the universal idea, which subsequently served as the basis of this development, so that the development of the phenomena of nature, it would appear, is merely the *form* of the development of the idea. These people were called idealists, who later split up and followed different trends. Others say that from the very beginning there have existed in the world two opposite forces—idea and matter, and that correspondingly, phenomena are also divided into two categories, the ideal and the material, which are in constant conflict. Thus the development of the phenomena of nature, it would appear, represents a constant struggle between ideal and material phenomena. Those people are called dualists, and they, like the idealists, are split up into different schools.

Marx's materialist theory utterly repudiates both dualism and idealism. Of course, both ideal and material phenomena exist in the world, but this does not mean that they negate each other. On the contrary, the ideal and the material are two different forms of the same phenomenon; they exist together and develop together; there is a close connection between them. That being so, we have no grounds for thinking that they negate each other. Thus, so-called dualism crumbles to its foundations. A single and indivisible nature expressed in two different forms—material and ideal—that is how we should regard the development of nature. A single and indivisible life expressed in two different forms—ideal and material—that is how we should regard the development of life.

Such is the monism of Marx's materialist theory.

At the same time, Marx also repudiates idealism. It is wrong to think that the development of the idea, and of the spiritual side in general, *precedes* nature and the material side in general. So-called external, inorganic nature existed before there were any living beings. The first living matter—protoplasm—possessed no consciousness (idea), it possessed only irritability and the first rudiments of sensation. Later, animals gradually developed the power of sensation, which slowly passed into consciousness, in conformity with the development of their nervous systems. If the ape had never stood upright, if it had always walked on all fours, its descendant—man—would not have been able freely to use his lungs and vocal chords and, therefore, would not have been able to speak; and that would have greatly retarded the development of his consciousness. If, furthermore, the ape had not risen up on its hind legs, its descendant—man—would have been compelled always to look downwards and obtain his impressions only from there; he would have been unable to look up and around himself and, consequently, his brain would have obtained no more material (impressions) than that of the ape; and that would have greatly retarded the development of his consciousness. It follows that the development of the spiritual side is conditioned by the structure of the organism and the development of its nervous system. It follows that the development of the spiritual side, the development of ideas, is *preceded* by the development of the material side, the development of being. Clearly, first the external conditions change, first matter changes, and *then* consciousness and other spiritual phenomena change accordingly—the development of the ideal side *lags behind* the development of material conditions. If we call the material side, the external conditions, being, etc., the *content*, then we must call the ideal side, consciousness and other phenomena of the same kind, the *form*. Hence arose the well-known materialist proposition: in the process of development content precedes form, form lags behind content.

The same must be said about social life. Here, too, material development precedes ideal development, here, too, form lags behind its content. Capitalism existed and a fierce class struggle raged long before scientific socialism was even thought of; the process of production already bore a social character long before the socialist idea arose.

That is why Marx says: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness" (see K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*). In Marx's opinion, economic development is the material foundation of social life, its content, while legal-political and religious-philosophical development is the "*ideological form*" of this content, its "superstructure." Marx, therefore, says: "With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is *more or less rapidly transformed*" (*ibid.*).

In social life too, first the external, material conditions change and then the thoughts of men, their world outlook, change. The development of content precedes the rise and development of form. This, of course, does not mean that in Marx's opinion content is possible without form, as Sh. G. imagines (see *Nobati*, No. 1. "A Critique of Monism"). Content is impossible without form, but the point is that since a given form lags behind its content, it never *fully* corresponds to this content; and so the new content is often "obliged" to clothe itself for a time in the old form, and this causes a conflict between them. At the present time, for example, the private character of the appropriation of the product does not correspond to the social content of production, and this is the basis of the present-day social "conflict." On the other hand, the conception that the idea is a form of being does not mean that, by its nature, consciousness is the same as matter. That was the opinion held only by the vulgar materialists (for example, Buchner and Moleschott), whose theories fundamentally contradict Marx's materialism, and whom Engels rightly ridiculed in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*. According to Marx's materialism, consciousness and being, mind and matter, are two different forms of the same phenomenon, which, broadly speaking, is called nature. Consequently, they do not negate each other,¹ but nor are they one and the same phenomenon. The only point is that, in the development of nature and society, consciousness, i.e., what takes place in our heads, is preceded by a corresponding material change, i.e., what takes place outside of us. Any given material change is, sooner or later, inevitably followed by a corresponding ideal change. That is why we say that an ideal change is the form of a corresponding material change.

Such, in general, is the monism of the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels.

We shall be told by some: All this may well be true as applied to the history of nature and society. But how do different conceptions and ideas about given objects arise in our heads at the present time? Do so-called external conditions really exist, or is it only our conceptions of these external conditions that exist? And if external conditions exist, to what degree are they perceptible and cognizable?

On this point we say that our conceptions, our "self," exist only in so far as external conditions exist that give rise to impressions in our "self." Whoever unthinkingly says that nothing exists but our conceptions, is compelled to deny the existence of all external conditions and, consequently, must deny the existence of all other people except his own "self," which fundamentally contradicts the main principles of science and vital activity. Yes, external conditions do actually exist; these conditions existed before us, and will exist after us; and the more often and the more strongly they affect our consciousness, the more easily perceptible and cognizable do they become. As regards the question as to how different conceptions and ideas about given objects arise in our heads *at the present time*, we must observe that here we have a repetition in brief of what takes place in the history of nature and society. In this case, too, the object outside of us precedes our conception of it; in this case, too, our conception, the form, lags behind the object, its content, and so forth. When I look at a tree and see it—that only shows that this tree existed even before the conception of a tree arose in my head; that it was this tree that aroused the corresponding conception in my head.

The importance of the monistic materialism of Marx and Engels for the practical activities of mankind can be readily understood. If our world outlook, if our habits and customs are determined by external conditions, if the unsuitability of legal and political forms rests on an economic content, it is clear that we must help to bring about a radical change in economic relations in order, with this change, to bring about a radical change in the habits and customs of the people, and in the political system of the country. Here is what Karl Marx says on that score:

"No great acumen is required to perceive the necessary interconnection of materialism with . . . socialism. If man constructs all his knowledge, perceptions, etc., from the world of sense . . . then it follows that it is a question of so arranging the empirical world that he experiences the truly human in it, that he becomes accustomed to experiencing himself as a human being. . . . If man is unfree in the materialist sense—that is, is free not by reason of the negative force of being able to avoid this or that, but by reason of the positive power to assert his true individuality, then one should not punish individuals for crimes, but rather destroy the anti-social breeding places of crime. . . . If man is moulded by circumstances, then the circumstances must be moulded humanly" (see *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Appendix: "Karl Marx on the History of French Materialism of the XVIII Century").

Such is the connection between materialism and the practical activities of men.

What is the anarchist view of the monistic materialism of Marx and Engels?

While Marx's dialectics originated with Hegel, his materialism is a development of Feuerbach's materialism. The Anarchists know this very well, and they try to take advantage of the defects of Hegel and Feuerbach to discredit the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels. We have already shown with reference to Hegel that these tricks of the Anarchists prove nothing but their own polemical impotence. The same must be said with reference to Feuerbach. For example, they strongly emphasise that "Feuerbach was a pantheist . . ." that he "deified man . . ." (see *Nobati*, No. 7. D. Delendi), that "in Feuerbach's opinion man is what he eats . . ." alleging that from this Marx drew the following conclusion: "Consequently, the main and primary thing is economic conditions," etc. (see *Nobati*, No. 6. Sh. G.). True, nobody has any doubts about Feuerbach's pantheism, his deification of man, and other errors of his of the same kind. On the contrary, Marx and Engels were the first to reveal Feuerbach's errors; nevertheless, the Anarchists deem it necessary once again to "expose" the already exposed errors of Feuerbach. Why? Probably because, in reviling Feuerbach, they want at least in some way to discredit the materialism which Marx borrowed from Feuerbach and then scientifically developed. Could not Feuerbach have had correct as well as erroneous ideas? We say that by tricks of this kind the Anarchists will not shake monistic materialism in the least; all they will do is to prove their own impotence.

The Anarchists disagree among themselves about Marx's materialism. If, for example, we listen to what Mr. Cherkezishvili has to say, it would appear that Marx and Engels detested monistic materialism; in his opinion their materialism is vulgar and not monistic materialism: "The great science of the naturalists, with its system of evolution, transformism and monistic materialism which *Engels so heartily detested* . . . avoided dialectics," etc. (see *Nobati*, No. 4. V. Cherkezishvili). It follows, therefore, that the natural-scientific materialism, which Cherkezishvili likes and which Engels detested, was monistic materialism. Another Anarchist, however, tells us that the materialism of Marx and Engels is monistic and should therefore be rejected. "Marx's conception of history is a throwback to Hegel. The monistic materialism of absolute objectivism in general, and Marx's economic monism in particular, are impossible in nature and fallacious in theory. . . . Monistic materialism is poorly disguised dualism and a compromise between metaphysics and science . . ." (see *Nobati*, No. 6. Sh. G.).

It would follow that monistic materialism is unacceptable because Marx and Engels, far from detesting it, were actually monistic materialists themselves, and therefore monistic materialism must be rejected.

This is anarchy if you like! They have not yet grasped the substance of Marx's materialism, they have not yet understood whether it is monistic materialism or not, they have not yet agreed among themselves about its merits and demerits, but they already deafen us with their boastful claims: We criticise and raze Marx's materialism to the ground! This by itself shows what grounds their "criticism" can have.

To proceed further. It appears that certain Anarchists are even ignorant of the fact that in science there are various forms of materialism, which differ a great deal from one another: there is, for example, vulgar materialism (in natural science and history), which denies the importance of the ideal side and the effect it has upon the material side; but there is also so-called monistic materialism, which scientifically examines the interrelation between the ideal and the material sides. Some Anarchists confuse all this and at the same time affirm with great aplomb: Whether you like it or not, we subject the materialism of Marx and Engels to devastating criticism! Listen to this: "In the opinion of Engels, and also of Kautsky, Marx rendered mankind a great service in that he . . ." among other things, discovered the "materialist conception." "Is this true? We do not think so, for we know . . . that all the historians, scientists and philosophers who adhere to the view that the social mechanism is set in motion by geographic, climatic and telluric, cosmic, anthropological and biological conditions—*are all materialists*" (see *Nobati*, No. 2. Sh. G.). How can you talk to such people? It appears, then, that there is no difference between the "materialism" of Aristotle and of Montesquieu, or between the "materialism" of Marx and of Saint-Simon. A fine example, indeed, of understanding your opponent and subjecting him to devastating criticism!

Some Anarchists heard somewhere that Marx's materialism was a "belly theory" and set about popularising this "idea," probably because paper is cheap in the editorial office of *Nobati* and this process does not cost much.

Listen to this: "In the opinion of Feuerbach man is what he eats. This formula had a magic effect on Marx and Engels," and so, in the opinion of the Anarchists, Marx drew from this the conclusion that "consequently the main and primary thing is economic conditions, relations of production. . . ." And then the Anarchists proceed to instruct us in a philosophical tone: "It would be a mistake to say that the sole means of achieving this object (of social life) is eating and economic production. . . . If *ideology were determined* mainly monistically, by *eating* and economic existence—then some gluttons would be geniuses" (see *Nobati*, No. 6. Sh. G.). You see how easy it is to criticise Marx's materialism! It is sufficient to hear some gossip in the street from some schoolgirl about Marx and Engels, it is sufficient to repeat that street gossip with philosophical aplomb in the columns of a paper like *Nobati*, to leap into fame as a "critic." But tell me one thing, gentlemen: Where, when, in what country, and which Marx did you hear say that "eating determines ideology"? Why did you not cite a single sentence, a single word from the works of Marx to back your accusation? Is economic existence and eating the same thing? One can forgive a schoolgirl, say, for confusing these entirely different concepts, but how is it that you, the "vanquishers of Social-Democracy," "regenerators of science," so carelessly repeat the mistake of a schoolgirl? How, indeed, can eating determine social ideology? Ponder over what you yourselves have said; eating, the form of eating, does not change; in ancient times people ate, masticated and digested their food in the same way as they do now, but the forms of ideology constantly change and develop. Ancient, feudal, bourgeois and proletarian—such are the forms of ideology. Is it conceivable that that which generally speaking, does not change can determine that which is constantly changing? Marx does, indeed, say that economic existence determines ideology, and this is easy to understand, but is eating and economic existence the same thing? Why do you think it proper to attribute your own foolishness to Marx?

To proceed further. In the opinion of our Anarchists, Marx's materialism "is parallelism. . . ." Or again: "monistic materialism is poorly disguised dualism and a compromise between metaphysics and science. . . ." "Marx drops into dualism because he depicts relations of production as material, and human striving and will as an illusion and a utopia, which, even though it exists, is of no importance" (see *Nobati*, No. 6. Sh. G.). Firstly, Marx's monistic materialism has nothing in common with silly parallelism. From the standpoint of materialism, the material side, content, necessarily *precedes* the ideal side, form. Parallelism repudiates this view and emphatically affirms that neither the material nor the ideal *comes first*, that both move together, parallel with each other. Secondly, what is there in common between Marx's monism and dualism when we know perfectly well (and you, Messieurs Anarchists, should also know this if you read Marxist literature!) that the former springs from *one principle* — nature, which has a material and an ideal form, whereas the latter springs from two principles—the material and the ideal which, according to dualism, mutually negate each other. Thirdly, who said that "human striving and will are not important"? Why don't you point to the place where Marx says that? Does not Marx speak of the importance of "striving and will" in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in his *Class Struggles in France*, in his *Civil War in France*, and in other pamphlets? Why, then, did Marx try to develop the proletarians' "will and striving" in the socialist spirit, why did he conduct propaganda among them if he attached no importance to "striving and will"? Or, what did Engels talk about in his well-known articles of 1891-94 if not the "importance of striving and will"? Human striving and will acquire their content from economic existence, but that does not mean that they exert no influence on the development of economic relations. Is it really so difficult for our Anarchists to digest this simple idea? It is rightly said that a passion for criticism is one thing, but criticism itself is another.

Here is another accusation Messieurs the Anarchists make: "form is inconceivable without content . . ." therefore, one cannot say that "form lags behind content . . . they 'co-exist.' . . . Otherwise, monism would be an absurdity" (see *Nobati*, No. 1. Sh. G.). Messieurs the Anarchists are somewhat confused. Content is inconceivable without form, but the *existing form* never fully corresponds to the existing content; to a certain extent the new content is always clothed in the old form, as a consequence, there is always a conflict between the old form and the new content. It is precisely on this ground that revolutions occur, and this, among other things, expresses the revolutionary spirit of Marx's materialism. The Anarchists, however, have failed to understand this and obstinately repeat that there is no content without form. . . .

Such are the Anarchists' views on materialism. We shall say no more. It is sufficiently clear as it is that the Anarchists have invented their own Marx, have ascribed to him a "materialism" of their own invention, and are now fighting this "materialism." But not a single bullet of theirs hits the true Marx and the true materialism. . . .

What connection is there between dialectical materialism and proletarian socialism?

Notes

1. This does not contradict the idea that there is a conflict between form and content. The point is that the conflict is not between content and form in general, but between the *old* form and the new content, which is seeking a new form and is striving towards it.
-

[Collected Works Index](#) | [Volume 1 Index](#)
[Works by Decade](#) | [J. V. Stalin Archive](#)
[Marxists Internet Archive](#)