

DIALECTIC : THE MARXIAN CONCEPTION AND ITS CLASSICAL BASIS



DIALECTIC : THE MARXIAN CONCEPTION AND ITS CLASSICAL BASES

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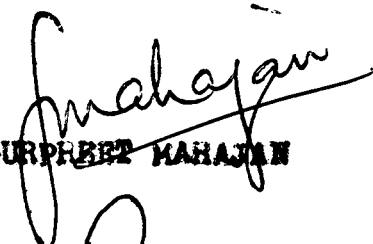

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other Degree to this or any other University and all the sources used in this Dissertation have been duly acknowledged.

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A man can do all things if he will.

**- Alberti, in Kenneth Clark,
Civilisation**

**To philosophise is not to be perplexed by
the unperplexing, to cultivate perplexity
for perplexity's sake or, even worse, to
adopt the pose of being eternally
perplexed. Perplexity is often not only
the beginning but also the end of serious
thought. It is not its aim.**

**- Stephan Körner, Fundamental
Questions of Philosophy**

**I am of course no longer a Hegelian but I
still have a great feeling of piety and
devotion towards the colossal old chap.**

**- F. Engels to F.A. Lange
29th 1855**

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation attempts to re-examine the concept of the dialectic. The task may, at the outset, seem to be superfluous because the concept has been simply and lucidly presented in the writings of Engels, Plekhanov, Lenin and Stalin. Even today, a brief exposition of Dialectical Materialism appears in almost all Soviet books on philosophy. It is, therefore, essential to specify the context within which it seemed necessary to undertake an analysis of the concept of dialectics.

In Marxian circles, the dialectic was regarded as the legacy of Hegel. However, Hegel had, according to them, used the dialectic in the realm of ideas while Marx had applied it to matter and material processes. At the same time, we are also told that the difference between the Kantian and the Hegelian conception of the dialectic was that for the former, contradictions were a consequence of the limitations of individual understanding; while for Hegel, contradictions existed within the very essence of things. It is difficult to effect a compromise between these two almost irreconcilable viewpoints.

It has quite often been remarked that the dialectic could not be applied consistently within the idealist framework. Hence, there was a contradiction between the method and conclusions of Hegel. To put it differently, Hegel had regarded the Prussian state as the highest stage of development. He had, thereby, relinquished the dialectic which upheld the necessity of continuous development. The question that presents itself, here, relates to the situation in the communist state. Would it (the communist society) resolve all contradictions that have existed in history and represent a classless society; in which case, the situation would be analogous to that of Hegel's ideal state. Or would it, as Mao suggests, overcome only the primary contradiction.

It is frequently maintained that contradictions are inherent in all phenomena. Does this, as some of its critics point out, imply that black and white co-exist, or else, that black is white, in which case, how do we account for the individual ability to identify and differentiate objects and qualities. In other words, what is implied by saying that each object contains within it, its own opposite? It is not possible to dismiss the dialectic, as some of its critics are in the habit of doing, as an incorrect system of thinking because two of the finest minds in the history of mankind

could not have made a simple logical error, (which is apparent even to an undergraduate student.)

All this, leads one to study the concept of dialectics and reconsider its relationship with other associated concepts such as change, flux, movement, unity of opposites and contradiction. Besides, what is usually upheld as the dialectic, seems to be a set of simple and fairly commonplace assertions. Even if one concedes that these statements are simple and common because we have assimilated them so completely, it is still difficult to get a coherent picture of what Hegel was trying to do through the dialectic. Why did he use the dialectic? How did he apply it? What did the concept of dialectic imply? What is the difference between Dialectical Idealism and Dialectical Materialism? Can a student of political philosophy categorise the dialectic (which represents a different conception of the universe) as materialist or idealist? These are some of the questions that remain unanswered in most studies of the dialectic. It is, therefore, necessary to re-examine the concept of dialectic; to analyse the difference and continuity in the Hegelian and Marxian conception of the dialectic; and to re-interpret the writings of Hegel.

In the post-war period, several attempts were made to study Hegel's political theory, particularly his conception of the state, to see if it legitimized a Fascist regime. Most students, even today, are familiar only with those aspects of Hegel's writings. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the philosophy of Hegel, to study his contribution to the history of philosophy because almost all methodological debates today, revolve around Kant and Hegel. It is within this setting that this work has been undertaken.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF GERMAN IDEALISM, RATIONALISM, EMPIRICISM AND ROMANTICISM

Philosophically, the renaissance marked the emergence of a new era unmistakably different from the mediæval ages. The decline of feudalism was accompanied by the decreasing control of the church and theology over all aspects of human life. The renaissance celebrated man and placed him in the centre of the universe. The Cartesian principle of 'Cogito ergo sum' aptly expressed the spirit of this age. Everything, except the existence of consciousness, 'I' -- which was an intuitively grasped certainty -- was subject to doubt.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century the system of Ptolemy came under attack. The Copernican system of describing the movements of planets provided a more dynamic understanding of the processes of nature. While Copernicus and Kepler provided the theoretical bases of the new conception of the world, Galileo used his expertise to

develop objects of practical utility which were of immense use to the trading republics.¹

Scholasticism in the mediaeval ages had emphasized the passivity of the individual, expecting him to accept and only reflect on God's creation. By contrast, the appeal to reason and an emphasis on the individual were the two cardinal principles of the post-renaissance philosophy. Together they expressed the Cartesian principle of 'doubt everything'. Complete skepticism and unconditional doubt were used to highlight the irrationality of the feudal system and its pattern of beliefs in contrast to the emerging capitalist social relations. Each individual, autonomously, was required to decide for himself what was good and best. The comparison, of course, was to be between the structures that already existed and the possibility of a new order which was in the mind of the individuals and which, theoretically, at least, had the potential of providing plenty for everyone. A comparison of this kind would undoubtedly weight in favour of the

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1. Although a hundred years before Leonardo da Vinci was aware of the uniform motion of the pendulum, it was Galileo who used it for measuring time. He even developed the compound microscope which revealed a world beyond that which is given through observation. Of even greater practical utility was his use of the telescope to draw a chart of the positions of the seven moons of Jupiter which could be used by seamen to know the time and to fix the longitude. This helped not only in the development of better techniques of navigation but was of immense importance to the trading community which was steadily accumulating more and more economic and political power.

new society. Its idealisation by the masses could be utilized to lend impetus to the actual historical transition from feudalism to capitalism.

The philosophy that developed in Europe during this phase was Rationalist in character in so far as it rejected the mystical elements and reference to authority, sacred texts, divine revelation and tradition for the validation of knowledge. It viewed the world as a permanent unalterable structure in which change was subject to definite laws which could be discovered through the application of reason and controlled experimentation. The philosophy of this age expressed its faith in human reason, in its ability to understand and solve the problems of the natural and the social world.

Beyond this sphere on which there was consensus, there were a range of differences between them in terms of their epistemological perspectives; one group regarded abstract reasoning as the predominant source of knowledge while the other adhered to concrete experience. While both schools regarded the universe as an entity mathematical in its structure, the former, rationalists, were of the opinion that the method and procedure of deduction used in mathematics and general logical reasoning was the best possible

technique for attaining knowledge of the universe. Empiricists, on the other hand, emphasised the inductive procedures used in contemporary mechanics and the natural sciences.

The unity underlying the works of the rationalist philosophers was a methodological one. The system of Descartes, Leibnitz and Spinoza were deductions from a proposition which was regarded by each of them to be a self-evident postulate, whose certainty could not be questioned. The empiricist philosophers, on the other hand, followed the method delineated in the writings of Francis Bacon. The latter had expressed the opinion that scientificity and objectivity could be ensured only through the adoption of the inductive method. The need to begin with the empirical and the directly observable was of crucial importance.

It is customary to regard John Locke as the 'real father' of British empiricism. However, his 'Essay'² was to a considerable extent a philosophical exposition and systematisation of Bacon's philosophical ideas. Locke upheld the belief that the material given through sense

2. Refers to Locke's book entitled An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.

perception was the only source of knowledge. The mind was a "... white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas..."³ on which impressions were formed through sense perception. It was "...from experience ... that all our knowledge is founded and from that it ultimately derives itself."⁴ The mind was regarded as a passive receptacle of the sensations derived from the object existing outside the subject. To quote Locke, "...the mind is, for the most part only passive and what it perceives, it cannot help perceiving".⁵

Ideas, then, were derived from sense experience and so were the general ideas. Although the mind possessed the ability to abstract further and think in terms of abstract ideas. "...Words become general by being made the signs of general ideas; and ideas become general by separating from them the circumstances of time, and place, and any other ideas that may determine them to this or that particular existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more individuals than one; each of which, having in it a conformity to that abstract idea, is (as we call it) of that sort."⁶

3. J. Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Ch.I, in A.J. Ayer & R. Marsh (ed.) 'British Empirical Philosophers', Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p.43.
 4. *ibid.*, p.43.
 5. *ibid.*, Book II, Ch.IX, p.60.
 6. *ibid.*, Book III, Ch.III, p.117.

A shift to empiricism and sensationalism implied a reversal of Cartesian epistemology. In the latter, objective and reliable knowledge was predicated on and derived from the first 'a priori' principle; everything else that was given factually through the senses was subject to systematic doubt. The Newtonian scheme had effectively incorporated the two diverse positions represented by the methodological models of rationalism and empiricism. He reiterated the need to begin with facts (although not to end with them). His method emphasized the search for facts which could be systematized for "...facts exhibit an all-pervasive form. The form appears in mathematical determinations and arrangements according to measure and number."⁷ At the same time it accorded to the mind an important role, especially in the formation of hypotheses which were crucial for scientific investigation.

The object of investigation, within the Newtonian paradigm, was the discovery of laws and principles which govern the movement of all objects in the universe. These laws could be known through careful observation, experimentation, measurement, calculation and the precise determination of the relation between the two levels of analysis. Parallel to this, there developed an emphasis on

7. H. Cassirer, The Philosophy of Enlightenment,
 Bacon Press, Boston, 1955, p.8.

methodological individualism based on the analytical and synthetic method used by Galileo. Knowledge of a phenomenon required its resolution into simple components and its reconstruction from the latter.⁸

It was the empiricist epistemology used within the larger Rationalist conception of the universe that dominated English and French thought almost exclusively, till the end of the eighteenth century. Gradually the mechanistic allegory and the accompanying emphasis on precision and scientificity became more dominant and its influence permeated all spheres of thinking. The method used in the natural sciences was sought to be replicated in all other disciplines as it ensured 'scientificity'. The necessity as Voltaire mentioned, was "...not only to think, but to think well";⁹ and, since the modality of reasoning, according to them, remained the same, the developments in the natural sciences proved the obvious superiority of that method of reasoning and analyzing.

8. cf. Cassirer, *ibid.*
Galileo illustrates this in reference to the discovery of the parabolic path of the projectile, which could not be known through observation directly or through abstraction thereof. Instead, only when it is seen as a complex event and then reduced to its simple components and determinations, can one trace the parabolic path, in what appears to be a phase of ascent followed by a phase of descent in the movement of the projectile.
This method - i.e. of reducing a complex action into its simplest components -- was the legacy of the Cartesian method, which was incorporated in the Enlightenment philosophy.

9. F.L. Bauer, *Main Currents of Thought*, New York, 1970.

Through the use of empiricist epistemology Locke had established the primacy of matter (object). However, the manner in which a particular doctrine or methodology is used by later philosophers is not determined by its originator; and quite often it is used to serve an end that is at variance with the intentions of its initiator. Berkeley used empiricism (more consistently than his predecessor - Locke - from whom he had borrowed this epistemology) to criticise the methodological foundations of Lockean 'Commonsense'. Beginning with the proposition that sense perception was the only source of knowledge, Berkeley affirmed the existence of ideas. Things that were immediately perceived by the individual were ideas, therefore, there was no reason to presuppose the existence of a colourless, motionless, sightless substance which formed the basis from which the primary and secondary qualities emanate. To quote Berkeley -- "...Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry. Since it is not a being distinct from sensations..."¹⁰

Throughout the 'Three Dialogues'¹¹, Berkeley appears to be making a proposition of fact -- i.e. trying to show

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10. Berkeley quoted in Aekermann, Theories of Knowledge, McGraw Hill, New York, 1966, p.170.
 11. Referring to Berkeley's Book Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous in opposition to Sceptical & Atheists.

the exact nature of the perceptual object. However, his handling of the problem highlights, as A.J. Ayer suggests, a logical question which he was interested in answering, viz. whether one could through the given sensible qualities know everything about the perceptual object or that which was regarded to be the object.

While Berkeley negated the existence of matter and affirmed the existence of mind Hume carried the task further and showed that the existence of mind was as mythical as that of matter. What did exist, or rather what could be known to exist were "association of ideas". Through direct observation one could perceive (and, therefore, know) ideas co-existing -- i.e. succession and contiguity. Derivation of causal relationships (which was the crux of scientific activity) was regarded as a notion imposed on the objective reality through custom or habit. Just because an effect 'b' had accompanied or had for long been known to accompany an event 'a', one could not conclude that there was a 'necessary' relationship between 'a' and 'b'. In fact, Hume saw no reason to rule out the possibility of an effect 'c' following 'a' at another moment in time.

Hume had questioned the possibility of deriving general ideas from knowledge obtained through sense

perception and observation. Categories such as matter, space, cause and effect, which formed the core of the Newtonian paradigm and the Rationalist way of thinking, were reduced to metaphysical categories, which were attributed by the individual as a matter of habit.

Although Hume's 'Treatise' had been criticised of the method used by the natural sciences, it were the social sciences that were affected more by his scepticism. The former through their immense technological development and the use of controlled experiments were able to counter Hume's scepticism. However, it generated a crisis in the theory of knowledge which provided a methodology for the social sciences.

Goldmann explains the development of an empiricist epistemology and an individualist ethics and psychology, in reference to the capitalist development and transformations in these countries. Most of the English thinkers, Locke, Hume, Bentham, wrote at a time when capitalism was in ascendance and the emerging capitalist class was in the process of seizing sufficient economic and political power. In such a situation, the rationality of the directly observable was bound to be emphasised and reinforced. "Having developed in a 'healthy' society, French thought is principally directed towards the external

world, seeking to know and understand it. Theoretical truth, epistemology, mathematics, psychology and society have provided the main problems and preoccupations of French philosophy.¹²

In Europe, Rationalism as a philosophical attitude was historically linked to the bourgeois way of life and was largely used to legitimise the experience of the capitalist society. Its exclusive domination, however, encountered opposition, in the early 19th century, from a rising Romantic intellectualism. Romanticism as a social movement was a reaction to the prevalent Rationalist culture. It expressed disenchantment and disillusionment both with capitalism and the philosophic category of Reason.

The term Romanticism referred to a specific spirit or a state of mind. People belonging to this school shared similar predilections and problems. In spite of the diverse attitudes and ideas expressed by its members, it was united in its critique of the Enlightenment philosophy and bourgeois culture. Romanticism was not a uniformly backward looking movement nor was it opposed to progress. However, its glorification of the mediaeval ages linked

12. L. Goldmann, Immanuel Kant, New Left Books, London, 1973, p.41.

with its critique of the mechanistic capitalist society was congenial to the demands of the disinherited aristocratic class for a return to feudalism.

Although Romanticism was not concerned with problems of epistemology and philosophy, yet, the questions that it raised in art, literature and music along with its critique of the competitive market society had serious repercussions on philosophy. It challenged the Rationalist concept of man as a rational being. Enlightenment Rationalism had not denied the existence of emotions, however, it had favoured its subordination and control through reason. Romanticism negated the rationalist over-emphasis on reason by placing a corresponding emphasis on the faculty of imagination, belief, and emotions. The Romantics constantly referred to the reason of the heart and the creative originality of the individual, his ability to create a new world and change himself through the creation of new meanings and values. The rationalist love for procedures and adherence to specified method were no longer viewed as necessary requirements for scientific human activity. In fact, the Romantics continually rebelled against such conceptions in art and poetry which assumed that conformity to certain norms and rules secured perfection and accuracy.

The conception of a law governed, harmonious universe was replaced by a dynamic and constantly changing world. Romantic poetry used imagery of "...twilight, of a boundary dissolving moonlight, or of fleeting moments before dawn, rather than the imagery of clear boundary sharpening light of the classical mind."¹³ The notion of universality, permanence and objectivity of beauty and truth were completely rejected. The Kantian theory of aesthetics was, in this respect, a continuation of the romanticist critique.

What came under scathing attack from the Romanticists were the Lockean conception of knowledge and the entire Newtonian paradigm. In response to Newton's 'Opticks', Thomas Campbell wrote:

"Can all that optics teach, unfold
 Thy form to please me so,
 As when I dreamt of gems and gold
 Hid in thy radiant bow?
 When science from Creation's face
 Enchantment's veil withdraws,
 What lovely visions yield their place
 To cold material laws!"¹⁴

13. A.W. Coulson, For Sociology, Pelican Books, Harmondsworth, 1973, p.328.

14. Thomas Campbell, 'To the Rainbow', quoted in M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition, New York, 1971, Title page.

Yet others, like Keats, rebelled against the reduction of the rainbow to its prismatic colours, for such an action deprived it of its poetry and aesthetic quality.¹⁵ Shelley and Blake protested against the Lockean attempt to restrict knowledge to that which was given through sense perception. Instead, they focussed on the extraordinary and the inexplicable forces governing human existence.

The Romantics talked of the creativity of the mind and highlighted its role in the cognitive process, yet, they did not overlook the importance of careful observation and collection of facts. The Rationalists collected facts with an eye to systematisation, while the Romanticists, quite often, referred to facts totally incongruous, but conveying a wealth of meaning.

In reference to the conception of history, the Rationalists viewed it as a process of unilateral and continuous development, rational in character. Progress was regarded as the inevitable law of historical development leading from the dark ages to the brighter present. Romanticists, in comparison, treated each historical epoch as a totality by itself, representing a complete culture.

15. John Keats, quoted in *ibid.* p.307.

The past was no longer associated with the dark ages, instead, they saw history as a process in which change, development and struggle co-exist such that development was accompanied by a greater complexity of problems.

The revolutionary significance of Romanticism lay in its refusal to accept the earlier forms of Rationalism, particularly its emphasis on the mechanistic principle. However, both these approaches shared a complementary blindness. Romanticism was an emotive response to the inadequacies of Rationalism -- its norms of scientificity, its faith and hope in reason and progress. While performing this task, it not only destroyed the certainties of the prevalent culture of rationalism, but also questioned the necessity of certainty and systematization in knowledge. Lacking a coherent epistemology and a system of its own, it merely led to the dissipation of the earlier form of Rationalism.

Berkeley had negated the Lockean framework while Hume's philosophy had reduced the scope of knowledge and questioned the validity of what had hitherto been regarded as scientific activity. Such a thorough critique from within the empiricist framework on the one hand, and from the Romantics on the other, had completely rocked the

foundations of the existing structure of Rationalist philosophy.

German Idealism, and with it, dialectical theory, arose from a dialectic between the Enlightenment rationalism and romanticism. Goldmann explains its development historically, as a response of intellectuals in a 'sick' German society, in which feudalism was disintegrating and capitalism had not developed sufficiently. Undoubtedly, dialectical theory helped in the 'cultural revitalisation' of the society by its emphasis on the primacy of movement, of 'ought' over 'is', and idealism 'accomplished' the capitalist revolution in thought. While the social implications of German Idealism cannot be denied, it is equally necessary to emphasize that dialectical theory, as represented in the writings of the German Idealists played a historically progressive role; and for a long time it provided the only viable alternative and answer to the Humean problem in the theory of knowledge.

Kant's 'Transcendentalism' especially, his 'Critique of Pure Reason' was a direct response to the Hume's way of posing the fundamental philosophical problems. It

sought to reconstitute Rationalism while taking cognizance of the Romanticist critique. This alternative, as Kant had correctly foreseen, performed a function analogous to the Copernican revolution in the natural sciences.

CHAPTER II

GERMAN IDEALISM : FROM KANT TO HEGEL

Reason is not for the sake of existence, but existence for the sake of Reason. An existence which does not of itself satisfy Reason and solve all her questions cannot possibly be true being.

Fichte, The Vocation of Man.

The philosophical system of Kant marked the beginning of a new era in the history of philosophy which Hegel referred to as the transition from 'Verstand'¹ to 'Vernunft'.² The Kantian system advocated critical thinking and demarcated the limits of knowledge. Categories that had so far been accepted unquestioningly were subject to critical doubt. This uncovered the deficiencies of previous philosophical

1. 'Verstand' (Understanding) referred to an uncritical attitude of the mind, which according to Hegel, concerned itself with "the finite and conditioned". This included both the empiricists and the rationalists i.e. those who believed that sensations ensuing from the objects existing outside were the source of knowledge; or, alternatively, that reason was the source of knowledge and thought alone could apprehend the true nature of things.
2. 'Vernunft' (Reason) in contrast to the former referred to a critical understanding which highlighted the inadequacy of both empiricism and rationalism.

systems and presented an alternative, a new system, which was better equipped to tackle the problems that had remained unanswered in the former frameworks. So decisive was the change in thinking about philosophical, particularly epistemological, problems that after Kant one could no longer pose questions or conceptualise reality in the manner in which the rationalists and the empiricists had done prior to him. Even for those who rejected his system, the problem that Kant had located in the philosophy of Hume remained the reference point of debates in the fields of theory of knowledge and philosophy of science.

Hume, according to Kant, had not only questioned the existence of mind and the unity of self, but had destroyed the very basis of scientific thinking. Within the Humean framework, one could know only that which had been observed directly, i.e. to use the Hegelian terminology, the 'now', 'here' and what 'is' at that moment in time. Since the present was always a fleeting present (for it is negated just when it is designated as the present), the truth of a statement had to be established at every successive moment. Viewed from this perspective Hume's epistemology not only limited the scope of knowledge but also questioned its very possibility.

The inability to perceive general concepts, such as the principle of necessity and causation, made Hume question the possibility of their existence. Subsequently, he had attributed these conceptions to belief, custom or 'habit of the mind'. Certainly, Hume was aware of the importance of these concepts, as he had not formulated a system which could dispense with them. Yet, he had questioned their objective validity for they were neither derivable through empirical inference nor demonstrable 'a priori'. Hume had thus reduced the uniformity and regularity of phenomena to an accidental unity. This was the problem that Kant had located in Hume's philosophical works.³

Hume's scepticism was, Kant argued, a consequence and manifestation of the inadequacy of his initial premise ... of beginning with sense perception as the only source of knowledge. Hume, in accordance with the principles of empiricism, had assumed that what was true must exist and should be accessible to the individual through sense perception. Empiricism characterised in this manner was

3. This was interpreted by Hegel as being illustrative of the dialectical process in the history of ideas, wherein the rigorous use of a category brought one to a situation where the finite passed into its opposite. Similarly, Hume through the consistent use of empiricism had shown the limitations inherent in the doctrine of empiricism, i.e. he had ultimately said the opposite of what he had intended.

v.f. G.H.F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. III, (Trans.) E.S. Haldane, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1935.

as inadequate as rationalism which ignored the existing reality, reduced it to consciousness and regarded reason/mind as the only source of knowledge. Kant, therefore, began with a critique of the faculties of knowledge. Neither reason nor sensations by themselves could, he explained, provide knowledge. Thought alone was empty and precepts alone were blind.

Kant agreed with the empiricists that the sensations emanating from the objects which existed in the world, independent of the individual, formed the basic constituent of knowledge.⁴ The sensations so received did not, however, provide any knowledge of the object. It was only through the action of the categories and principles⁵ existing a priori in the mind of the individual that the manifold of

4. The sensations received by the individual were mediated through the forms -- space and time -- which existed in the mind of the individual, prior to all existence. Space and time, for Kant, were not forms which we could abstract from experience, but forms through which experience was mediated. To quote Ashernann, "...We do not see space and time but see things in space and time". (op.cit, p.220)

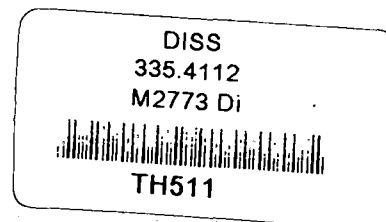
5. These categories, according to Kant, were twelve in number.

Categories as such lacked an independent, autonomous existence, outside the human mind; consequently, they were subjective in nature. Yet, in spite of that they were objective -- i.e. necessary and universally applicable.

(Here, the concepts subjective and objective acquired a meaning quite different from that which was commonly associated with them.)



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sensations was integrated into an ordered whole, such that the individual could know the object. However, this was knowledge of the object/things as they appeared to us (mediated through our categories), as distinct from knowledge of things as they are in themselves. Things as they appear to us (and of which we have knowledge) belonged to the world of appearances (phenomena). The world of 'noumena' (reality) remained beyond our grasp.⁶

Things that exist in the world were the source of individual experience and knowledge. However, they belonged to the realm of appearances; consequently, the norms of practical activity, both social and moral, were to be derived from reason which had the ability to transcend the limitations of the given natural order -- i.e. the world of appearances.⁷

6. cf. M. Green, Reason and the Ideal.

7. To be universally applicable, the principles of morality must be derived from reason. To quote Kant "...the basis of obligation must not be sought in nature of man, or in circumstances in the world in which he is placed, but 'a priori' simply in the conceptions of pure reason;..." (M. Green (ed.), Kant's Religion, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1907, p.209)
Reason, here, was defined as the ability to transcend the limitations of the natural order and the spatio-temporal world, and grasp the truth; truth, that was universal, one and undisputed. (The latter because it could be grasped by all rational beings, besides, it secured the freedom of all individuals uniformly.) By emphasizing the quality of transcendence, Kant had restored the revolutionary content of the concept of reason which had been lost during the Enlightenment. (cf. Marcuse, Reason & Revolution, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969).

The categories and concepts that Kant had used were similar to those of the Enlightenment theorists. Yet, despite the linguistic similarity their content was considerably altered. The freedom of the individual had since the renaissance been the primary concern of political theory. The individual continued to occupy the central position in Kant's works; but for him, the individual was a social entity and had, therefore, to be studied in relation to other people -- i.e. in reference to the civil society. It was only in the perfect civil society where freedom of all individuals was ensured that man could realise his essential self.

In the Rationalist -- empiricist paradigm, freedom was defined as the absence of external restraint and the liberty to do what one liked. Kant, on the other hand, argued that freedom required the removal of external hindrances imposed on the individual by other members of the society; and the removal of external causation and determination.⁸ In other words, freedom could be realised only when the individual acted in accordance with his *true* nature (i.e. rational self) and subordinated himself to

8. The term 'external causation' here implied determination by that which is external to the real nature of man -- i.e. freedom from determination by instincts, feelings and passions.

his will and the moral law that was given 'a priori' by reason.⁹ Freedom, therefore, involved not the absence of determination but subordination to and determination by these 'a priori' dictates of reason which seek to ensure freedom of the self along with freedom of all rational beings.¹⁰

The distinction between what is and what ought to be, postulated in the Kantian system, impelled movement -- i.e. negation of what was existing then and movement towards the ideal rational structure.¹¹ Hegel extracted this element and assimilated it within his own system.

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9. To quote Kant, "The will is a kind of causality belonging to living beings in so far as they are rational, and freedom would be this property of such causality that it can be efficient, independently on foreign causes determining it...." (T.M. Green (ed.), op.cit. p.224.) [author's emphasis]
10. The three principles of Categorical Imperative incorporated these 'a priori' dictates of reason, which should determine the action of an individual as they alone constituted the right moral choice. These imperatives were --
- a) Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.
 - b) so act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only.
 - c) Autonomy of the will; i.e. the idea that the will of every rational being was a universally legislative will and was not contrary to his real nature.
11. Cf. Marcuse, Negations: Essays in Critical Theory, trans. by J.J. Schapiro, Allen Lane, London, 1968.

At the same time he rejected the Kantian system, particularly its dichotomy between natural and moral inclination as it implied, at least theoretically, a continuous and unending struggle against the former with little possibility of actualising the 'ought' in the given reality.¹²

In the sphere of epistemology Kant had overcome the problem posed by Hume and shown the possibility of having a synthetic 'a priori' proposition. Yet within his own system he had postulated the 'thing-in-itself' which remained beyond the grasp of the individual and limited the possibility of acquiring knowledge of the objective reality — the truth.

12. Continuous and unending struggle because the Kantian ethics differentiated between inclination and duty. The three laws of the Categorical Imperative presupposed this gulf between the actual and the real. They were, therefore, framed as an 'ought' (sollen). The dilemma, according to Hegel, was that if we obeyed the 'ought', such as, help the poor, then there would soon be a situation where either all of us would be rich or else no one would be poor. In either case the 'ought' would not then be applicable. Or else, the limit situation would never be overcome and then this struggle between 'is' and 'ought' would continue, and consequently, complete freedom would not be realised.

From the Hegelian perspective, the Kantian system was only an inversion of Enlightenment philosophy. It had merely reversed the order, for the forms and categories that were earlier ascribed to the object were now seen as belonging to the subject.¹³ The forms, however, remained the same and both of them upheld the dichotomy between finite and infinite, nature and spirit, reason and understanding, subject and object, mind and matter, etc. In the 'Transcendental Dialectic' Kant had restricted himself to the critique of four antinomies instead of undertaking a comprehensive critique in which these dichotomies could be resolved into a single unified whole.

The writings of Fichte, attempted to overcome these limitations of the Kantian system, particularly the unknowability of the 'thing-in-itself'. However, ultimately, it too "....does not pass beyond the fundamentals of Kant's philosophy...."¹⁴ There was no place for the 'thing-in-itself' in Fichte's philosophy -- idealism -- which regarded the ego as the first principle which was identical to itself and the source of all

13. Categories such as unity, quality, causality, that were earlier regarded as belonging to the object were now attributed to the subject and regarded as constructions of the mind which are imposed upon the world -- i.e. the objects existing outside.
14. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy Vol. III op.cit. p.479.

creation.¹⁵ Within this framework too, limitations analogous to those in the Kantian system, persisted. The categories remained the same and the dichotomies between them left unresolved, with the difference that instead of the limitation of the self by the objects outside, the latter were derived from the ego itself. The primacy of the ego, however, remained an intuitively grasped certainty as its logical necessity was not demonstrated in the philosophy of Fichte.

According to Hegel, Fichte's system was extremely inadequate. It reduced all determinations to the ego (consciousness) and totally negated the reality. Besides, its conception of ego was ambiguous as it could refer both to the Absolute ego as well as the individual ego. Since Fichte referred to the ego as the absolute existence it obviously implied the former, in which case the problem was that we were aware of the ego only as an individual ego, as opposed to the universal. If, on the other hand, it was conceptualised as the individual consciousness then it remained finite and limited by an other.

15. Ego was the source of all creation. Lacking a determinate form of its own, it posited the non-ego, i.e. the determinate objects.

In spite of these limitations, Fichte's emphasis on the creative force of the ego had a positive influence. It fostered faith in the ability of the individual to alter and change the existing reality, as the latter was a product of his own creation.¹⁶ Moreover, Fichte reasserted the Renaissance belief in critical thinking -- movement from doubt to knowledge; but knowledge in and by itself, according to Fichte, was inadequate. It required transition into faith.¹⁷ Based on this philosophy the political writings of Fichte emphasised social action and urged the formation of a new society, i.e. a Rational society.¹⁸

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16. Fichte conceived the process of knowledge as a process of self-consciousness. Common consciousness (or the proposition of theoretical Reason) perceived the objects (i.e. non-ego) as limiting the ego. However, ~~it was the task of self-consciousness to~~ realise the identity of ego and the non-ego, such that consciousness which seems to be directed towards something outside is in actuality directed towards that which it had for itself posited.
17. Faith or belief which would then constitute the will to act.
18. It is not within the scope of this dissertation to analyse the nature of the state that Fichte advocated. But it would be necessary to mention that the Rational society was defined as one in which freedom and dignity of the individual was upheld. This implied -- a) a stage of scientific and technological development, where the individual had complete control over the natural forces such that his life was not at the mercy of natural elements; b) a society which secured the economic and material well-being of its people such that some of its members were not exploited by other people in the society. Fichte had thus given a concrete form to Kant's Kingdom of Ends (where men were to be treated as an end in themselves and not merely as a means to an end) and Hegel too, in spite of his differences with Fichte, accepted this general definition of the Rational society.

A will to act and change the society was the distinguishing feature of Fichte's philosophy. Advocating this, he wrote -- "You are here not for idle contemplation of yourself, or for brooding over devout sensations -- no, YOU ARE HERE FOR ACTION, your action and your action alone, determines your worth."¹⁹

Hegel inherited from his predecessors both the concept of a Rational society and also the belief in reason²⁰ -- i.e. a faith in the ability of the individual to actualise this Rational society. Beyond that he rejected

19. Fichte, The Vocation of Man, ed. by R.M. Christain, Dobbs, Merrill Co Inc., New York, fifth printing, p.84. (emphasis added.)

20. For the Enlightenment theorists the universe was rational in character i.e. governed by laws -- and therefore, completely knowable. For the German Idealists reason did not refer merely to a faculty of cognition and rational did not simply imply precision. Instead, it referred to a particular conception of existence; a particular ordering that must exist which was in harmony with the essential nature of man. This assumed not merely a belief in human ability to realise that society, but also a conviction that men would like to actualise that specific society. This desire was universal in nature; if men were not aware of it, it was because they did not understand their real nature. It was, therefore, necessary to inculcate critical thinking, which alone could enable them to realise their essential self. Self-consciousness was, in this manner a pre-condition for the realisation of the Rational society; and it was also an attribute of it.

the philosophical system of Kant and Fichte. Idealist philosophy and its counterpart, German Romanticism, he thought were inadequate. The philosophy of Schelling grasped the necessity to search for a unity underlying the subjective and the objective, both of which were equally real. However, the inadequacy of his Natural philosophy was that it appeared to be "an external scheme (ready-made)"²¹ which was applied to nature. According to Hegel, it failed to apply the dialectical method for demonstrating the inherent necessity because of which the distinction between the ideal and the natural breaks down.²² Although Schelling talked of the unity of God and Nature (wherein, Nature represented the negative moment in God) he viewed Nature as a "work of art", as the "secret hidden in the Absolute" and consequently, left its emergence unexplained.

Hegel tried to overcome these limitations and to demonstrate through reason the true nature of external reality (the external order), a scheme which was compatible with individual freedom defined as the power of

21. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Munich, ed. 1875, p. 542.

22. To quote Hegel, "...his defect is that this idea in general, its distinction into the ideal and the natural world, and also the totality of these determinations are not shown forth and developed as necessitated in themselves by the Notion." (History of Philosophy, Vol. III, p. 542) Also refer to A.V. Miller, "Hegel's Science of Logic", Introduction.

self-determination.²³ The Hegelian scheme, accordingly, attempted to analyse:

- 1) the logical necessity of predicating the Finite on the Infinite
- 2) the relation between the Absolute Idea and Nature (finite, determinate objects).

In 'Logic' Hegel demonstrated the inadequacy of restricting oneself to the category of Being.²⁴ To put it simply and rather schematically, Hegel argued that Being -- the simplest category, immediately perceived by the mind -- was devoid of any determination. Lacking a specific form it was equivalent to its opposite -- i.e. Pure Nothingness. The category of Being was indispensable (as it was an essential attribute of reality) yet, in the form of Pure Being it could not be applied to reality. Hence, if Being must apply to reality, it could only do so in the form of Determinate Being.

Determinate Being was the form in which the category of Being applied to reality. Determinate Being synthesised Being and Nothingness. Determination implied the possession of a specific attribute (quality). At the

23. Self determination implied freedom. It represented a spirit which had abolished all otherness and recognised itself in everything outside and saw itself as the reality.

24. Starting with the category of Being he showed that the unity was complete and the contradictions dissolved only when one ended with the category of Absolute Idea.

same time it could be defined only in reference to the negation of other attributes. In this form, Determinate Being contained negation within it; yet, in so far as it was able to maintain its identity as a specific object, it fought against that Determinate Negation. However, since negation was contained within each object, it must of necessity, pass away.

Coming into existence and passing away was an essential attribute of reality. Becoming, according to Hegel, was the first concrete category of thought. It represented the truth of Being. Becoming, however, was not a meaningless process (devoid of any result). It referred to change not into nothingness but into something. In other words, that which failed to maintain itself against the forces of negation did not simply disappear; instead, from that emerged a New Object -- another determinate object.

In this process of change one could locate continuity in change and identity in spite of the seeming difference and flux. Thus, we locate the category of Infinite, i.e. that which remained constant and linked something in its passage into an other. The Infinite represented the whole in which all the finite objects inhere. It constituted

the Essence, the substrata, which developed the finite objects from itself and was, therefore, logically prior to them.

Hence, in 'Logic' Hegel established the primacy and reality of Absolute Idea. The immediately perceived Being was a manifestation of that reality and yet, an appearance.²⁵ 'The Phenomenology of Mind' analysed the process of self-consciousness, the relation of man, universe and the Idea.

The Absolute Idea was the self-moving and self-perpetuating reality which, however, lacked a consciousness of its own self -- an end which could be realised only through another object, external to its own self. To achieve self-consciousness, the Idea externalised itself -- i.e. it divided itself into subject and object. But the moment it so divided itself, it became a qualitatively different object -- a finite object limited by the object outside.

25. Appearance, for Hegel, was an essential attribute of reality, as an externalisation of the reality (essence) it was its manifestation. Hence, it was not merely an illusion which camouflaged the reality. Instead, 'appearance' for him referred to the form in which reality appeared to be. "Phenomena are related to noumena as the trees to the wood, not as a compound to its atoms." (Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J.E. Ballie, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1971, p.179.)

Nature was the embodiment of Idea in space and History the embodiment of that Idea in Time. The link between the two was forged by the individual. Man was the highest and the most complex of all creation, capable of reason and action. His purpose was to arrive at an understanding of his own self, i.e. to realise his unity with the 'Geist'.²⁶ Reason was the instrument through which this unity could be grasped. Hence, through the individual, the Idea could attain self-consciousness, or in other words, return to its self.

The return to the ideal (i.e. to Reason) had to be achieved not only in the realm of ideas but also in actuality. History represented progress, a movement towards the actualisation of Reason (which for Hegel, implied a society in which "freedom of all"²⁷ was ensured). This transition was, as Flemons explained,

26. The German word 'Geist' has been retained here because it is difficult to find its equivalent in English, where it could be translated as Mind, Absolute Spirit, God, etc. Besides, the choice of any of these terms in English is laden with implications and associations (of transcendental and metaphysical character) that are not necessarily found in its German equivalent.

27. c.f. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, trans. H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp.54-55.

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27. c.f. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, trans. H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, 1976, pp.54-55.

"... at once intellectual, moral and social; it is a growth in understanding, self-awareness and social control²⁸ and also a gradual coming into existence of social forms suited to the needs and aspirations of intellectually and morally mature person".²⁹

The existence of an external Rational Order, which was being realised in history, did not limit the freedom of the individual for it was the individual who expressed in a determinate manner, what the rational form was. The idea was logically prior but not entirely determinate beforehand. Only in the process of being fulfilled did it become fully determinate.³⁰ Consequently, man was free;

28. Self awareness implied the consciousness of -

- a) what man is;
- b) why he is what he is;
- c) what does he want;
- d) How can those ideals be actualised in society.

In other words, progress towards freedom was a journey in which man ceased to accept uncritically the moral and social world to which he belonged and his place in it. Dissatisfied with the existing reality he turned inwards and formulated the ideals to which the individual himself and the social order must conform. Then he demanded that the world and all rational beings must conform to those ideals and realise them in actual practice (i.e. the laws and institutions in the society must incorporate those ideals).

29. Plamenatz, 'History as the realisation of freedom', in Z.A. Pelechynski (ed.) Hegel's Political Philosophy problems & perspectives, Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.47.

30. c.f. Charles Taylor, Hegel, Cambridge University Press, 1977, the section on Phenomenology.

while being an externalisation of 'Geist' he remained independent of it. In fact, as the embodiment of 'Geist' he could think of the external order as emanating and unfolding from himself.³¹

In this manner Hegel solved all the philosophical problems that could not be tackled within the framework of Kant and Fichte. By demonstrating the unity of opposites, it reconciled the existence of an external order with human freedom and the right of self-determination.

31. It is commonly assumed that Hegel's Absolute Idealism rendered reality meaningless and unreal because it was absorbed in the Absolute Idea. But actually this was not so for Hegel had established the unity of identity and non-identity, and in this the otherness was not abolished.

CHAPTER III

THE HEGELIAN DIALECTIC AND ITS CLASSICAL BASES

The complexity of philosophy is not
in its matter, but in our tangled
understanding.

Wittgenstein, Philosophical Remarks

According to Hegel, self-consciousness or in other words, the consciousness of true self was, the purpose underlying all rational activity. This task, he felt, had been accomplished by his philosophical system which had grasped the unity at the base of all existence. It had shown the necessity underlying the emergence of many from one and at the same time upheld the reality of both one and many. Hegel also maintained - justifiably - that he had resolved the contradictions and answered all the problems that had been raised by philosophers before him. In other words, his philosophy had completed the task - 'the return of the spirit to itself'.

This task had been accomplished by the use of the Dialectical Method which could be derived from the analysis of the Idea in the various stages of its development, i.e. ^Mmanifestation in Nature and then return to itself. The method was an attribute of reality which he had used in his writings to understand the nature of that reality. To quote McTaggart, the "...dialectical process of the logic is the one absolutely essential element in Hegel's system. If we accepted this and rejected everything else that Hegel had written, we should have a system of philosophy.... On the other hand, if we reject the dialectical process which leads to the absolute idea, all the rest of the system is destroyed."¹

Dialectics, according to Hegel, provided a new science of logic. It was a method used to overcome illusions; as such it carried forward the task undertaken by Kant in 'Transcendental Dialectic' (which was a critique of 'Logik der schein's' — i.e. logic of illusions, error or appearances). Formal logic, Hegel argued, was concerned only with the forms of cognition — i.e. universal laws and categories used by 'Understanding' to comprehend the world existing outside, independent of

1. McTaggart quoted in Kaufmann, Hegel: A Re-interpretation, Anchor Books, New York, 1966, p.160. (emphasis added.)

these categories. It did not concern itself with the content (the matter/world to which these laws of thinking were to apply) as it assumed that the material world existed independent of thought; and that thought in itself was an external scheme imposed on the world. Besides, by postulating this dichotomy (between objects and thought) formal logic gave primacy to laws/methods vis-a-vis the object of cognition. Laws remained the same in spite of the changes in the content. Or alternatively, it assumed that the categories used in the process of cognition were merely subjective categories which were imposed on the object and did not inhere in the object. Hegel, therefore, wanted to formulate a new system of logic which would deal both with the form as well as the content — i.e. it would apply to reality and also provide laws of thinking.

Hegel had only formulated a guideline for the method of dialectic; the specific nature of the laws that it incorporated had, consequently, to be inferred from his 'Logic' and other philosophical works. Dialectics has commonly been associated with and referred to as the philosophy of change and movement. Movement, in turn was seen as the result of struggle between opposites, which followed a triadic pattern of Thesis-Antithesis & Synthesis (TAS). It has also been viewed as a system of logic which postulates not only the unity of opposites

and the co-existence of the terms of a contradiction, but also established the identity of opposites. With this conception of dialectics, it is also customary to analyse the classical bases of this understanding, the assumption being that men thought dialectically long before it had been systematised into an approach to reality. Accordingly, Heraclitus, Plato, the early Christian theorists, Spinoza, Kant and Fichte have been regarded as the precursors of dialectical thinking.

BASES OF THE DIALECTIC

Heraclitus emphasised change. In contrast to the philosophies of Thales and Xenophanes he claimed that "...everything is in a state of flux; nothing subsists nor does it ever remain the same."² His conception of fire as the primary substance helped him to view the universe as an ongoing 'ever-living' process wherein

2. G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. I, trans. by E.S. Haldane, RKP, London, 1956, p.283.

what appeared to be the same was actually undergoing constant change. Opposites co-existed in reality.³ In fact, the "...opposites are combined in the self-same one, just as honey is both sweet and bitter".⁴

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3. Earlier Thales had argued that everything originated from one element which always remained the same. "...Socrates neither originates if he becomes beautiful or musical, nor does he pass away if he loses these qualities, because the subject Socrates, always remains the same. And so it is with all else." (ibid., pp.174-5). Even Xenophanes and Parmenides regarded the 'law of identity' to be the fundamental canon of logic. The former explained that logically, nothing could arise from the unlike. It was equally difficult to assume that anything could arise from the like because in that case it would not be engendered from it. The dilemma arising from the equal impossibility of anything arising out of its like or unlike had led Xenophanes to conclude that God was eternal and One.

Parmenides used the same logic and reached the conclusion that Being was the only reality -- i.e. that which existed must be real and eternal. If everything had arisen, it implied that at a specific stage nothing had existed and from it everything emerged. However, to conceive of such a thing was a logical impossibility (i.e. something could not emerge from nothing.) Consequently, only that which existed -- 'what is' -- was real. Heraclitus, on the other hand, registered the existence of contradictions in reality, even though, that was contrary to the law of identity.

4. Ibid., p.284.

Heraclitus gave primacy to change and referred to the co-existence of opposites⁵ yet, he failed to distinguish the ways in which the opposites were linked. Consequently, the value of his conceptions was grasped only in retrospect.⁶ Plato was critical of him for attributing mutually exclusive and contradictory properties to the same object. What 'is' could not be 'is not'. Prior to Plato, Zeno continuing in the spirit of the Eleatics, had shown the logical fallacy inherent in the conception of change and movement.⁷

It is customary to regard the Platonic dialogues as an illustration of the concept of dialectic, for it arrived at the truth through the examination of contradictory and opposing viewpoints. Although Plato coined the noun 'dialectic' and also 'dialectician' and

5. For example, he stated that "cold things grow hot, not things grow cold, the wet dries, the parched is moistened." (Heraclitus quoted in Karl Jaspers, The Great Philosophers, Vol. II, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plotinus, Lao-Tzu, Nagarjuna, ed. by Hannah Arendt; Harvest Books, New York, pp.11-12.
6. Hegel expressed the opinion that Heraclitus realised the absolute as 'the process of dialectic' and that he understood the identity of Being and non Being, and incorporated the idea of an active One which became Many and then One again.
7. The paradox of the 'Flying Arrow' and 'Achilles and the Tortoise' were used to illustrate this.

'dialectical', however, it referred to something quite different from what has come to be associated with it.⁸ Plato used the term dialectic to refer to an exercise quite similar to 'eristics' conducted by the Sophists. Movement through opposites was never its concern. In reference to the bases of the concept of dialectic it is, perhaps, more meaningful to focus on 'Parmenides' where Plato (Socrates) in his attempt to counter the logic of Zeno, argued that bodies could be both 'like and unlike'. In sense perception an object may contain a union of opposing tendencies and qualities, i.e. it may be a unity as well as a plurality. However, in the world of Forms

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8. To quote Gilbert Ryle, dialectic was for Plato, "...a special pattern of disputation, governed by strict rules which takes the following shape. Two persons 'agree to have a battle'. One is to be the questioner, the other the answerer. The questioner can only ask questions; and the answerer can, with certain qualifications, answer only 'yes' or 'no'. So the questioner's questions have to be properly constructed.... The answerer begins by undertaking to uphold a certain 'thesis', e.g. that 'justice is the interest of the stronger' or that 'knowledge is sense perception'. The questioner has to try and extract from the answerer by a series of questions, an answer or conjunction of answers inconsistent with the original thesis.... The questioner has won the duel if he succeeds in getting the answerer to contradict his original thesis, or else in forcing him to resign." (Gilbert Ryle, Collected Papers, Vol. I, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1971, p.90.)

(which for Plato represents the real world as distinct from what exists and forms the basis of sensations) these contraries did not exist. In other words, in the world of Forms, 'like' and 'unlike', 'unity' and 'plurality' were not one and the same thing; in fact, each of them had an independent and autonomous existence.

The idea of triadic movement, representing TAS had been developed by some Neoplatonists who explained that the course of the world was governed by a three-stage process: "unity (moné), going out of one self (prohodos) and return into oneself (epistrophé)." ⁹ The same idea was also incorporated in Christian theology which explained the process of creation as the fall from grace, leading on to redemption i.e. unity with the first principle.

It was Kant who rediscovered the concept of dialectic. Hegel was of the opinion that Kant effectively utilised the triadic movement (an integral part of the dialectic) throughout his philosophy. This was apparent from Kant's list of categories each of which contained three stages and

9. Kaufmann, op.cit., p.153.

third was derived from a combination of the first two; for example, Totality was a combination of Unity and Plurality and Limitation a synthesis of Reality and Negation.¹⁰ Besides, in the 'Transcendental Dialectic' Kant had analysed the relationship between opposites. Kant, however, regarded contradictions and antinomies as an evidence of the limitations of our understanding which could be resolved through pure reason. In fact, in the 'Critique of Pure Reason' Kant differentiated between 'dialectical' opposition and 'analytical' opposition. The former referred to two apparently opposite statements or arguments, which could be resolved as they were predicated on an initial condition which had to be critically analysed, e.g. "If it be said that all bodies have either a good smell or a smell that

10. In the section on Transcendental Logic, Kant had listed twelve categories of Understanding in four groups of three each.

I. Of Quantity

Unity
Plurality
Totality

II. Of Quality

Reality
Negation
Limitation

III. Of Relation

Of inherence and
subsistence
Of causality and
dependence
Of community

IV. Of Modality

Possibility -
impossibility
Existence -
non-existence
Necessity -
contingence

Quoted from Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by
J.M.D. Meiklejohn, George Bell & Sons, 1878, p.64.

is not good, a third case is possible, namely, that a body has no smell at all; and both the conflicting propositions may therefore be false."¹¹ Thus, dialectical oppositions did not exhaust the whole, for other possibilities remained which could falsify both the thesis and the antithesis. In contrast to this, Kant referred to the analytical opposition which was irreconcilable and represented mutually exclusive conceptions.

Fichte borrowed the concept of triadic movement and incorporated it within his philosophy. "... Thus the ego's positing of itself (Reality), was balanced by a positing of the non-Ego (Negation), and both were harmonized in the positing of Ego and non-Ego as limiting each other, the source of the category of limitation."¹²

THE HEGELIAN DIALECTIC

The concept of change along with the pattern of triadic movement and the associated scheme of TAS have been regarded as the most important attributes of the Hegelian dialectic. While the former had been borrowed from Heraclitus, the latter was extracted from the writings of Kant and Fichte.¹³ This was the manner in which the

11. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Trans. by Norman Kemp Smith, Macmillan, London, 1973, p.477.
12. J.N. Findlay, Hegel: A Re-examination, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, p.69.
13. With the difference that Hegel, unlike Kant, located these contradictions in reality.

Hegelian dialectic had been understood. Both the Marxists as well as the British Idealists accepted this and, subsequently, continued to associate dialectic with the general concept of change and movement through opposites. Even those, such as Kaufmann, who rejected this, concluded that we could not find the concept of dialectic in Hegel.¹⁴ In either case, the association of dialectic with continuous movement, change and TAS remained unquestioned.

Kaufmann, of course, had overreacted, however, it is undeniable that the form in which the Hegelian dialectic had been popularised did not exhaust the Hegelian conception entirely. If anything, it simplified and in the process, misrepresented the Hegelian concept of dialectic. From this perspective, Kaufmann's 'Re-examination of Hegel', provided interesting and rather revealing insights into Hegel's work. On the question of TAS, Kaufmann seeks to demonstrate that Hegel — "... never once used these terms together to designate three stages in an argument or account in any of his books.... whoever looks for the stereotype of the allegedly Hegelian dialectic in Hegel's 'Phenomenology' will not find it."¹⁵

14. Kaufmann accused Marx and Kierkegaard for misrepresenting Hegel's dialectic and reducing it to triadic movement. Hegel's dialectic, he felt, was a "logic of passion" used to highlight the errors and limitations of some philosophical positions. c.f. Kaufmann, From Shakespeare to Existentialism, Anchor Books, New York, 1960.

15. Kaufmann, op.cit. p.154. However, in a footnote, Kaufmann makes one exception. He adds that "the only place where Hegel uses the three terms together occurs in his lectures on the history of philosophy...."

Those who attributed this scheme to Hegel, he felt, had never gone beyond the first triad in 'Logic' — i.e. Being, Nothingness and Becoming — which adhered to this pattern. He pointed out, quite correctly, that a careful analysis of the argument in 'Logic' or even its Table of Contents would show that everything was arranged in triads. But, quite often, the first two categories did not represent Thesis and Antithesis. Nor was the third, in each case, the synthesis of the first two.¹⁶ One could, perhaps, go a little further and suggest that if it is difficult to find the pattern of TAS in 'Logic', it is even more difficult to locate it in 'Phenomenology'.¹⁷

Kaufmann was justified in rejecting the conventional understanding of the concept of dialectic, but he seems to have carried the argument too far. It is true that we cannot locate the pattern (TAS) in each of the Hegelian

16. To quote Kaufmann, Existence (Ch.II) could not be regarded as the antithesis of Being (Ch.I) and Being for-itself (Ch.III) did not represent their synthesis. (Ibid., p.198). Neither the main division nor the sub-divisions reflect the triadic pattern. In Chapter II, 'Infinity' could not be regarded as the synthesis of 'Existence as such' and 'Determinateness' (Finitude). Several other examples can be cited to support this. In Book I, section II, Chapter I, II and III — i.e. Quantity, Quantum & Quantitative infinity — do not represent the pattern of TAS.
17. Even the main triads in 'Phenomenology' do not represent TAS, e.g. in Section I, the divisions Consciousness, Self-Consciousness and Reason, do not represent TAS. The same is true of the subdivisions listed there.

triads, but this does not rule out the possibility of deriving it from the Hegelian system of Logic. There are certain sections of 'Logic' where Hegel used the pattern of TAS, although he did not formally use the terms thesis, antithesis and synthesis while referring to them.¹⁸ Hence, on analysis, one finds that although the Hegelian dialectic cannot be reduced to TAS, yet, the latter can be derived from a general analysis of Hegel's work.

Undoubtedly, Hegel showed a marked preference for the triadic movement.¹⁹ Movement, in general, was impelled by contradictions. "Contradiction is the very moving principle of the world and it is ridiculous to say that contradiction is unthinkable".²⁰ Contradiction has usually been interpreted as the co-existence of antithetical and opposite factors. However, Hegel had used it to denote friction and an internal struggle.

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18. The pattern of TAS may be used to represent the Main triads of 'Logic'. In Book I, the three main divisions are -- Quantity, Quality and Measure. In Book II, the subdivisions are Essence, Appearance and Actuality. In Book III, subjectivity, Objectivity and The Idea. In each of these, the second category represent the antithesis of the first and the third one the synthesis of the first two.
19. In each of his works, there is a main triad which is subdivided into sub-ordinated triads.
20. Hegel quoted from Hegel's Logic (Being Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences) trans. by W. Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1978, p.174.

In 'Phenomenology' it referred to the struggle resulting from a disparity between the existing reality and the general purpose underlying all existence. This inner conflict impelled movement against the existing limitations and towards the rational order which was sought to be actualised in reality; i.e. the contradiction between the general purpose and the existing reality resulted in the dissolution of the latter and its substitution by a more adequate order.²¹

In 'Logic' this internal struggle implied what Charles Taylor refers to as the 'Dialectic of Categories' as distinct from the 'Historical dialectic' that was applied in 'Phenomenology'. In 'Logic' Hegel showed that the categories that he had used in his analysis, was necessary and indispensable, and yet, inadequate and incoherent. Each category referred to an essential attribute of the reality, yet, it was inadequate for portraying that reality — i.e. meeting the requirements of the general concept of reality. This conflict impelled the category to go beyond itself, to move into an other, or its other. The category of Being,

21. According to C. Taylor, the same method of argument had been used by Plato. He, too, began with —
- a) the general definition of a concept;
 - b) the specific understanding of that concept;
 - c) the stage where the inadequacy of that specific understanding is shown (as it contradicts the general definition of that concept).

for example, represented an essential attribute of reality, yet, in its pure form, it was the same as Nothingness, and, therefore, inadequate for representing that reality. It necessitated movement into the next category, of Becoming on the one hand, and Determinate Being on the other. The process continued in this manner. The inadequacy in A leads to the postulation of B, which was viewed at this stage as an indispensable category. However, when B itself was seen to be limited, and, therefore, inadequate, it required movement to category C. In 'Logic' movement from finite being to Absolute Idea was propelled by contradiction only in this sense. Contradiction of this kind — i.e. depicting internal struggle — have of necessity to be overcome in reality and dialectical movement was a product of contradictions, defined in this manner.

However, this connotation of the concept of contradiction is usually overlooked in discussions on the dialectic. Normally, an assertion of the existence of contradiction is viewed as the rejection of the Law of Identity used in formal logic, which stated that $A = A$ — i.e. a thing is identical only to itself, not to an other 'B' or to its other - A. The dialectical method was, by comparison, seen as a new way of thinking which spoke of the co-existence of mutually exclusive and opposing attributes, and demonstrated the identity of opposites — i.e. $A = -A$.

There are, of course, several sections in 'Logic' where it appears that Hegel was attempting to demonstrate the identity of opposites; where Pure Being was equated with Pure Nothingness. However, Hegel did not formulate this as a canon of a new system of logic. He was interested primarily in analysing the relations of identity and difference and their implications; and in showing the interdependence of opposites. To put it differently, he was interested in revealing the oneness of the categories used by 'Understanding'. As such his emphasis was on the concept of the whole within which opposites were united, or else a situation where an object or a proposition ultimately veered into its opposite. Only from this perspective can one understand the dialectic of Master - Slave relationship, where at the end of the whole process, we find that the master and the slave have exchanged their position. The slave finds fulfilment and overcomes the fear of death while the master continues to struggle and thereby remain a slave.²²

Hegel was critical of Formal Logic and dissatisfied with the principle of $A = A$ because it failed to identify rigorously and postulated the identity of an object only with itself. Hegel, on the other hand, was interested in

22. For a detailed discussion on the Master - Slave relation, c.f. Kojève, An Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Basic Books, New York,

developing the concept of identity further; in seeing identity even in difference (i.e. in making apparent the linkages between two seemingly diverse concepts). In the process, he also demonstrated the co-existence of opposites and even the identity of opposites. This did not, however, imply as Charles Taylor points out, the reduction of all rounds to squares or even black to white and vice-versa. Instead, it referred to the relationship between black and white where the idea of black was predicated on the idea of white or at least 'black'. To use the Hegelian terminology, it implied that a thing was black only in so far as it was able to keep away its negation - white. In fact, these confusions would not arise if one realizes that Hegel used the term contradiction mainly to refer to the internal struggle that existed within the concept. To quote J.N. Findlay "...A bad state and a diseased person are contradictory and 'untrue' in this sense, as not living upto their concepts. [Hegel is careful to say that such contradictory untruth has nothing to do with the correctness of the judgements describing the corrupt condition of such objects. The conformity of our notions to the objects (correctness) is quite different from the conformity of the object to its own notion (truth).]"²³

23. J.N. Findlay, op.cit., p.66. (author's emphasis.)

The Hegelian dialectic did not imply the perpetuation of contradictions at the logical plane (unlike what was attributed to it by Popper).²⁴ If anything it implied precisely the opposite. To use Adorno's terms, it was the search for identity that impelled Hegel to locate identity even in difference, in non-identity. For this reason alone, he was critical of Formal Logic which left dichotomies between subject and object; finite and infinite; freedom and necessity; unquestioned and unanalysed.

The search for identity ultimately led him to postulate the unity of opposites, and not, as Adorno suggests the identity of opposites.²⁵ Although these were sections where

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24. Implicit in Popper's discussion of 'What is Dialectic' is the understanding that dialectics is a form of logic which upholds the co-existence of contradictions as opposed to the law of identity (i.e. it asserts that two contradictory statements can both be true). He, therefore, attempts to show the logical problems inherent in this proposition. The concept of dialectics - both Hegelian and Marxian - is, therefore, condemned at the very outset. "For it can easily be shown that if one were to accept contradictions then one would have to give up any kind of scientific activity; it would mean a complete breakdown of science. This can be shown by proving that if two contradictory statements are admitted any statement whatever must be admitted." (author's emphasis). K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1963, p.317.
25. The Hegelian system, according to Adorno, ultimately propagated 'identitarian thinking' (which helped to reinforce the structures of domination and bourgeois ideology) as it identified the subject with the object, finite with the infinite and most important of all the object with the concept.

Hegel showed that the opposites were reduced to one another, in his philosophical system it was the former principle that prevailed. If Hegel was interested in demonstrating only the identity of opposites then he would, perhaps, have settled for the philosophy of Fichte. Instead, he was critical of Fichte for negating the reality of nature and reducing it to the ego. Consequently, Hegel adhered to the method presented in Schelling's philosophy. According to Schelling, the absolute principle (the original ground) underlying all things contained the unity of subject and object. "...At no point of existence is this unity annulled; but either one or the other pole may preponderate; on this quantitatively differing relation between the poles depends the difference between different powers. In nature, the objective, in spirit the subjective pole preponderates. If the absolute is symbolised as $A = B$ (where A stands for the subject and B for the object), nature may be symbolised as $A = B^+$, and spirit $A = B^-$.²⁶ Using the same principle, Hegel concluded that the Absolute Idea was the ultimately real category which posited the individual in a form similar to its own. However, this did not deny the reality of the individual, nor did it reduce him to the Absolute Idea.

26. H. Hoffding, A History of Modern Philosophy, Vol. II, trans. by B.E. Meyer, Dover Publications, USA, 1955.

The individual was identical to and yet, different from the Absolute Idea. Similarly, Nature was both similar to and different from the spirit. In other words, both of them were equally real. The individual was real because it possessed terrestrial existence, which the Idea lacked. At the same time, the Idea was more real than the finite consciousness (i.e. individual determinate objects) because it formed the substrata for the latter and was the ultimately adequate category.

The purpose of the Hegel's philosophy and his system of Logic was to demonstrate the unity of opposites. It implied the co-existence of opposites within an undifferentiated whole. The whole or the concept of totality is central to the Hegelian dialectic. Equally important is the concept of synthesis which did not imply the sum total of two propositions, but the incorporation of certain elements from two or more contradictory, yet, complementary propositions within one whole, which leads to development, i.e. movement to a higher stage. The whole argument in Hegel's History of Philosophy is structured around his concept of 'transcendence'. The Kantian system, for example, in the history of ideas synthesised the best elements of empiricism and rationalism and in the process provided a more sophisticated theory of knowledge. Synthesis was

represented by the term 'aufheben' which incorporated three attributes — cancelled, preserved and elevated.

While this is the general concept of dialectic that can be derived from the Hegelian writings, particularly from 'The Phenomenology of Mind', 'Logic', 'History of Philosophy' and 'Philosophy of World History'. In the shorter logic, however, Hegel referred to the dialectic as the second stage in the development of any notion or logical entity, wherein the first stage - Understanding - adhered to the particular as different from the other objects. The dialectic as the second stage referred to the negation of the first by showing that the finite characteristics supersede themselves. The dialectic represented the negative impulse but it did not have a negative for its result, instead it sought to negate the existing form and replace it by another positive form. As such, it incorporated the third stage, that of Reason, which saw things in their own being, development and movement, i.e. Being in the process of Becoming.

In this manner, dialectics formed a new system of logic. It provided not merely the rules of thinking (method) but also knowledge of the structure of reality. According to Hegel, it represented a 'scientific way of knowing' and studying an object, its movement and its process of development.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARXIAN CONCEPT OF THE DIALECTIC

There arises within me the wish, the desire -- no not the mere desire, but the absolute demand -- for a better world. I cast a glance on the present relations of men towards each other and toward Nature; on the feebleness of their powers, on the strength of their desires and passions. A voice within me proclaims with irresistible conviction; "It is impossible that it should remain thus; it must become other and better".

Fichte, The Vocation of Man.

Marxism was rooted in German Idealism. It wanted to realise in history that which was implicit in the writings of German Idealists. Kant's 'Kingdom of Ends' represented the ideal society -- a Moral, Rational Order. It was the vocation of man to realise this in practice. Hegel, like his predecessors -- Kant and Fichte -- believed that only the Rational was real, but he was critical of their idealism which postulated a dichotomy between 'ought' and 'is'. The Rational Order was not merely a moral imperative or a 'thing-in-itself' existing 'Beyond' which 'Ought' to be realised, but something that was being actualised in history. In fact, Hegel was of the opinion that the process of self consciousness and

realisation of the 'freedom of all' had been completed. In philosophy, his own writings had achieved this end, while in history, the French Revolution (with its slogan that "All men as such are free, and that man is by nature free"¹) secured the latter. Marx, on the other hand, accepted the Hegelian ideal but argued that it could not be realised in the existing society. Freedom in a capitalist society was an opportunity for some and not all as it was based on the exploitation of the working class. The Rational Order could be real only in a communist society. Elucidating this transition from capitalism to communism, Marx developed a new conception of the historical process; a method which borrowed heavily from the Hegelian conception although it did not accept his system in its entirety.

Hegel understood that the world was not "...a complex of ready-made things" but "...complex of processes".² It had, therefore, to be studied in reference to its process of development. Hegel also recognised that the rationality evident in the historical process could not be explained through the rationality of individual action. Men participated in history with different intentions and

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1. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, op.cit., pp.54-55. (author's emphasis).
 2. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, p.44. (author's emphasis).

reasons; however, the result was ultimately different from what any of them had intended.³ Arguing against the Enlightenment conception of history, Hegel attributed the rationality in history to the 'cunning of reason'. He did not, however, provide any general laws in reference to which the movement from one stage of historical development to another could be analysed. This, according to Marx and Engels, was a consequence of his idealist philosophy, which made him associate the process of development with the unfolding of the Absolute Idea and ignored the concrete historical process. It was, therefore, necessary to supplement the general Hegelian conception with an analysis of the actual historical process. In this manner, Marxism entailed both the rejection of the Hegelian system and the retention of its spirit.

3. Elucidating the relation between individual, subjective intention and the universal pattern that emerges in history, Hegel wrote -- "By way of analogy, let us imagine a man who, from motives of revenge -- perhaps of justified revenge, in that he may himself have suffered unjustly -- set light to someone else's house; ...the deed as such consisted, let us say in applying a small flame to a small portion of a beam. What this deed itself does not accomplish takes place in its own accord;....this conflagration destroys the property of many other people apart from that of the individual against whom the revenge was directed,All this was not a part of the original deed itself...." (Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, op.cit., p.78)

In Marxian circles, it is customary to use the method of Hegel -- i.e. the dialectic -- as a synonym for the spirit of the Hegelian system. The dichotomy between the 'method' and 'conclusions' of Hegel, had been accepted earlier by both the Younger and the Older Hegelians. The former (representing the radical elements in German politics i.e. those favouring liberal bourgeois democracy) gave primacy to the method while the latter (arguing for the status quo) emphasized the conclusions. Following the Younger Hegelians, Marx wanted to place the Hegelian dialectic on its feet by discovering the "... rational kernel within the mystic shell".⁴

Dialectics, according to the Younger Hegelians, implied -- 1) the necessity to overcome everything that everything is; 2) identity of philosophy and action;

4. Marx, Capital Vol.I, Peoples Publishers, Moscow, 1974, p.29.

Although it was not explicitly stated by Marx, the 'rational kernel' later came to be associated with the method of dialectic, which was incorporated by Marx in his writings.

3) historical relativity.⁵ Marx, himself, wanted to write about "...what is rational in the method which Hegel discovered but at the same time enveloped in mysticism...."⁶ However, he did not find the time to write at length about Hegel's system and his conception of dialectics; or to analyse what in Marx's opinion constituted "... apparently formal but really vital question..."⁷, i.e. the relation between the Hegelian and the Marxian dialectic. One does come across passing references to and comments about the dialectic. On the one hand Marx stated that the Hegelian dialectic represented "the basic form of all dialectics";⁸ on other

5. c.f. L. Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism, Vol. I (The Founders), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1978.

To summarise the argument, Bruno Bauer interpreted the dialectic to imply endless negativity. Cieszkowski, according to Kolakowski, elaborated the second principle. Philosophy was supposed to provide an answer to what ought to be, and on the basis of that knowledge it was the task of philosophy to provide a basis for action and to criticise and destroy the world as it finds it. Before him Fichte had emphasised the supremacy of practical reason over theoretical reason.

David Strauss in his critique of Christianity emphasised the concept of historicity, which he used against Hegel to show that the Christian religion was a product of a particular stage of historical development, and now, in the new epoch of historical development it had outgrown its utility and must, therefore, be transcended. These three principles which constituted the essence of the Hegelian dialectic, were quite often used by the Younger Hegelians to criticise the conclusions of the master.

6. 'Marx to Engels in Manchester, January 14, 1868' in Marx Engels, Selected Correspondence, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p.93; (author's emphasis).
7. Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, Progress Publishers, 1974, p.124.
8. 'Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann in Hanover, March 6, 1868,' in *ibid.*, p.187.

occasions he wrote that "My dialectic is not only different from the Hegelian but is its direct opposite."⁹ The latter did not imply a total rejection of the Hegelian dialectic but only that of its idealist framework.¹⁰ Consequently, dialectic remains a problem that is both significant and diffuse. Marx's own dualism on this question caused this situation. Marxists could not bypass the questions; what is the fundamental methodological structure of Marx's writings, and how does it relate to Hegel's. Yet they got little help in solving these questions directly from Marx's work.

It was Engels who wrote on the concept of dialectics and explicated the philosophic basis of Marxism. In 'Dialectics of Nature' and 'Anti-Duhring', he formulated the basic laws of the dialectic which, according to him, had been filtered from Hegel's writings.¹¹ As such, they contained the essence of the Hegelian dialectic in a simplified (!) form. According to Engels, Hegel's philosophy represented a transition from commonsense perception to

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9. Marx, Capital Vol. I, op.cit. p.29.
10. Marx in his letter to Kugelmann, (op.cit), wrote, "He knows very well that my method of development is not Hegelian, since I am a materialist and Hegel is an idealist". (author's emphasis).
11. Although both these works were approved by Marx, yet, one cannot rule out the possibility that if Marx himself had written them, their content would have been considerably different.

dialectical thinking. It demonstrated the existence of contradictions in reality and challenged the principle of 'exclusion of contradictions'.¹² It also symbolised a shift from the idea of rest to the idea of motion, in other words, to the philosophy of change.

In spite of these similarities, Engels was critical of Dühring for identifying the Hegelian dialectic with the Marxian dialectic because the former was concerned with abstract concepts and not with the real history of man.

Dialectics, according to Engels, formed the "... science of the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of human thought".¹³ Its essence was represented in three fundamental laws -- 1) Unity of opposites; 2) Transformation of quantity into quality and vice-versa; 3) Negation of negation.¹⁴ Unity of opposites was interpreted as the co-existence of contradictions and the transference of an entity into its opposite.¹⁵ In nature, motion itself represented a contradiction. To

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12. c.f.: Engels, Anti-Dühring, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1976, p.138.
13. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, p.44.
14. Represented in this form, the concept of dialectic was quite different from the Younger Hegelian understanding of it; needless to say that it bore little resemblance to Hegel's own conception of it.
15. In spite of the fact that the basic logical principle required the exclusion of contradictions, the differential calculus, under certain circumstances, equated straight lines and curves. This, according to Engels upheld the dialectic of contradictions and the identity of opposites.

quote Engels, "... life consists precisely and primarily in this -- that a being is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is, therefore, also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originates and resolves itself."¹⁶

The second law represented the idea that a quantum of change beyond a limit, ultimately, resulted in a qualitative change.¹⁷ This law was operative in nature. Under normal atmospheric pressure, water at 0°C turned to ice and at 100° C it became steam. The same principle operated in organic chemistry. The addition of carbon and hydrogen atoms, in the same proportion led to the formation of qualitatively different compounds.¹⁸

The third law implied something quite similar to the notion of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It referred to the negation of the first 'a' by 'b' and then the negation of 'b' by 'c' in such a manner that 'c' represented a higher stage of development. This law, Engels argued, operated in both nature and mathematics.

16. Engels, Anti-Duhring, op.cit., p.139.

17. Although Hegel had not formulated it as a law, he had referred to it in his discussions on the relation between quality and quantum, both of which were incorporated in 'measure'.

18. For a detailed discussion, c.f. Engels, Anti-Duhring, op.cit., p.147.

In the latter "... let us take any algebraic quantity whatever; e.g. a . If this is negated, we get $-a$, if we negate that negation, by multiplying $-a$ by $-a$, we get $+a^2$, i.e. the original positive quantity but at a higher degree, raised to its second power."¹⁹

Engels had earlier explained negation of negation in reference to the germination of a grain of barley wherein, the plant represented the negation of the seed. But as the plant grew, it produced flowers and fruits and once again seeds, grains of barley. In this process the plant died and the seed symbolised the negation of that negation. Here, it represented a return to the first principle (and not movement to a higher stage) through the second negation.

Engels argued that the materialist dialectic provided a scientific understanding of the historical and natural processes. Scientific as opposed to philosophic; as the latter was, for Engels, a superfluous adjunct which imposed certain ideas and connections over and above those that could be discovered through the natural sciences. Moreover, philosophy was speculative in nature, a means of describing the world, while the important thing was to "change it".

19. Ibid., p.157.

Plekhanov carried forward Engels' task of converting Marxism into a 'Social philosophy'²⁰ which was capable of tackling all questions of logic, epistemology and metaphysics; and also providing a science of history and society.²¹ In reference to the concept of dialectic he reiterated what Engels had stated and argued that it formed a new system of logic, which postulated the co-existence of opposites. The 'Law of Identity' and the 'Law of Excluded Middle' used in formal logic, adhered to the formula "Yes is yes, and no is no" while dialectical logic stipulated just the opposite; viz. "Yes is no and no is yes".²² The former, according to Plekhanov, could not be applied to objects that were in a process of change and motion. To quote Plekhanov, "A youth on whose chin down is beginning to appear is no doubt growing a beard, but this is yet, insufficient reason to call him beard^{-ed.} Down on the chin is not yet a beard, though it is ~~turning~~^{turning} into a beard."²³ In other words, motion implied contradiction

20. c.f. Lichtheim, From Marx to Hegel and Other Essays, Orbach & Chambers, London, 1971.
21. Kolakowski states that it was around this time that the necessity of transition from capitalism to socialism was interpreted as a historical 'law'. The use of this terminology had serious repercussions later on, as it assumed, methodologically, a different conception of transition.
22. Plekhanov, Fundamental Problems of Marxism, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977. Appendix, p.93. Plekhanov had, perhaps, borrowed the idea from Marx himself; who had discussed dialectical movement in reference to "...the yes becoming no, the no becoming yes and no ...". Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1973, p.94.
23. Plekhanov, *ibid.*, p.97. (author's emphasis.)

and this could not be grasped within the system of formal logic. "At a particular moment a moving body is at a particular spot but at the same time it is outside it as well because, if it were only in that spot it would become motionless."²⁴ Such statement could be understood only through the formula "yes is no and no is yes"; i.e. law of contradictions.²⁵

The new law was applicable only in situations where the object was in motion or undergoing change; where one thing could not be identified as this or that, but, instead, had the attributes of both.²⁶ There remained one difficulty in such a conception. According to Dialectical Materialism everything in the world was in a state of flux. Hence, the

24. Plekhanov, Selected Philosophical Works, Vol. I Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1960, p.607 (author's emphasis)

25. Plekhanov, like Engels, explained the 'Law of Contradictions' in reference to the movement of an arrow. According to Engels, the arrow (or the moving body) was at "...one and the same moment of time both in one place and in another place, being in one and the same place and also not in it". (Anti-Duhring, op.cit., p.139). Plekhanov, on the other hand, stated that a "... moving body is at a particular place, and at the same time it is not there". (Fundamental Problems of Marxism, op.cit., p.94). This shift in terminology had serious repercussions as it converted contradiction into an ontological category which could be interpreted to imply that a thing exists and yet it does not exist. Formulated in this manner, dialectical logic led to absurd conclusions.

26. Although Plekhanov spoke of the co-existence of opposites, however, the law that he formulated, viz. yes is no and no is yes, implied the identity of opposites.

new logic would apply to all objects at all time. It would cease to be of limited applicability and become a system of logic parallel to formal logic.²⁷ This was the conclusion that the ideologues of Bolshevism had derived from the writings of Engels and Plekhanov.

Lenin, on the other hand, provided a more exhaustive analysis of the concept of dialectic in his 'Notebooks'. The sixteen points of the dialectic elaborated there can, perhaps, be summarised in the following manner —

- 1) The study of the entire "... totality of the manifold relations of this thing to others" and "...the development of this thing, ...its own movement and life".²⁸
- 2) The analysis of the thing as the unity of opposites;
 - a) the transition of every determination into its other, i.e. into its opposite.
 - b) struggle of content and form.
 - c) Negation of negation.

27. The works of Plekhanov did not specify whether --
 a) Formal logic and dialectical logic were two different forms of logic, which were mutually exclusive; or
 b) dialectics, as a form of logic, applied to certain specific circumstances; in which case formal logic was logic in the true sense, while dialectics provided other non-formal rules of analysis.
 c.f. Kolakowski, op.cit. Vol.II.

28. Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks, Vol.38, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961, p.221.

Triadic movement was regarded as an external aspect of the dialectic, which actually sought to demonstrate the connection between the negative and the positive. Unfortunately, what were regarded as essential attributes of the dialectic in his 'Notebooks' were not sufficiently emphasised in his other writings.²⁹ In 'Materialism and Empirio Criticism' he interpreted Marxism as a Materialist philosophy which upheld the dichotomy between thought and being. Matter was the primary substance that existed in external reality, independent of the subject, while knowledge was regarded as the mirror reflection of the objects that existed outside, independent of the subject. Consequently, the criterion of scientificity was that of adherence to the objective reality. In contrast to this, Lenin in his 'Notebooks' referred to human knowledge as a process of continuous interaction between the subject and object in which the absolute primacy of either could not be established.

With the exception of 'Philosophical Notebooks', most of the other writings of Lenin were directed towards a specific practical purpose -- primarily that of making the revolution. In the process, quite often, theory was subordinated to practice. This relegated philosophy to a

29. c.f. Lenin, Marx Engels Marxism, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968, particularly the section on 'Dialectics'.

secondary position — a trend which was later quite effectively used by the state machinery to justify its social policies and the revolution.

The dialectic had all along been used to specify the necessity of transition to socialism. The fact that the revolution had occurred in Russia was later used to corroborate the scientificity and sanctity of Marxism and its philosophy. In the zeal stemming from such an attitude, the dialectic was presented in a bold and simplified manner, with a conviction that it provided a scientific understanding of the social and historical processes, and along with that a revolutionary outlook — a basis for a new society. Stalin's 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' presented Dialectical Materialism as the "...world outlook of the Marxist-Leninist party. It is called dialectical materialism ^{because} its approach to the phenomena of nature, its method of studying and apprehending them, is dialectical, while its interpretation of the phenomena ..., its theory is materialistic".³⁰ Stalin differentiated on the one hand, between idealism and materialism and on the other, between mechanical and dialectical materialism. The dialectic was reduced to the simple assertion that everything changes and develops; i.e. quantitative change

30. Stalin, Dialectical and Historical Materialism, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1972. p.1. (author's emphasis).

leads to a qualitative change and results in an upward movement. Movement was seen as a product of "... contradictions inherent in things and phenomena, as a "struggle" of opposite tendencies which operate on the basis of these contradictions."³¹ The dialectical approach, therefore, required that objects should be studied in their process of change and development and in reference to their connection with other objects in nature.

This was the manner in which the dialectic had been popularised. What had been overlooked were those aspects which had been mentioned in Lenin's 'Philosophical Notebooks' and before that in the writings of Labriola. In line with the interpretation given by Younger Hegelians, Labriola had emphasised the concept of 'praxis' and the historicisation of knowledge. He was, perhaps, the first to oppose the dogmatic scientific ideology that developed within Marxism. This was the task, as Kolakowski argues, that was later on taken over by Lukacs and Gramsci and which inspired the publication of Marx's early writings.³²

Gramsci, Lukacs and Korsch attempted to provide an explanation for the failure of Social Democracy at the

31. Ibid., p.7.

32. c.f. Kolakowski, op.cit. Vol.III.

outbreak of World War I and the continued failure of attempted revolutions in West Europe even after the war. Just what had gone wrong and how could it be explained? These were the questions that they had asked themselves. In an attempt to provide an answer to these questions Lukacs argued that orthodox Marxism did not imply "...the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations"³³ but required the orthodoxy of 'method'. The latter implied — 1) supremacy of the whole, i.e. totality; 2) difference between appearance and reality; 3) unity of theory and practice.

Engels dialectic of nature was foreign to Marxism. The identity of subject and object, which Marx has taken from the works of Hegel, had been completely lost in the works of his followers who had emphasised the materialist conception of the universe. For this reason Lukacs was critical of Lenin's theory of cognition as it postulated a dichotomy between thought and being, and gave to the external reality an alien existence. Knowledge of the external objects could provide only a technological control of reality, while Marx's concept of 'praxis' sought to transform man into a conscious creator of reality.

33. Lukacs, History of Class Consciousness, Merlin Press, London, 1971, p.1.

Although Lukacs was critical of the philosophical outlook that had developed within Marxism, yet, he maintained that the Communist party represented the historical consciousness in which the objective movement of history and the subjective awareness of that movement were merged into one.³⁴

In line with Lukacs' interpretation of Marxism, Karl Korsch too, provided a critique of the popular conception of Marxian Methodology. He argued that the manner in which Engels, Lenin and their disciples had interpreted Marxism was at variance with Marx's own conception of it. By reinforcing the idea that the difference between the Marxian and the Hegelian dialectic was only that of a philosophical outlook, Lenin went back to the pre-Kantian stage in philosophy — i.e. to the debate between the idealists and the materialists. Besides, such an interpretation involved a shift from dialectics to conventional materialism.

Lenin, according to Korsch, emphasised the need to fight bourgeois theories (idealism) from the standpoint of the party's position. And in the process, the dialectical approach had been relinquished as "... they present

34. c.f. Kolakowski, op.cit. Vol.III, especially the section on Lukacs.

knowledge merely as the passive mirror of reflection of this objective being in the subjective consciousness.... In so doing they destroy both the dialectical interrelation of being and consciousness and as a necessary consequence, the dialectical interrelation of theory and practice".³⁵ In a dialectical conception, form and content were inseparably linked and this, according to Korsch, had been completely overlooked. Hence, the method used was counterposed to the results that were obtained by its application; i.e. it differentiated between an abstract theory which discovered truth and pure practice which applied these to reality.³⁶ Analysing these developments, Korsch suggested that the materialist conception of history must be applied to the materialist conception of history itself. At the same time he maintained that he was not opposed to the dialectic of nature, nor did he wish to contradict it. The Hegelian dialectic had to be rejected for it could not help one to transcend the given reality.

These theorists, with their own experience of unsuccessful revolutions and political instability had continually emphasized the unity of theory and practice; i.e. in view of the changing historical and social

35. Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy, New Left Books, New York, 1970, p.132. (author's emphasis.)

36. Ibid., pp.134-5.

situation, it was necessary to use the Marxian method to analyse the specific historical situation, which could then provide a basis for practical action. According to Gramsci, the objective condition for the transition to socialism had been there for the last fifty years but the proletariat and the party were not prepared for it. In order to undertake a war of position and a war of manoeuvre it was necessary to recreate the lived totality and to analyse the hegemonic relations operating within the society.³⁷

After World War II, in the wake of destalinisation and the defeat of fascism, there was a general attempt to find an explanation for these events. The heart searching that ensued, once again brought the concept of dialectic to the forefront. Besides, the encounter with Positivism necessitated a systematic analysis of the concept of dialectic. The members of the Frankfurt school concerned themselves with these questions.

They reemphasised the importance of philosophy, as that alone provided a basis for action. The Soviet ideologues had neglected philosophy because it represented a speculative description of the world and encouraged passivity. In fact, under the aegis of Stalin the history of philosophy before

37. The 'war of position' or direct military confrontation with the state would be the decisive warfare; but prior to that the working class must consolidate its position internally -- i.e. carry on the war of manoeuvre. c.f. Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, International Publishers, New York, 1975.

Marx had been reduced to a set of extremely simple propositions. Important philosophical problems were either wished away in the process of simplification or else they were reduced to propositions that seemed absurd from the commonsense point of view.³⁸ The members of the Frankfurt school, on the other hand, attempted to study the legacy of earlier philosophies, particularly German Idealism, to Marxism. Besides, they argued that the moment to actualise the Rational in history had been lost. Consequently, philosophy was required as it alone could assess the existing situation and help in the development of subjective consciousness.

38. Assessing the manner in which important philosophical problems were interpreted in this period, Kolakowski writes -- "Thanks to Stalin's exposition, anyone could become a philosopher in half an hour, not only in full possession of the truth but aware of all the absurd and nonsensical ideas of bourgeois philosophers. Kant, for instance, said that it was impossible to know anything, but we Soviet people know lots of things, and so much for Kant. Hegel said that the world changes, but he thought the world consisted of ideas, whereas anyone can see that what we have around us are not ideas but things. The Machists said that the desk I am sitting at is in my head, but obviously my head is in one place and the desk in another." (Kolakowski, Vol.II, op.cit., p.151.) In this manner, they disposed off all philosophical problems.

Also refer to Marcuse, Soviet Marxism, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth,

This did not, however, imply the acceptance of given reality (status quo). Instead, theory was supposed to inculcate critical thinking.

Dialectics as a method indicated the "untruth of identity".³⁹ In other words, it was a sense of consistent "non identity". Hence, dialectics had the negative for its result. It involved a critical reflection on the context and a continuous opposition to all descriptive standards and all methods pretending to universality and identification. Its logic was, therefore, "...one of disintegration; of a disintegration of the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces, primarily and directly".⁴⁰ Philosophy in the traditional sense urged towards positiveness, which inevitably degenerated into the acceptance of status quo (i.e. a society in which the individual is treated as an object and exploited by other men). Now in the form of critical thinking, philosophy had the negative for its result, and it sought to transcend the existing society.

Members of the Frankfurt school differentiated between critical theory and 'traditional theory', i.e. between two contrary trends that were derived from Hegel and Comte

39. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1973, p.5.

40. Ibid., p.145.

respectively. Traditional theory, according to them, served an 'ideological' function. It was concerned with the production of value-free theories and law-like generalisations which "corresponded" to the existing reality. "They produced an image of society based on a technical model, and technocratic ideologies which deprive people of political consciousness (i.e. awareness of social aims), by implying that all human problems are of a technical and organizational character and can be solved by scientific means".⁴¹ In other words, it sought technical control of the reality and did not, therefore, concern itself with a critique of the object — i.e. the society that they were analysing.

Critical theory wanted to emancipate man to liberate him from systems of domination. Consequently, it did not restrict itself to methodological problems; instead, it undertook a more comprehensive critique of the society.

41. Continuing the argument presented by Horkheimer and Adorno in 'Dialectic of Enlightenment', Habermas explained that during the Enlightenment, reason lost its element of reflection, its 'meaning-generating function'. Like the natural sciences it became an instrument for acquiring greater technological control. While dialectics emphasised the 'emancipatory cognitive interest' through the pursuit of self-reflection; i.e. an investigation of the "natural historical process of the self-generation of the social subject" and of making "the subject conscious of this process". (Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, Heinemann Publications, London, 1972, p.47.)

* Kolakowski, op.cit., Vol.III, p.391.

The problem was of a 'practical' nature. The contradictions that existed in the society were reflected in our analysis of the society. Hence, unless society itself was changed (i.e. the society was free of contradictions) methodological problems would remain unresolved. Critical theory, in this manner, restored to reason its "emancipatory function" (which had been lost in the Enlightenment era) so that men can become truly subjects. Critique of the capitalist society and its social relations formed an integral part of critical theory. In 'One Dimensional Man' Marcuse not only launched a severe attack on the technological rationality that emerged under capitalism; instead, he argued that technology and science were responsible for the exploitation and suppression of the people. Collectively they reduced man to a machine and then to an object. Machines that were created by man came to assume an independent existence strengthening the prevalent structures of domination and alienation.

Moreover, the idea present in the work of Gramsci -- viz. the need to study the functioning of the 'Superstructure' in itself, and also in relation to the 'base' -- was given primacy by the exponents of Critical Theory. Through the analysis of capitalist culture they attempted to explain the trend towards fascism and

authoritarianism; and the manner in which advanced capitalism in Western Europe legitimised itself.⁴²

The concept of dialectic has most often been discussed and reinterpreted during periods of turbulence, when political opportunity presents itself and there is the possibility of making the revolution. Analysing the contradictions that existed in the Chinese society, Mao-Tse-Tung provided a better and more perceptive understanding of the concept of contradiction (as developed within the Marxian framework). The 'universality' of contradiction, elaborated by Engels, was undeniable, but what had to be stressed was the 'particularity' of contradiction. The study of the latter required the distinction between 'principal' and 'secondary' contradiction, and at the same time, a distinction between primary and secondary aspects of each contradiction.

In connection with the debates in structuralism, Marxist theorists undertook a serious discussion of the dialectic. According to the structuralists; the meaning of

42. The capitalist culture, according to them, had developed and permeated each section of society and social relations, and in the process it had cultivated a set of attitudes that helped to legitimise the system and perpetuate authoritarianism.
c.f. William Leiss, 'Critical Theory and its Future' in Political Theory Vol.II, No.III, August 1974.

an object or a thing did not inhere in its own self, rather it was a product of the structure of relationships in which the object was held. Consequently, they devoted greater attention to an analysis of relationships (both internal to the object and between objects). In the Marxian philosophical tradition the method of the dialectic was equipped for this enterprise. While a conventional structuralist anthropologist would have described kinship patterns as a structure of relations, a Marxist described a historical conjuncture as a structure of specific contradictions, etc. In this manner, French structuralist Marxists, particularly, assimilated the concept of dialectic to the contemporary definitions of structure, and initiated a new debate on the meaning of the materialist dialectic in which they incorporated Mao's conception of the dialectic as the theory of contradictions.

It was Althusser who developed this understanding further, and attempted to study the concept of Marxian dialectic and its relation with the Hegelian dialectic. Marx, according to Althusser, had not provided the dialectic in a 'theoretical state', therefore his 'gestures' (through which he referred to his relationship with Hegel) should not be confused with the knowledge of the 'specificity' of his dialectic. The reference to the 'inversion' of the Hegelian dialectic was only a gesture, and should not,

therefore, be confused with the solution to the problem as it did not explain exactly "... what constitutes Marx's 'inversion' of the Hegelian dialectic?" Nor did it specify the "... specific differences which distinguish the Marxist dialectic from the Hegelian".⁴³

Analysing the specificity of the Marxian dialectic, Althusser argued that the Marxian dialectic was not an inversion of the Hegelian dialectic but a rejection of it; i.e. it did not retain some elements and reject the others; instead, it formulated a new conception in which despite the similarity of words, the concepts were considerably different. An inversion of the Hegelian system entailed a return to naive materialism and empiricism (primacy of the specific object) -- a task which had been fulfilled through the philosophy of Feuerbach. Marx, on the other hand, attempted to do something different, which could not be regarded as 'simple inversion'.

At the same time, the difference between the Marxian and the Hegelian dialectic could not be reduced to or explained only in reference to the difference between their philosophical outlook -- i.e. materialism and idealism respectively. The Hegelian dialectic was inadequate not

43. Althusser, FOR MARX, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1969, p.164.

because it was applied to speculative philosophy, but it had to be rejected as its structure was different from that of the Marxian dialectic. Marx, to use Althusser's terms, differentiated between 'generality I, generality II and generality III'. Beginning with the abstract concept (generality I, i.e. the ideological form in which the general concept was presented) he moved through 'generality II' (that which worked upon the former) and ended with 'generality III', i.e. the 'concrete in thought' (the new scientific understanding of the concept in a theoretical form). Marx recognised that "... the 'abstract' generality with which the process starts and the 'concrete' generality it finishes with, Generality I and Generality III respectively, are not in essence the same generality..."⁴⁴ whereas in the Hegelian conception, the universal, abstract concept, (through self-movement) produced the concrete reality. Consequently, the Hegelian dialectic failed to differentiate between generality I and generality III -- i.e. the universal abstract concept and an abstraction from the concrete.

Moreover, Althusser argued that the Marxian concept of contradiction and totality could not be equated with those of Hegel's. For Hegel, 'unity of totality' referred to the development of a single essence. In his system,

44. Ibid., p.187.

contradiction referred to a 'simple process with two opposites' (i.e. the original unity split into two opposites) which was resolved internally (by overcoming the alienation and returning to the original unity). Marxism, on the other hand, rejected this "presupposition of an original simple unity".⁴⁵ With each category, Marx presumed, the existence of a "structured whole of society" in which several contradictions coexisted. Consequently, the process was a complex one; the beginning itself was complex and not derived from a simple unity.

The identification of a dominant contradiction was an essential attribute of the Marxian dialectic. Whereas, for Hegel, there could never be a single dominant contradiction because the phenomenon was an alienation of the Idea; hence, the differences were all "...equally 'indifferent', that is, practically equal beside it, and therefore, equal to one another..."⁴⁶ Within Hegel's system, the complexity (i.e. the existence of other contradictions) could be explained in reference to a single essence, while for Marx, the secondary contradictions were not merely attributes of, or reducible to, the principal contradiction. Instead, Althusser points out that they were in some occasions "...essential even to the existence of the principal contradiction..." as they constituted the condition of its existence.

45. Ibid., p.198.

46. Ibid., p.203 (author's emphasis).

Given these differences, the Marxian dialectic, according to Althusser, had only a formal linguistic similarity to the Hegelian dialectic. Godelier, too, attempted to differentiate the structure of the two conceptions of the dialectic.⁴⁷ Marx, in Godelier's opinion, postulated two kinds of contradictions -- a) those that existed within a structure; and b) those that existed between two structure. The former involved the co-existence of opposites, such as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat within capitalism. Contradictions between relations of production and forces of production represented the latter. It was the contradiction between structures that impelled change in the entire system, in the process of which the former (i.e. the internal contradictions) could be resolved. Hegel, on the other hand, provided an internal solution to the internal contradictions and established the identity of opposites.

Godelier and Althusser had emphasised the differences in the structure of the Marxian and the Hegelian dialectic and on the basis of that the difference between the understanding of various concepts (such as, whole, contradiction etc.) which were common to both forms of dialectic. Their work analysed systematically -- for the first time, perhaps, in the history of Marxism -- the relationship and the specific differences between the Hegelian and the Marxian dialectic. They advanced

47. c.f. M. Godelier, Rationality & Irrationality in Economics, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972, and also "Structure and Contradiction in Capital" in H. Blackburn (ed.) Ideology in Social Sciences, Fontana, Glasgow, 1976.

the first step in this direction. Yet, the task is even today, far from being complete.

Althusser was interested in establishing the scientificity of Marxism and showing that a science (i.e. Marxism) could not be arrived at through an 'inversion' of an ideology (Hegel's system). Instead, it involved a break with the past and earlier forms of thinking. Following the logic of this argument, there was no need to analyse and study the Hegelian system. Consequently, he left unexplained any similarities that might exist between the two conceptions and overlooked certain important differentiations between the two.

In addition to the changes that he referred to, one can point out that in Marx's writings, there is a greater emphasis on historicity. Hegel used pure, abstract categories while Marx began with determinate, abstract categories -- i.e. categories that are located in a specific process, occurring in a particular space and time. Moreover, the identity of opposites (such as Being and Nothing) in Hegel's system was predicated on a logical necessity -- i.e. it was completely unconditioned -- while in Marx, such an identity was dependent upon the fulfilment of certain historical conditions.⁴⁸

48. c.f. Marx, Grundrisse, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973. Introduction by Martin Nicolaus.

For Marx, contradictions/opposites were inter-related as they existed within one whole. Each one required the existence of the other. For Hegel, it referred to an 'internal struggle'⁴⁹ between the essence and a specific form. It also involved the transformation of an entity into its opposite -- into something else, that is different from itself. Resolution of the contradiction involved either an approximation to the essence (the real concept) or else the realisation that the two structures that exist as opposites were in reality one entity. Synthesis in the Marxian context implied the emergence of something new as a result of the clash between the opposites that coexist within a whole. Consequently, the unity of opposites, for Marx, referred to the whole within which the opposites existed; whereas for Hegel, it implied that two seemingly opposite objects were both one and yet different.

Marx's concept of contradiction and its specific structure is quite different from that of Hegel's but that does not imply that it is any closer to, what Colletti terms as Kant's 'real opposites'. In fact, Colletti's differentiation between Kant's 'real opposites' and Hegel's 'contradiction' is itself quite untenable.⁵⁰ Hegel does

49. c.f. C. Taylor, op.cit.
Also refer to Chapter III of this dissertation.

50. c.f. Colletti, "Contradictions and Contrarities" in New Left Review, Sept - Oct. 1975.

refer to the unity of opposites (i.e. he argues that we can know the nature and implications of A only in reference to its opposite -A) but this does not imply that both A and -A lack 'real existence'; or else that the finite and infinite are both negative, as their essence lies outside of their own self. The infinite lacks terrestrial existence, but that, for Hegel, was not a sufficient criterion for regarding it a 'non-being' (i.e. a negative); in fact, it was in itself a positive.

It is, perhaps, equally erroneous to suppose that real opposites are complete, positive and real in themselves. To take an example used by Colletti, falling is different from rising but not in the manner in which A is different from -A. To put it differently, falling and rising are both positive; they form real opposites and not dialectical contradictions. However, even these seemingly real opposites can be studied only in relation to one another. They are, hence, negative, as falling is the other of rising. We can arrive at a conception of falling only when we differentiate it from a shift in position in the opposite direction, which we term as rising. Consequently, falling implies not rising, just as black represents the exclusion of white and darkness the absence of light.

This, however, forms only a small section of the argument which Colletti directs against the entire tradition of Hegelian Marxism. The Hegelian dialectic and the law of contradictions, according to him, were at variance with Marxism and science. Engels and Lenin, had wrongly assumed that dialectics could be applied to matter.⁵¹ Hegel had rejected the deductive method used in mathematics and the principle of non-contradiction used in the natural sciences and developed the concept and method of dialectics which could be used for studying philosophical problems. As such, dialectics, according to Colletti, was used by Hegel to establish the primacy of God, Infinite and to annihilate matter. Engels, Plekhanov and Lenin, on the other hand, dismissed metaphysical questions and philosophical problems and used the method of dialectics (that Hegel had recommended for philosophy only) for a scientific analysis of social, historical and even natural processes.

Based on this understanding Colletti argued that Engels and Lenin forced themselves to read Hegel materialistically (just when Hegel was destroying matter). Their distinction between the method and conclusions of Hegel was equally incorrect, and they failed to realise that the contradiction was not in Hegel but in their own understanding

51. c.f. Colletti, Marxism and Hegel, New Left Books, London, 1973; and From Rousseau to Lenin, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1972.

of Hegel. Hegel was a consistent idealist and the conclusions that he arrived at were not merely inconsistencies, instead, they were the product of his entire system.

The extent to which the dialectic of nature may be regarded as an integral part of historical materialism and Marx's general conception of the dialectic is even today a matter of considerable controversy. Engels had focused on the dialectic of nature and had, consequently, overlooked its application to history. Colletti is justified in arguing that in traditional Marxist literature, the dialectic was converted into a law which established a necessary (and quite often, causal) relationship. There was an attempt to 'scienticise' the dialectic.⁵² Engels not only illustrated the three laws of the dialectic through examples taken from the natural science; in fact, he regarded their occurrence in nature to be a proof of their correctness/validity.

Moreover, Engels had reduced the dialectic to simple commonsense propositions which were of little or no explanatory value; e.g. the state^{ment} that the addition of Carbon and Hydrogen atoms in the same proportion resulted in the formation of a new compound, merely stated the obvious. It simplified the concept of change to the transformation

52. c.f. L. Dupre, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism, Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1966,

of quantity into quality; while the nature of change could be understood and explained only in reference to the structure of the atoms -- i.e. the system of linkages that they formed.

Louis Dupre points out that in the traditional Marxist conception of the dialectic, history becomes an extension of the mechanistic laws found in nature. It is, therefore, reduced to natural history and no longer remains human history.

However, these are problems associated with the form in which the dialectic was incorporated in the traditional Marxist literature. It highlights the need to study and re-define the concept of dialectic. It does not imply a rejection of the dialectic, nor does it suggest that this concept is foreign to Marxism. Hegel had used the method of the dialectic to analyse philosophical questions; (to show that the Infinite was the essence of the Finite) because the object of its study was in the process of change, continuous movement and development. Marx had, therefore, used the dialectic to understand the process of social and historical development. With the change in the context, the dialectic underwent certain structural changes; even the content of some of the concepts associated with it

were altered. In spite of these changes there is between the Hegelian and the Marxian conceptions a definite area of commonality. For both, the dialectic provides a 'Weltanschauung' (conception of the world) and a method of enquiry. The continuity at this level constitutes the core of dialectical theory.

CHAPTER V

ON DIALECTICAL THEORY

Philosophizing does not provide Man with new, precise knowledge; it does not add a new science to the rest. It offers no suggestions, plans, or programs. But it can arouse the inner dispositions from which these tangibles derive their guiding sense.

Karl Jaspers, *The Future of Mankind*.

A stream of Marxist theorists maintained that the dialectic was a legacy of the German idealists, while others argued that the Hegelian and the Marxian conception of the dialectic were totally disparate. Yet, in spite of these differences, they were all united in their critique of Hegel's system. Hegel's idealism, his emphasis on the infinite and the Absolute Idea, was regarded as an embodiment of bourgeois ideology; hence, rejected for its conservatism. Hegel's writings on State, especially the sections in defense of Prussian monarchy, were cited in support of this interpretation.

No one questioned the genius of Hegel but they were critical of everything except his dialectical method. What

they overlooked completely was the context — Hegel's system — in reference to which, his method could be understood. Like Marx, Hegel had not, in any one place, outlined the method of dialectic. It was implicit in the development of his argument and the method of his analysis. Consequently, disassociated from the totality of his system, the concept and method of dialectic could never be adequately understood.

Besides, these theorists rejected Hegel's system for its idealistic outlook without noticing, that if the Hegelian system defended idealism, it did so with a difference. If it gave supremacy to the Absolute Idea it did not place the Idea in 'The Beyond', but located it in this world. If Hegel conceptualised history as the unfolding of the divine order (providence), he was, at the same time, dissatisfied with faith in providence. He equated the divine order with a rational design. If there were occasions when he referred to world history as a plan of God, there were other instances where the concept of 'cunning of reason' was used to explain the rationality that manifested itself in the totality of historical process. It was, thus, used to fill in a void, or else to complete the logic of his argument. To give it a positive and a more concrete content, it referred to Reason, a Rational Order, which could be grasped by the individual

and ought to be actualized in reality (practice). Undoubtedly, the Rational Order, for Hegel, existed prior to all finite objects, but in that form it was devoid of any determination. In other words, the specific content of that Rational Order was derived only in the process of actual historical development.

Lenin in his Philosophical Notebooks had remarked that "...in this most idealistic of Hegel's works there is the least idealism and the most materialism. "Contradictory", but a fact!"^{*} what this implied in the context of Hegel's writings had been completely overlooked. The fact that it contained, according to Lenin, "...almost nothing that is specifically idealism..." received little attention; what was emphasized was that it had for "...its main subject the dialectical method."^{*} The Hegelian philosophy, its concept of Absolute Idea and spirit had been rejected; hence, no attempt was made to analyze the nature of that concept or to probe, beyond the apparent linguistic similarity, into the difference between the Hegelian and the more common idealist and theological conception. Instead, the Marxist theoreticians either spoke of the dichotomy between the system and method of Hegel, or else, they completely rejected the dialectic. The former reduced the dialectic to certain catchisms such as the co-existence of opposites; what is,

^{*} Lenin, Philosophical Notebooks, Vol.38, op.cit. p.234.

is not; movement through opposites etc. and they defined method in reference to general, abstract laws so as to avoid any endorsement of texts or conclusions.

Neither of them viewed the dialectic as a 'paradigm' or what could in E.P. Thomson's terms be called a 'tradition' (i.e. a school of thought).¹ In other words, through the dialectic, both Hegel and Marx, presented to their followers a specific way of viewing the world and a set of rules and standards for scientific practice through which they could study the problems that they posed, or deemed necessary to ask within their framework.² Dialectics, as a conception of the universe emphasised the primacy of change. Everything was in a process of Becoming — coming into existence and passing away. Change and movement were essential co-ordinates of natural and historical processes. History represented progress — Movement from primitive ages to the present stage of civilisation. Progress, however, was accompanied by an increasing complexity of problems. The processes in nature

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1. In 'An Open Letter to L. Kolakowski', E.P. Thomson differentiated between Marxism as a doctrine, a method and a tradition. The same categorisation can, perhaps, be applied to study the debate on the concept of dialectic.
 2. There were, undoubtedly, important differences in the answers that they gave for specific questions. Yet, despite these differences a scientific analysis would, for both Hegel and Marx, involve the observance of certain methodological principles, which form the core of dialectical theory.

were cyclical — of repetitive character — while in history the movement was in spirals. The created object was always something new. Even that which appeared to be the same in history, always possessed certain elements that distinguished it from those that had preceded it.

The differentiation between natural and social processes is central to dialectical theory. In contrast to this, the positivists argued against such a differentiation and placed the natural and the social sciences along the same continuum. Comte, who coined the term 'positive philosophy' explained that all disciplines of human knowledge pass through the stages of theological, metaphysical and positive thought. The natural sciences, dealing with phenomena external to the individual, had arrived at the third stage while the social sciences were still lagging behind.

Later followers of Comte, who called themselves Positivists claimed that the methods and techniques used in advanced natural sciences provided scientific and valid knowledge; and advocated the use of these methods in the social sciences to secure the same degree of scientificity — i.e. objectivity, validity and predictability. The purpose of a scientific analysis was the formation of value-free, objective, law like generalisations and cogent theories,

which could be obtained through the collection of facts, observation and experimentation.³ A complex entity could be divided (at least theoretically) into an infinite number of smaller parts, each of which could be studied through scientific techniques and research methods. The isolated facts so ascertained could be knit together to form a scientific theory. Or else, the scientificity of a theory could be judged by reducing it to a number of basic statements, each of which could be verified against reality.⁴

As opposed to this, dialectical theory is critical of any attempt to replicate indifferently the methods used in natural sciences to the social sciences. According to them, there is a fundamental difference between the subject matter of natural and social sciences because of which the techniques

3. Stegmüller explains that for the Positivists, "All statements acceptable to the scientist must either be provable on logical grounds alone, or have been confirmed by experience. These statements need not be simply reports of observations, nor need they be logically derivable from such observation statements.... On the contrary, they may be hypotheses, which are not susceptible of conclusive verification through observation. As scientific assumptions, however, hypotheses also differ from speculative pseudo-theses in that they must in principle be empirically testable, even if only in a negative way." (W. Stegmüller, Main Currents in Contemporary German, British, and American Philosophy, D. Reidel Publishing Co., Dordrecht-Holland, 1969, p. 265. *(author's emphasis)*)
4. c.f. *ibid.*, particularly the section on 'Modern Empiricism: Rudolf Carnap and the Vienna Circle'.

used in the natural sciences were inadequate for a scientific analysis of the social processes. This did not, however, abrogate the importance of the techniques used in experimental sciences; it was, of course, necessary to check against reality, but in itself, it was insufficient and should not become the sole criterion of scientificity. Knowledge obtained through observation of isolated, individual units, controlled experimentation and subjects that are interchangeable at will constituted one of the possible methods of deriving scientific knowledge, and any attempt to reduce valid knowledge to this form of experience has serious repercussions for the social sciences.⁵

Through the analytical experimental methods, one could know only isolated events, which was insufficient for practical life. It ruled out the possibility of knowing the interconnections between units because these linkages could not be established in the social sciences through scientific experimentation.⁶ In fact, given the logic of its inquiry,

5. c.f. T.W. Adorno, 'Sociology and Empirical Research' and Habermas, 'The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics' in Glyn Adey and David Frisby (trans.) Positivist Dispute in German Sociology, Heinemann, London, 1976.
6. The Positivists do analyse the immediately invisible causes of any observed phenomenon but they maintain that these causes be determined through systematic experimentation. Such a proposition assumes important dimensions in the social sciences where, using the positivist logic, it would be difficult to provide a causal explanation of any event. Or else, an explanation would be derived only in reference to those events that preceded it. One would, then, have to restrict oneself to the study of actual, isolated events. Any explanation of these events in reference to others that are not visibly connected with the phenomenon under study would remain a hypothesis, or a conjecture, which cannot be designated as a scientific analysis.

it would deny the existence of any entity which cannot be known through observation and experimentation; or else, it would exclude these concepts from the arena of scientific discourse, such that the observer would ultimately choose that subject which is easily amenable to quantification. According to Habermas, such techniques of analysis restrict themselves to individual events and in the process lose sight of the totality. Besides in such an analysis totality was reduced to a mathematical aggregate of various units in which the structure of these units and the relationship between them was completely overlooked.

Social totality, according to dialectic theory "...does not lead a life of its own over and above that which it unites and of which it, in its turn, is composed. It produces and reproduces itself through its individual moments.... This totality can no more be detached from life, from the co-operation and the antagonism of its elements than can an element be understood merely as it functions without insight into the whole which has its source *Wegen* in the motion of the individual himself. System and individual entity are reciprocal and can only be apprehended in their reciprocity".⁷

7. Theodor W. Adorno, 'On the Logic of the Social Sciences' in Glyn Adey & David Frisby (trans.) op.cit. p.107.

Social Sciences were concerned with the study of society -- a universe produced by men through active participation and continuous interaction. Consequently, an analysis of society could not be value free and neutral in the manner in which the study of natural phenomena was. The social scientist could not give the same 'objective' status to his analysis as the object that he was studying was not external to him; nor could he at any moment disassociate himself from it.⁸ Not only the problem that the social scientist choose to study, governed by a value (i.e. it is not only a value orientation) but even beyond that his analysis was not a scientific, non-partisan, collection of facts. Facts, according to a dialectician, were collected selectively and within the framework of a particular theory.⁹ They could not, therefore, be given any external validity/sanctity. In a new analysis of social processes, new facts

8. c.f. C. Taylor, 'Neutrality in Political Science' in Alan Ryan (ed.), Theories of Social Explanation, Oxford University Press, London, 1978.

9. In this sphere, Karl Popper was critical of the Vienna Circle, as they assumed a dichotomy between facts and value. The individual, he argued, chooses from a multitude of facts; e.g. the manner in which he would describe the events occurring in the street below, would also entail a value orientation. It would involve a choice, a differentiation between what he considers to be essential and non-essential. Therefore, one could not, in any analysis, counterpose facts and values.

were not discovered; instead, they were usually re-interpreted, the relationships between them reanalysed so as to provide new insights. Hence, one could not possibly have a value free science in the social sciences.¹⁰

Through the methods used in the natural sciences one could know what 'is'. Remaining within the parameters of what existed, they were equipped to provide technical control of reality. The social sciences, according to the exponents of dialectical theory, were concerned with a practical question, of what 'ought' to be, which could not be obtained through the techniques recommended by positivists. Besides,

10. It was in reference to this issue of a value free science, that K. Popper and the dialecticians, in spite of their criticism of Positivism, remained totally different. According to K. Popper, scientificity could be ensured, both in natural and social sciences, through the method of 'conjectures and refutations'. Since facts that were collected were not value free, theories remained conjectures which had to be continually refuted and falsified by the scientific community.
- However, Popper's theory of falsification represented only the other side of the coin. It, too, involved verification and testability, directly against the empirical reality, consequently, it showed some of the lacunas of the early Positivist conception of science. It had, once again, overlooked the extra-methodological problems that make the task of falsification and verification a difficult one. Even in the natural sciences, as Lakatos pointed out, it was difficult to falsify a theory on the basis of material obtained through observation (because the facts so obtained could be interpreted within the framework of the given theory to explain the given observation, such that it would be difficult to regard that information as sufficient basis for its falsification). The problem of falsification in the social sciences, is of still greater magnitude. The dialecticians, therefore, begin with the understanding that an analysis of society is beset with sociological problems which cannot be grasped or tackled through a set of methodological principles, least of all, those that are borrowed from the natural sciences. (c.f. Lakatos & Musgrave (ed.), Criticism and Growth of Knowledge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.100.)

if the social sciences do not specify or discuss what 'ought' to be (for the sake of a value-free science) then they would only help to legitimise and sanctify that which existed. They would perpetuate the given universe of discourse -- i.e. society -- and rule out the possibility of complete change.¹¹

Methodological questions, therefore, in the social sciences, were inextricably linked to sociological and practical questions. Yet, they were not for this reason, non-scientific in character. Instead, within this perspective, dialectical theory redefined the concept of scientificity and objectivity. Instead of giving primacy to a set of methodological principles, it subordinated them to the object, or subject-matter of analysis. (For this reason, dialectical theory was, according to Adorno, even more positivistic than positivism.¹²) The positivist conception of science represented "scientism" -- i.e. "science's belief in itself; that is the conviction that we can no longer understand science as one form of possible knowledge, but rather must identify knowledge with science".¹³ Dialectical

11. c.f. Habermas, 'The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics' and 'A Positivistically Bisected Rationalism' in G. Adey & D. Frisby, op.cit.
 12. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, op.cit., p.141.
 13. Habermas quoted in Glyn Adey & David Frisby, op.cit. Intro. p.xiii. (author's emphasis.)

theory provided another set of methodological principles on the basis of which a critical and scientific theory of society could be formed. Critical, as it emphasized the negative aspect, the logic of disintegration and a critical reflection of the context. While the scientific analysis involved a study of the totality in which individual objects derive their meaning along with a study of relationships between objects.

Knowledge was a process of continuous interaction between subject and object, nature and consciousness, and theory and praxis. It involved a particular relationship between appearance and reality, between essential and inessential. Science, according to Marx "...would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided".¹⁴ In fact, scientific truth, quite often, has a paradoxical relation to everyday experience as it seeks to uncover those relations and connections that are not apparent. Similarly, dialectics as a science of society moves from the apparent to the essential core; appearance manifests the reality, it is the form in which that reality exists; hence, it is not an illusion. Yet, one must move from the given, apparent form, to the real, essential reality, that one can arrive at through an analysis of the former; and which provides a more penetrating insight into the working

14. quoted in B. Ollmann, Alienation, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1976, p. 64.

of the society and enables one to answer questions that could not be solved or even raised earlier.¹⁵

Dialectical theory begins with the assumption that individual action entailed subjectivity, that value orientation could not be overcome. Consequently, objectivity for a dialectician did not imply the absence of values, instead it could be achieved through the study of hermeneutic relationships and a consciousness of the values through which the individuals operate. An object must, therefore, be studied in relation to the whole (i.e. other co-existing objects) and in reference to the specific historical context of which it was a product. For a scientific analysis one must also study the object in the process of its development over time.

Structuralism, Historicism, Hermeneutics and Phenomenology are schools of thought that are inextricably linked to dialectic;¹⁶ in fact, each of them focus on an aspect of dialectic theory. Historicity (i.e. the conception of historical relativity) undoubtedly, constitutes an important co-ordinate of dialectical thinking, with the difference that Historicism¹⁷ and even Hermeneutics¹⁸ as a

15. c.f. A Schmidt 'The Concept of Knowledge in Marx's Political Economy' in Karl Marx 1818-1968, Inter Nations, Godesberg, Germany, 1968.
16. c.f. John Rex (ed.), Approaches to Sociology, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975.
17. c.f. W. Stark, The Sociology of Knowledge, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971.
18. Also, Paul Connerton (ed.), Critical Theory, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1976; especially Part II, 'The Hermeneutic Tradition'.

school of thought are concerned primarily with the method of understanding, particularly, with the clarification of the 'conditions in which understanding takes place'. Similarly 'Phenomenology'¹⁹ concerns itself with a systematic analysis of the processes of understanding -- the patterns of intersubjectivity and the manner in which an individual understands his own actions and interprets those of others. Dialectics, too, upholds the necessity of undertaking such an analysis, however, it does not regard it as an end in itself. It, too, attempts to understand individual action, but more so, the manner in which individuals understand, or misunderstand that which is relative to a specific historical context for a permanent characteristic of existence.²⁰ Hence, dialectical theory does not deny the existence of absolute truth, but it emphasizes that the manner in which that absolute truth is grasped and presented is to a considerable extent determined by the specific historical situation; at least, it can be understood better, when it is studied in reference to that specific historical conjuncture.²¹

The South-West German School of neo-Kantians attempted to differentiate between the natural and the cultural sciences.

19. c.f. Giddens, New Rules of Sociological Method, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1977; and Gorman, 'Alfred Schutz - an exposition and critique' in British Journal of Sociology, Vol. XXVI, London, 1978.
20. c.f. Richard J. Bernstein, The Re-Structuring of Social & Political Theory, Blackwell, Oxford, 1976.
21. c.f. Q. Lauer, Hegel's Idea of Philosophy, Fordham University Press, New York, 1971.
Also Althusser & Balibar, Reading Capital, New Left Books, London, 1970.

Windelband drew a distinction between nomothetic and ideographic sciences -- i.e. a science of general laws and a science of individual events. Rickert shifted the basis of such a separation to the "...level of scientific concept formation"²² and the use of generalising or individualising methods. The study of society (i.e. sociology) and history was a "valuing and individualizing"²³ enterprise. The dialectical concept of history, on the other hand, stated that it was possible to form a generalising science even in these disciplines. History, for example, was concerned with individual, unique events, but its essential task was the study of the process of development where it could generalise about the relations between various units, between the general and the particular.

Dialectics as a form of logic and a set of methodological principles came under severe attack both from within the Marxian circles and from philosophers, who in spite of their differences, could be grouped together as Positivists. Dialectics, according to Karl Popper, was a non-scientific and incorrect form of reasoning. It was, at best a way of getting out of an argument -- by stating that this is true and it is also false -- or confusing people; and it sought to perpetuate contradictions at the logical plane. In fact,

22. Glyn Adey & D. Frisby (trans.), op.cit. Intro. p. xxi.

23. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976, p. 169.

in his analysis of each of the three laws postulated by Engels, Popper was quick to point out the mathematical error in the exposition given by Engels. Using the example cited by Engels, Popper argued, that negation of negation would not lead to a higher stage; i.e. if 'A' was negated by '-A', then the negation of the latter would imply a return to 'A' and not a transition to 'A²' (which incorrectly assumed the negation of '-A' by '-A').²⁴

Notwithstanding the logical rigour of Karl Popper's argument, one finds that he rejects the most popular, and thereby, simple and naive, form of dialectic. Quite often, he rejects the dialectic for those characteristics which are attributed to the dialectic by him. Hegel, for example, did not in his 'Logic' attempt to perpetuate contradictions (at the logical plane). If anything, he attempted to define more rigorously by tracing relations of 'identity even in difference'.²⁵ In other words, dialectics as a way of thinking, maintained that contradictions exist in reality, consequently, they manifest themselves in our understanding of that reality; however, it did not attempt to contradict the basic canons of reasoning and deduction. It is equally strange to find that Popper who explains 'synthesis' (in one section of 'What is Dialectic') in reference to the

24. c.f. K. Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, op.cit. especially the section on 'What is Dialectic'.

25. c.f. Adorno, Negative Dialectics, op.cit.

German term 'aufheben', later rejects it for being a simple mathematical formulation. Synthesis, he argues, is not a 'product' of thesis and antithesis, but a consequence of critical thinking, forgetting that 'aufheben' referred not to aggregation but to preservation and cancellation.²⁶

A more systematic critique of dialectical theory was provided by Hans Albert in his debate with Habermas.²⁷ He argued that an inability to give a detailed account of concepts such as, societal totality, along with the rejection of analytical experimental methods (i.e. systematic observation and experimentation), immunised these concepts from any kind of criticism. It also implied a failure to logically analyse the concept -- a limitation that spoke of the non-scientific and arbitrary nature of these concepts which were crucial for dialectical theory. Moreover, in his opinion, Habermas was looking for an objective justification of a practical interest (of a specific meaning derived from history) which could not actually be substantiated with empirical evidence. A continuous attempt to emphasise the 'essential', which is not apparent or given through systematic observation, not only mystified reality, but it also provided a basis for 'irrational' and arbitrary

26. c.f. K. Popper, op.cit. p.315.

27. c.f. Glyn Adey & D. Frisby (trans.), op.cit.

decisions. The 'myth of total reason' ultimately leads to a totalistic society which speaks with the voice of a prophet and curbs individuality. The plea for total change linked with the inability to decide the scientificity of such a claim was, according to him, beset with dangerous implications. After a complete transformation in the structure of the society it left one at a point of no return; i.e. even if the results do not accord with the expectations, given the duration of time, it would not be possible to return to the present stage of civilisation or the existing form of society.

The fears of this group of Positivists are, of course, historically well-founded. However, it would be necessary to make one important differentiation. Both Karl Popper and H. Albert, reduce dialectical theory to Marxism, such that their rejection of the latter is co-terminus with a condemnation of the former. They do not want their methodology to be criticised from any sociological perspective, yet, they are critical of dialectical theory because of its association with Marx -- i.e. for the sociological perspective that it, sometimes, upholds. Consequently, they fail to suggest inadequacies in the dialectical method of analysis -- an aspect which is debated upon within Hermeneutics and Phenomenology.

Quite often, Hans Albert is critical of dialectics because it has its roots in Hegel's philosophy, which, in his opinion, used concepts "...like magic words before which opponents are supposed to lay down their weapons -- unfortunately too early in most cases".²⁸ Such form of reasoning would, to students of Hegel, seem too inadequate a basis for the rejection of Hegel's system; and the association of dialectics with his works would in no way be self-evident of the weakness of such a method.

It is equally unfair to suppose that dialectical theory rejects experimentation and empirical validation. In fact, Habermas continually argued that such methods of analysis may be of some importance for the social sciences; however, in and by themselves they were insufficient. Verifiability or even falsifiability was, therefore, not ruled out but he merely attempted to highlight the problems associated with such ventures in the social sciences.

In the Marxian circles, Bernstein, in the early twentieth century, had advocated the rejection of the dialectic as it was a carryover from the Hegelian system and an impediment in the development of Marxism as a science. Much later, Colletti argued that the method of dialectic had

28. Hans Albert, 'The Myth of Total Reason' in *ibid*, p.177.

been used by Hegel to annihilate matter. It was, therefore, an integral part of his idealism. Marxism and any other scientific theory, which upheld the existence of matter, could not, therefore, use that device.

Sartre, in his critical appraisal of Dialectical Reason, pointed towards the problem that centred around the Marxian conception of the dialectic.²⁹ The superiority of the Hegelian dialectic, in his opinion, was its idealism -- an aspect for which it was rejected earlier. For Hegel, the Movement of Being and the process of knowledge were inseparable, therefore, the dialectic had no need to prove itself. Marx, on the other hand, demonstrated the irreducibility of Being to knowledge and preserved the dialectical movement both "in Being and in Knowledge".³⁰ The problem that emerged was, that if thought was governed by dialectical process (interaction between man and nature) then one could not know whether the object was modelled on the movement of thought or vice-versa. In other words, if the search for truth was to be dialectical in its methods, how could it be known, without resorting to idealism, that it corresponded to the movement of Being. It was inadequate to suggest that thought was dialectical 'by virtue of the

29. c.f. Sartre, Critique of Dialectical Reason, New Left Books, London, 1976.

30. *ibid.*, p.23.

object', or else, that history was intelligible only when it was understood dialectically because the crucial question was -- 'how is this truth to be established?' If it is suggested that we observe the actual movement and development of the object, without prejudging the type of rationality that we may encounter, we would find that it develops in accordance with the principles of dialectical theory, then there is another problem that presents itself. It is not possible to study reality in this objective manner because our collection of facts in such an analysis would be conditioned by our theory.

Knowledge, for a dialectician, is a relation between man and nature. If we, then, allow the world or the object to simply unfold itself to no one in particular, we would contradict the earlier assumption. Besides, dialectics as a basic law of nature cannot be ascertained through any verification, because if it was deduced from any particular instance, then it would only represent a probability and not a necessity. Engels, according to Bartra, had reduced the dialectic to a basic fact, a contingent law, not realising that it was something that 'man produced by producing himself'.

The main thrust of Sartre's analysis is to highlight the problems involved in deriving dialectics as a scientific form of reasoning through the use of empiricist techniques, i.e. from experimentation, observation, abstraction, etc. However, the problem is that, conceptualised in this manner, the dialectic becomes even more vulnerable to the positivist critique. Historically, the dialectical way of thinking has been linked inextricably with Marxism and on several occasions it has been used by them to predict the transition to a socialist state, and in several instances, to defend an existing socialist state. Lukacs on several occasions dismissed the empirical facts and maintained that 'superficially' things may appear to be so, but 'dialectically' they were the exact opposite.³¹

It would be necessary, at this juncture, to emphasise that the dialectic attempted to provide an alternative to the empiricist and positivist conception of the universe and method of analysis. This was the form in which Hegel had conceived the dialectic. As such, it emphasised the study of certain aspects that had been overlooked previously. The need then is not to reason the absolute basis of its scientificity (because the latter is partially apparent from its incisive criticism of existing methodologies) nor

31. c.f. Kolakowski, Main Current of Marxism, Vol. III, op.cit. p.305.

is it to justify the extent to which prediction can be predicated on it (for nothing could be more foreign to the method of dialectics than an attempt to provide 'law like generalisations'); but to be aware of the specific yet, limited purpose that the dialectic seeks to serve.

Dialectics provides a set of cautionary guidelines which ought to be followed in any analysis of the social reality. (In this respect, the development of dialectic is far from complete.) It does not, however, provide ready made answers or simple solutions, but, true to its spirit, it emphasizes the negative aspect. It inculcates critical reflection of the context and of all forms of existing rationality and scientificity. Dialectics, therefore, represents "...both a type of rationality and the transcendence of all types of rationality".³²

32. Sartre, *op.cit.*, p.21.

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