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a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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Nature, Society, and Thought

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a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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Engels on the Origins and Development of Mathematics

Luisa Redondo Botella

Ever since the dawn of humankind and throughout millennia of human existence, both in the development of their practical activity as social beings and in the rudimentary work they perform to provide for their daily needs, people observe the world that surrounds them, beginning with the natural environment as it relates to their own work. Such observation takes into account the qualitative and quantitative aspects of things, although in a very crude way, since it is not yet possible to penetrate to their dialectical unity.

That world is the reality that exists independently and outside of the consciousness of humans. Upon investigation, humans acquire spontaneous empirical knowledge which makes it possible for them to differentiate things, to realize their specific properties, and to go about discovering their regularities and interrelationships.

By consciously reflecting on reality, on things and phenomena, the consciousness assimilates their characteristics, it distinguishes between individuality and plurality, and it tries to express these things and phenomena in symbolic form so as to be able to identify them. But it is not only language that people utilize; they also make use of graphic symbols, the synthesizers of idiomatic expressions. The evolution of symbolic systems travels a long and complex route in the development of humans as

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social beings. It was difficult to arrive at a system of symbols representing quantitative concepts of measurement. At this stage of spontaneous empirical knowledge, one cannot properly speak of a system of symbolic mathematics.

With the appearance of the first great division of labor in agriculture and livestock breeding, the necessity for measuring and counting arose. Before that, perhaps, people had incipient concepts of size—larger and smaller—and of quantity—more and less—which also translated into incipient concepts of measuring. But along with the division of labor and the subsequent appropriation of wealth arose isolated, practical, nonsystematized forms of measuring and counting, used only to serve sporadic, individual, and particular needs.

In the course of social development, with the emergence of more advanced forms of a social division of labor, with the discovery of iron, and later with what could properly be called industry (which also implied more developed forms of appropriation of wealth based upon ownership of the means of production as private property), primitive concepts of measuring evolved into systems of measurement.

It was the private appropriation of wealth, and its consequence—early commerce—that established the urgent necessity for measuring surfaces, the capacities of containers, and the height of buildings; of counting livestock, evaluating commercial trade, and measuring the productivity of labor.

Farmers, builders, and merchants were the first to utilize symbolic forms in some systematized, mathematical way. The evolution of symbolic systems in general, and the quantification of those symbolic forms, made propitious the construction of a symbolic mathematical system that in turn contributed to the passage from spontaneous empirical knowledge to a higher level of scientific knowledge, the beginnings of science.

With regard to symbolic systems, one must point out that when we reflect on reality in our consciousness, images and representations are formed, not symbols, because symbols are idealizations of reality elaborated by human thought; they are idealizations that begin as thought in the form of language, but

develop themselves as symbolic systems on the level of scientific knowledge.

In this stage of spontaneous empirical knowledge, people tried to verify the accuracy of their assumptions through social practice. However, a long time had to elapse before the materialist dialectic as a theory of knowledge, created by the founders of scientific socialism, determined the necessity of proving the truth of all knowledge.

Upon realizing such proof, people possess a truth in the sphere of knowledge to which it refers, and in that part of the evolution of the subject matter which it defines. This truth at which one arrives objectively is not something static, but a process that includes different qualitative states. Objective truth is approached in the process of obtaining knowledge. It begins by being incomplete, relative, only valid within determined limits; and it may contain a part, however small, that will be carried over in its further evolution, since in relative matters there are always elements of the absolute. In this process of deepening knowledge and generalizing it when it becomes complete, when the essence of the object or phenomenon has been grasped, absolute truth is attained, which the later development of science does not refute, because it is intrinsic, essential knowledge.

In the acquisition of knowledge, relative truths are not complete and unchangeable, but are always subject to reformulation, perfection, and enrichment, since their limits are relative. That which appears to be certain, if we formulate it within definite limits, could be reformulated tomorrow upon widening the horizons of our knowledge, until we arrive at the essence of the object or phenomenon under study, at which point we achieve absolute, immutable certainty.

As has been stated, in this development one passes from undifferentiated labor to the division of labor, which causes it to be more and more productive. Individuals produce not only to satisfy their own individual needs but, with the surplus value that they create with their labor power, contribute to the satisfaction of the needs of others; that is, they produce for society.

It is well known that the surplus value created in this stage of development of society is the object of private appropriation by

the owner of the means of production. This is how a large majority of people produce material goods, while a small minority appropriates the surplus created by the majority. Society is divided into exploited and exploiters, into social classes, and thereby the class struggle is initiated.

The development of the forces of production and of private property, with its consequent appropriation of value, deepens the division of labor; and in this process intellectual work and manual work are separated one from the other. Intellectual work is centered in the dominant classes, and there are people who have the possibility of dedicating themselves to that, thanks to the surplus value created by manual work.

Moreover, the same development of the forces of production and that of spontaneous empirical knowledge lead to cognitive activity becoming scientific. But this activity is not yet carried out by all people, but by a portion of them, by people who dedicate themselves to intellectual work, as specialized work: a direct consequence of the process of the division of labor itself.

Under these circumstances research is carried out systematically, on higher or lower levels, directed toward achieving advances in knowledge under the pressure of solving the needs of labor activity proper; and not only with respect to improving tools, but in general, in all aspects of that activity.

Also, research is directed toward finding explanations to phenomena of nature, society, and thought. The dominant classes adopt positions aimed at justifying—directly or indirectly—propositions, principles, and laws created and established by them for their own profit.

In this situation, which is qualitatively different from that which preceded it, humanity already has accumulated knowledge over the course of millennia, throughout the whole process of formation of spontaneous empirical knowledge. The qualitative difference is that the knowledge that humanity is trying to grasp is already scientific, due to the systematization that characterizes it. It uses concrete, specific objects as referents, explaining facts and phenomena always from a scientific basis—that is, supported by laws and theories.

A system of scientific knowledge that is the result of a long

research process concerning nature, society, and thought, with its corresponding subsystems, constitutes a concrete science. Each system of knowledge finds its origin in the empirical; it reaches a high level of generality, confirms it in practice, and thereby synthesizes reality.

In the advance of the research activity through which scientific knowledge is accumulated, when it arrives at a determined stage of development, when knowledge of the fundamental laws regarding a certain aspects of changes in matter is achieved, science as a system of knowledge emerges. This means that in that particular sphere of learning, a high level of abstraction has been attained. But at the same time, science is originating in a society divided into exploited and exploiters. These conditions must be kept in mind when analyzing the emergence and development of any science.

The emergence and development of scientific mathematical knowledge, and mathematical science, follow the same theoretical pattern previously set forth.

Even though mathematics emerges from the empirical via the necessity to measure and count, or conceptually as primitive materialism, it is that same necessity which leads to the creation of means to quantify the characteristics of size and quantity of objects; or in the case of quantity, to determine the number that corresponds to each object in a given sequence. These abstractions lead some philosophers, creators of such means or systems of measurement, to pretend to look for similar qualities in objects to which the same number corresponds, as if they possessed a common substance—or, simply put, that numbers are the fundamental element in things, and that numbers are also things. This happens because abstract thought can arrive at such a degree of simplification, of schematism, that it distances itself from the real object it analyzes. This characteristic of abstract thought, when carried to extremes, provides an opening through which idealist conceptions enter, including openly speculative forms of thought.

On the other hand, the development of symbolic systems favors the creation of a system of numbers and their relationships, which makes possible the development of mathematics on

a high level of abstraction. It must be said that humanity had to travel a long road from symbols of combination, of equal fundamental characteristics, of the same essence, until it arrived at numerical symbols, and out of these a system of numbers and of subsystems which would permit all types of quantification, and which would apply independent of the essence of phenomena and things.

In this sense, Engels himself explains that forms of *being* “can never be created and derived by thought out of itself, but only from the external world. . . . Principles are not the starting-point of the investigation, but its final result; they are not applied to nature and human history, but abstracted from them; it is not nature and the realm of man which conform to these principles, but the principles are only valid in so far as they are in conformity with nature and history” (1987a, 34).

If the first numerical symbols had their origin in primitive materialism, as an expression of the quantity of similar collected objects, and the first geometric figures as idealized expressions of forms of nature, mathematics begins its development as science overlaid with idealist philosophy, a situation which existed for a long time, and which bourgeois ideology presently tries to carry on as a basis for speculation that actually moves away from materialist and dialectical scientific knowledge. As examples, we have those offered by Engels in his work *Anti-Dühring*. In it he explains how concepts of number and shape have no other origin than the real world, and that people first began to count by utilizing the fingers on their hands, from which we get the base 10 for arithmetic operations; which again demonstrates that mathematical concepts are not a fanciful creation of intelligence (36).

In a manner similar to the other sciences, mathematics makes its way dialectically, affirming and negating itself, in a complex of contradictions in which the outstanding ones are those that carry forward the advance of scientific knowledge in search of the truth. And there is an antagonistic contradiction between the idealist impression of the origins of abstract thought—of its having a magical quality—and the scientific advance of mathematics. The latter, as in all science, synthesizes objective reality and provides a true knowledge of it in the field to which it applies.

In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels refers to the contradictions in higher mathematics, which can only be resolved at that level, and not at a lower one. Such contradictions are those that occur, for example, upon comparing, under certain circumstances, straight lines and curves, the contradiction arising when two lines that apparently intersect before our eyes are, at a certain distance, parallel—that is, even if extended to infinity they will never meet. And he goes on to enumerate other contradictions that are common to all of mathematics (112).

In this sense Engels affirms that when dealing with variable quantities, mathematics “enters the field of dialectics” and he makes the observation that it was a dialectical philosopher, Descartes, who introduced this concept. “The relation between the mathematics of variable and the mathematics of constant quantities is in general the same as the relation of dialectical to metaphysical thought. But this does not prevent the great mass of mathematicians from recognising dialectics only in the sphere of mathematics, and a good many of them from continuing to work in the old, limited, metaphysical way with methods that were obtained dialectically” (113).

Engels asserts that this constitutes the turning point of mathematics. With Descartes’s variable magnitude “came *motion* and hence *dialectics* in mathematics, and *at once, too, of necessity the differential and integral calculus*, which moreover immediately begins, and which on the whole was completed by Newton and Leibniz, not discovered by them” (1987b, 537)

Engels continues adding to the significance of this turning point, and writes: “With the introduction of variable magnitudes and the extension of their variability to the infinitely small and infinitely large, mathematics, usually so strictly ethical, fell from grace; it ate of the tree of knowledge, which opened up to it a career of most colossal achievements, but at the same time a path of error. The virgin state of absolute validity and irrefutable proof of everything mathematical was gone for ever; the realm of controversy was inaugurated” (1987a, 81).

The advance of this science, affirming itself and negating itself, is exemplified in the creation of the different numerical symbols.

From its beginnings, and in the more advanced development of science, research activity is characterized by the intensive use of empirical research methods: observation and experiment. Idealism in philosophy leads to making both of these absolute, even comparing them to methods of theoretical investigation, including the use of mathematics and the hypothetical-deductive method. The development of empirical research has been narrowly tied to the development of the deductive method.

It had been concluded that induction and deduction were two types of mutually exclusive logical processes, that the first was supposed to reason from the particular to the general, and the second the inverse. Considering these methods of reasoning to be opposites raised barriers that slowed down the development of research.

The concept of induction as movement of thought from the particular to the general was introduced for the first time in the logic of Aristotle. Nevertheless, as previously stated, in spite of the creation of formal logic having been of great importance, only simple propositions, of little complexity, could be solved with it.

All the same, the importance of logic to mathematics is shown in that its axioms “are expressions of the scantiest thought-content, which mathematics is obliged to borrow from logic.” Here Engels is referring to the fact that the whole is greater than its part and that two quantities equal to a third are equal to each other (1987a, 38).

It is appropriate here to refer to the axiomatic method in general, since it has a close relationship with what we just mentioned. There are sciences and spheres of science that are formed by beginning with axioms; that is, with concepts and basic principles that are self-evident. Geometry begins in this way and is generally tied together with certain relations, such as inferences or truths by logical deduction. Euclid worked out his geometry in this way.

But over the course of time the axiomatic method has gone through variations owing to its own development, a process initiated by David Hilbert and which led to enhanced explanatory powers. Thus, from the first discursive or axiomatic

determinations of incipient mathematical science, which served as a point of departure, we go on adding others that, like the first, are not demonstrable, but nevertheless evident. The method that we use, that in its initial or Euclidean form was of axiomatic material or content, becomes a formal axiomatic method. From there it becomes a formalized method. Both are differentiated from the original in that their concepts and correlations appear in pure form, apparently disconnected from all content. Also, instead of verbal language, another symbolic language is used in the formalized version.

Even though mathematics needs axioms and formalisms in order to sustain itself through a high level of abstraction, and to achieve a high measure of unity, this does not imply that the application of the axiomatic method in general excludes the modification of the basic concepts that gave the formalisms their origin, but that this same scientific development of method opens the way to other modalities. It is obvious that this method is valuable for the logical shaping of scientific theories, primarily in mathematics and physics. (See “Mathematics” in Engels *Dialectics of Nature* [1987b, 536]; also Institute of Philosophy 1981, 264 ff.) This axiomatic method also contributed to distinguished mathematicians—among whom Leibniz stands out—establishing the foundations for a successful formulation of symbolic logic.

Such was the origin of mathematical logic, which makes possible the investigation of complex propositions, but within the conceptual framework of formal logic.

With investigative activity directed toward the formation of scientific knowledge, the need for a genuine general logic of investigation was already obvious. Logic is really one of the fundamental parts of the philosophical system of Hegel, the most distinguished thinker in classical German philosophy.

Hegel analyzes the existing relation and mutual conditioning of opposites as “the law of eternal motion,” and from that he concludes that the presence of contradictions in phenomena is proof of their development. This necessarily leads him to consider the negation of the given form of a phenomenon as something inherent to it. For Hegel, concrete negation is not simply a destruction of the old, but a transformation of its basic elements

into something new, as the negation of the negation. However, Hegel adapted his triad—thesis, antithesis, synthesis—to processes of development in an artificial way. It was Karl Marx and Frederick Engels who scientifically worked out the law of negation in the development of matter.

The logic created by Hegel could not be the universal method of investigation either. The cause of this resides in its inconsistency, and the idealist position of its creator. His logic, despite its containing the necessary dialectical elements, made thought absolute, in the form of the Absolute Idea, which led him to a closed system, one that begins with the Absolute Idea and returns to it. For Hegel the process of development takes place outside of time and space, and consists of the self-development of the concept of Being.

Hegel also brings up the problem of the relation between theory and practice, trying to discover their interaction. But he does not succeed in this, because for him practice is an activity of thought; in the final analysis, the Absolute Idea invents the world upon becoming conscious of itself. But practice is considered within his theory of knowledge.

The concept of practice in Marxism-Leninism is diametrically opposed to Hegel's in that it has to do with the utilization of material resources for the purpose of knowing and changing the world in which we live. Nevertheless, upon analyzing the Hegelian concept of practice, Lenin affirms that "Marx, consequently, clearly sides with Hegel in introducing the criterion of practice into the theory of knowledge" (Lenin 1961, 212).

In spite of the advance that the Hegelian dialectic represented, it continued on without making itself the universal method of investigation. The degree of maturity of science in general, and particularly in the natural sciences in the second half of the nineteenth century, brought about the imperative need for such a genuinely scientific method. This is achieved with the revolutionary turning point in philosophy realized by Marx and Engels when the Hegelian dialectic is made materialist.

Marx and Engels studied the principles of formal logic and the relations between it and the dialectic. It became clear that

formal logic focuses on phenomena and things on the outer boundaries of the internal relations among their elements, and their interdependencies. That is, it does not take into account the existing contradictions in these phenomena and things, nor their development and change. Nevertheless, this way of approaching reality, Engels asserts in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, was necessary because one had to be familiar with things before investigating the processes, before being able to sound out the changes that are operative in things (1970, 363), that is to say that formal logic is concerned with what is directly observable by the senses, and cannot go beyond that. On the other hand, dialectical thought is the reflection of motion through the contradictions that are present throughout nature and society.

Through the experience that humanity had accumulated, it had come to know that nature, society, and consciousness are in a constant state of flux and development. But it was Marx and Engels who discovered the general laws of development of nature, society, and thought by utilizing the materialist dialectic, “i.e., the doctrine of development in its fullest, deepest and most comprehensive form, the doctrine of the relativity of the human knowledge that provides us with a reflection of eternally developing matter” (Lenin 1963, 24).

The most relevant aspects of this question are synthesized in the following points:

(a) Marxist-Leninist philosophy considers method from its positions regarding the theory of reflection, taking into account that the materialist dialectic acts as a general method of knowledge, because it is the reflection in theoretical thought of the most general laws of the development of nature, society, and thought. In this sense Lenin declared: “Logic is the science not of external forms of thought, but of the laws of development ‘of all material, natural and spiritual things,’ i.e., of the development of the entire concrete content of the world and of its cognition, i.e., the sum-total, the conclusion of the *History* of knowledge of the world” (1961, 92–93).

(b) That which distinguishes dialectical logic from all previous theories as general methods of acquiring knowledge is the

integration of practice into logic as a criterion of truth.

(c) Dialectical materialist thought is the reflection of motion across the contradictions that are present in all matter, which leads to the disappearance of something into that which it contradicts, elevating both terms of the contradiction to a higher form.

(d) The materialist dialectic, upon assembling the wealth of historical experience of the cognitive activity of man, has a relative, limited, finite—and contradictory—character; and along with it an absolute, unlimited, and infinite character. Therefore, it opposes any attempt to present cognitive activity as a kind of closed logical system.

(e) The materialist dialectic, as logic and theory of scientific knowledge, performs its methodological functions on different levels of analysis.

In regard to mathematical logic, what was said before is valid, although it unfolds at a higher level of complexity. The essential thing is that, as with formal logic, it does not deal with contradictions, nor development and change. With mathematical logic success has been attained in resolving complex situations in the proofs of mathematical theorems, which has contributed to the development of this science in the sphere of relations between mathematical logic and formal logic.

On the other hand, mathematical logic, when treated as a set of conventional rules and mathematical symbols, without reflecting the essential connections with objective reality, or when taken in an exclusively formal or formalistic way, can be converted into an instrument of ideological struggle by those of an idealist bent. The latter find it valuable in pretending to verify their own doctrines, which are formulated in such a way as to camouflage objective reality and even to deny it, without considering the essential connections of the phenomenon with objective reality.

From the position of Marxist-Leninist materialism, dialectical logic ponders forms of thought by beginning with the laws of motion and development of matter. Thus, the deductive form of reasoning is oriented toward the search for laws, the advance of scientific knowledge, and the formation of scientific theories.

From the aforesaid, one infers that judgment is the most simple form of thought, which begins with the most simple and important form of abstraction. Judgments, if integrated into a system that is based on a unique principle, form a theory. Judgment becomes theory; that is, from simple thought comes mature thought. The reaffirmation and correction of judgments is the hallmark of reasoning. When, using judgment and reason, thought achieves its most abstract form, a concept has been produced.

For reasons we have just expounded, the concept is not a point of departure of knowledge, but its result. The concept is a form of reflection of things, of phenomena and the laws of their motion.

Idealism, owing to its conception of the existence of form of thought as essence, denies the objective content of the concept. Nevertheless, the concept, independent of its degree of abstraction, is always connected to the objective world; it always has an objective content.

Idealism, by considering mathematical concepts as detached from the essence of objective reality, only sustaining itself on semblances of form, tries to put these concepts at its service and utilize them indiscriminately, without scientific basis—depending on what it pretends to test—even though such may be refuted by the appropriate objective reality.

Materialist philosophers previous to Marxism, including mathematicians, had already held a materialist interpretation of concepts. An example of this was the great Russian mathematician Lobachevski who, in interpreting the essence of mathematical concepts in a materialist way, wrote: “Concepts, for example geometric concepts, are not an artificial product of our minds, but are taken from the properties of motion” (1946, 158–59).

Mathematical thought began by emphasizing quantitative relations and the relations of spatial shapes of objects in the unique way in which they appear. In the process of formation of scientific thought, generalizations were arrived at, the formation of concepts and laws, which in this concrete science are characterized by a high level of abstraction.

In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels specifies that “pure mathematics

deals with the space forms and quantity relations of the real world—that is, with material which is very real indeed” (37). He goes on to explain that even highly abstract forms of mathematics can in no way hide that fact. But he warns that, “in order to make it possible to investigate these forms and relations in their pure state, it is necessary to separate them entirely from their content, to put the concrete aside as irrelevant”; thus, we get points without dimensions, lines without breadth and thickness, variables, constants, letters as symbols, and “only at the very end do we reach the free creations and imaginations of the mind itself, that is to say, imaginary magnitudes.” It is obvious that such creations of the intelligence are not simply fantasies, but representations of the real world at an elevated level of abstraction. This accounts for their great heuristic value.

The foregoing affirmation that mathematics deals with spatial shapes and quantitative relations has withstood the test of time, because it defines this science through the prism of the materialist dialectic. Engels has thereby succeeded in masterfully synthesizing its essence and content.

In *La Dialéctica y los métodos generales de investigación* [*The Dialectic and General Scientific Methods of Investigation*] (Institute of Philosophy 1981), prepared by a collective of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Department of Philosophy of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, it is explained how the transition to modern mathematics was enhanced by the extensive use of the *axiomatic method*, later by the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry, and by the appearance in the final quarter of the last century of *abstract set theory*, created by the mathematician Georg Cantor. This led to the concept of *abstract mathematical structure*, basic to all modern mathematics (1:190). Starting from this concept, certain definitions of the subject matter of mathematics were tried out, supported by the false premise that owing to the advance of this science, the aforementioned definition of Engels no longer applied to modern mathematics, without realizing that this concept, by strictly reflecting the essence of mathematics, is impossible to deny. In some cases it could be considered advisable to broaden

it, in order to comprehend other essential aspects that might be discovered in the advance of this science.

Thus, for example, A. D. Alexandrov points out that “in the subject matter of mathematics, any shapes and relations of reality may enter that objectively possess such a degree of independence with respect to content that they may be totally abstracted from it. Moreover, in mathematics not only are shapes and relations abstracted directly from the reality examined, but also those that are logically possible, determined on the basis of shapes and relations already known” (cited in Institute of Philosophy 1981, 1:190). This explicitly extended the previous formulation to figures in multidimensional space, including infinite dimensions.

For his part, A. N. Kolmogorov considers that “the scope of quantitative relations and spatial shapes studied by mathematics has been considerably broadened: within it enter existing relations between the elements of an arbitrary set, between vectors, between operators in functional spaces, all of the diversity of spatial shapes of whatever number of dimensions, etc. Under this broad understanding of the terms ‘quantitative relations’ and ‘spatial shapes’, the definition of mathematics as the science of quantitative relations and spatial shapes of the real world is also applicable in this new and modern stage of its development” (cited in Institute of Philosophy 1981, 1:191).

Engels reiterates his conception of mathematics in the so-titled part of his *Dialectics of Nature* and reaffirms that even the most abstract forms are representations of reality, and says: “Of all theoretical advances there is surely none that ranks so high as a triumph of the human mind as the discovery of the infinitesimal calculus in the last half of the seventeenth century. If anywhere, it is here that we have a pure and exclusive feat of human intelligence. The mystery which even today surrounds the magnitudes employed in the infinitesimal calculus, the differentials and infinities of various degrees, is the best proof that it is still imagined that what are dealt with here are pure ‘free creations and imaginations’ of the human mind to which there is nothing corresponding in the objective world. Yet the contrary is the case. Nature offers prototypes for all these imaginary magnitudes” (1987b, 545–46).

These attributes or variables are studied from different points of view. Engels puts forward concepts concerning the content and forms of mathematical expressions (1987b, 536, 548–50). Upon this foundation the following three aspects of generalization are presented:

(a) Functions, by means of which relations between attributes of particular types of motion of matter are quantified.

(b) Integrals, that reflect integrated phenomena of nature and the changes that are produced in them.

(c) Sets, which differentially bring together each type of attribute, here defining the subdivisions of these as subsets, if by quantitative variations in the intensity of a given attribute it is considered to have produced a differentiation that implies a particularity within the generality.

In the first and third aspects one finds fundamentally the mathematical models that are currently applied to sociological research. The widespread use of differential or integral calculus, for all it can offer as an idealized representation of the motion of matter, does not occur in a direct way in the social sciences for various reasons, among which the important ones are (a) the attributes of the elements that are present in the phenomena of the social sciences, or, say, the variables that are taken into consideration in the corresponding mathematical models, are of a discrete nature, not continuous, even if in certain situations they are taken as continuous in order to work with them; and (b) the variations of intensity of the attributes of the elements that are present in the phenomena of the social sciences are of a probabilistic nature, which implies that the mathematical models that interpret relations between said attributes possess this same characteristic, although perhaps not in a direct way. Nevertheless, differential and integral calculus is encountered in the field of probabilistic laws.

Accordingly, it is proposed that the mathematical methods utilized in social research, and only for purposes of method and methodology in this research, be classified into (A) methods that quantify existing relations between attributes, whether they be

present in the same phenomenon or in different social phenomena, and (B) methods to determine whether the value an attribute takes belongs to a set defined for this attribute.

Passing from the general to the particular, we see that in this classification, under (A) are included associations, and therefore relations of cause and effect as a type of association, which are measured on abstract scales or perhaps by their position in a hierarchical order. These quantitative evaluations proceed from the application of a mathematical method in the particular or individual case with which it deals.

These methods are found fundamentally in multivariate analysis, whose basic and most generalized form is encountered in sociological research as regression and correlation analysis, and especially in coefficients of correlation and association, both in parametric and nonparametric statistics. One could cite methods such as factor analysis, the discriminant, and, exceptionally, principal component analysis as being those most utilized in the kind of research we are referring to.

As a variant there is the selection of the variables that really influence the phenomenon with which one is dealing. Also there is the case of determining within what limits an attribute will vary for given values of other attributes that are related to it and directly influence it.

In (B) are included methods that study the behavior of statistical and probabilistic distributions and therefore the population or populations that define and consequently belong or do not belong to them. Also included is the analysis of various samples taken, be they absolutely independent or in such form that they are related, in order to study whether or not they belong to the same population—in other words, whether the quantitative variations indicate qualitative variations or not. These methods belong to parametric and nonparametric statistics.

In both (A) and (B) the corresponding answer to a given problem is associated with mathematical probability in one form or another, which tells us the degree of possibility that the answer is correct whenever that phenomenon is present.

On the other hand, Engels points out the importance of the

hypothesis in scientific research. His conception is totally applicable to the mathematical hypothesis.

In *Dialectics of Nature* Engels penetrates to the essence and content of the hypothesis and affirms that if observation uncovers a new fact that makes its explanation with known methods impossible, there arises the necessity for new methods based at first only on a limited number of facts and observations, and the formulation of new hypotheses. Thus, “further observational material weeds out these hypotheses, doing away with some and correcting others, until finally the law is established in a pure form. If one should wait until the material for a law was *in a pure form*, it would mean suspending the process of thought in investigation until then and, if only for this reason, the law would never come into being” (520).

Mathematical hypothesis is the supposition or prediction of the behavior of mathematical systems that, by describing a certain field of phenomena of other sciences, makes it possible, once the hypothesis is proved, to transfer the acquired mathematical knowledge to the sphere of reality which it describes.

This supports the assertion that the hypothesis, as an element of theoretical investigation, is inseparable from the creative attitude toward theory.

On the other hand, when one takes this point of view concerning the hypothesis, the interrelation between unique categories, the particular and/or universal, must be considered. This leads us to understand the relation between absolute and relative truth, overcoming the extremes of relativist and metaphysical conceptions of the process by which we acquire knowledge.

With respect to this last point, Engels writes: “In fact, all real, exhaustive knowledge consists solely in raising the individual thing in thought from individuality into particularity and from this into universality, in seeking and establishing the infinite in the finite, the eternal in the transitory (1987b, 514).

Lenin, for his part, affirmed: “the individual exists only in the connection that leads to the universal. . . . Every individual is connected by thousands of transitions with other **kinds** of individuals (things, phenomena, processes)” (1961, 361). From the

above one infers that scientific investigation can follow two paths: ascend from the individual as point of departure of the movement of thought to the particular and from there to the universal; or rather to descend from the universal and the general to the particular, and from there to the individual. These kinds of movement are present in the formulation of a hypothesis, in its proof, and in the deduction of laws.

The *mathematical hypothesis* as a method of investigation assumes the possibility of expressing, in mathematical language, the relations in the motion of matter that the empirical world offers. The appropriate apparatus for this is the language of different types of equations. If it were possible to determine empirically what magnitudes (variables and constants) the investigated phenomenon depends on, it would facilitate the construction of mathematical equations that express such dependency. Modifying these expressions can establish other dependencies or relations between the variables, requiring always proving in practice the obtained results.

Upon utilizing a mathematical hypothesis, there may be an element of supposition or prediction having to do with a given modification of the posited equations, which currently describe a certain domain in the scope of the phenomenon. This modification extrapolates the analysis from the original domain to one related to it. Doing this, the hypothesis can also be called a mathematical extrapolation.

The fact that these mathematical forms were established long before it became clear how they would be used to interpret objective reality shows once again the great heuristic capabilities of mathematics in contemporary science. This is owed to the fact that currently mathematics possesses such a level of generality that it can be used to study abstract structures, not only of the known, but to enter the field of investigating structures not yet known. Discussing Boltzmann's comments on developments in physics, Lenin, in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, wrote that "the unity of nature is revealed in the 'astonishing analogy' [Boltzmann's words] between the differential equations of the various realms of phenomena" (1962, 289).

What has just been said shows that through the unity of quality and quantity—whose connection is measurement—the possibility to formulate principles, laws, and scientific theories in mathematical form does exist. The schemes of reproduction that Marx elaborated are an excellent example of this. Mathematical forms contribute to making the concepts more exact, and in certain cases, even enriching them. It must be reiterated, however, that such possibility is more openly available in the natural sciences than in the social sciences.

As can be appreciated, Engels studied the origins and development of mathematics extensively in order to arrive at its essence and to give a precise definition of the subject matter encompassed by this science, which, through its high development and heuristic value, possesses methods that can be applied, in a generalized but not universalized sense, to scientific tasks.

Engels elucidates how mathematics had its origin in the material activity of people, given the needs they faced. He goes on to show how, in this way, in its development, all symbolic mathematical forms—no matter how separated from the material world they seem to be—have their origin in that material world. They start from the empirical and arrive at a high level of abstraction. Engels emphasizes that the dialectical development of mathematics has as its point of departure the introduction of the concept of variable magnitude. Obviously, these variables are studied from different points of view, and Engels, in his foundational studies, sets forth concepts dealing with the content and forms of expression of methodological generalizations applicable to social investigation. He does this in order to go deeper into the quantitative aspects of a phenomenon, while we are occupied in dialectical unity with its qualitative aspects.

In the *Theses and Resolutions of the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba* it was stated that, “the only ruling criterion that ought to guide the activity of Marxist-Leninist researchers is the search for and finding of objective truth, of the essence and laws of the problem which is the object of their study.” Therefore, the investigator must proceed from the

position of dialectical and historical materialism. This is the scientific philosophical conception that is based on the triumphs of modern science and the practical activity of humankind. It is in continuous development and enrichment, providing knowledge of the most general laws of nature, society, and thought.

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REPLACES AD PAGE.

Hugh MacDiarmid: Sketch of a Materialist Poetics

E. San Juan, Jr.

The struggle for material existence is over. It has been won.
The need for repressions and disciplines has passed.
The struggle for truth and that indescribable necessity,
Beauty, begins now, hampered by none of the lower needs. . . .
It is now the duty of the Scottish genius
Which has provided the economic freedom for it
To lead in the abandonment of creeds and moral compromises
Of every sort and to commence to express the unity of life.

—Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky Poet* (1972)

Anyone entering for the first time the massive and immense structure called “the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid” might well take the poet’s affirmation of his vocation at face value and see how it fares in reading and appreciating his poems. The magisterial theme of MacDiarmid’s poetry, one may suggest at the outset, is the achievement of the fullest human freedom or self-fulfillment for everyone, what Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* called the free development of each premised and predicated on the development of all: in short, communism. What complicates this axiom and makes it problematic for orthodox socialists or “Red Republicans” (to be less sectarian) is MacDiarmid’s now legendary if controversial nationalism and his lifelong crusade against English imperialism and its Scottish allies. In his self-commentary of 1952 he describes his paradoxical commitment: “If he is an extreme

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Scottish nationalist, he is also one of the greatest internationalists even Scotland has ever produced" (1970a, 21).

Indeed, MacDiarmid was proud of being "organically welded" to the working class because he was rooted in the place of his birth, Dumfriesshire burgh of Langholm, whose "tremendous proletarian virtue" saved him from the ordeal of searching for his identity amid the religiosity, parochialism, and general alienation of the milieu. From this milieu he would celebrate how man "will flash with the immortal fire" and "rise/To the full height of the imaginative act/That wins to the reality in the fact"—life flaming in the vision of "the light that breaks/From the whole earth seen as a star again/In the general life of man" (1970a, 36). MacDiarmid's imagination grounds its truth, its elucidating vision, in the terrestrial drama of a struggle between the forces of light and of darkness, the spirit's *agon* in the fact of incarnation. He was a poet, "a single and separate person," cognizant of his specific time and place in the world, of which the poems furnish ample evidence.

At the age of forty-six, MacDiarmid reflected on his career by assaying the crisis that overtook poets like Keats, Wordsworth, and Rimbaud. In the process he expressed the Marxist foundation of his poetic "method of being":

—I am forty-six; of tenacious, long-lived, country folk.
Fools regret my poetic change—from my 'enchanted early
lyrics'—But I have found in Marxism all that I need—
(I on my mother's side of long-lived Scottish peasant stock
And on my father's of hardy keen-brained Border mill-workers).
It only remains to perfect myself in this new mode.
"And, Above All, My Poetry Is Marxist" (1978, 30)

What this "method of being" signifies is nothing else but the principle of dialectical materialism which holds paramount the historical specificity of any practice (cultural or ideological) and the reciprocal dynamics of human sensibility and the multi-layered social totality in which it is inscribed. Hence he situates his own art concretely within the cultural heritage of Scotland. He disavows any tendency toward "purely hothouse proletarian

literature” by addressing what Gramsci calls the “national-popular” needs of the masses in Scotland, needs that provide the energies for a socialist project of winning hegemony. While MacDiarmid’s comprehension of Marxism may not adhere strictly to the tenets of classical Marxism-Leninism, his practice is revolutionary, I think, as far as the construction of a poetic idiom geared to shaping a materialist scientific consciousness is concerned. Like Bertolt Brecht or Ernesto Cardenal, he wanted to communicate to the masses and in the process educate them and himself. Poetry was both a teaching and learning experience.

In “Aesthetics in Scotland,” MacDiarmid outlines his stance: “I regard the cultural question as of supreme importance, and believe the function of Literature and the Arts to be the expansion of human consciousness, or as my friend Sean O’Casey termed it, ‘the sensitive extension of the world . . .’ My real concern with Socialism is as an artist’s organised approach to the interdependencies of life” (1978, xxvii-xxviii). Perhaps the fundamental thesis crystallizing MacDiarmid’s various formulations of his social responsibility as a Scottish poet, the “central passion that animates” his poetry, is this passage from the magnificent “Third Hymn to Lenin” which he quotes at the beginning of chapter 6 of his autobiography *Lucky Poet* (1972):

Our concern is human wholeness—the child-like spirit
Newborn every day—not, indeed, as careless of tradition
Nor of the lessons of the past: these it must needs inherit;
But as capable of such complete assimilation and surrender,
So all-inclusive, unfenced-off, uncategorized, sensitive, and
tender,
That growth is unconditional and unwarped—Ah, Lenin,
Life and that more abundantly, thou Fire of Freedom!
Firelike in your purity and heaven-seeking vehemence,
Yet the adjective must not suggest merely meteoric,
Spectacular—not the flying sparks, but the intense
Glowing core of your character, your large and splendid stability,
Made you the man you were—the live heart of all humanity—
Spirit of Lenin, light on this city now!
Light up this city now!

Immediately obvious here is the fact that the city, not rural landscape, becomes the privileged site of metamorphosis and “soul-making.” Two themes are signalled in this passage—the theme of growth or process of renewal leading to a differentiated, enriched, creative and responsive wholeness; and the theme of enlightenment and the invention of a character, a heroic form or model forged in the fires of popular struggles. Both themes are dialectically integrated in MacDiarmid’s poems devoted to protagonists in epoch-making struggles like the Spanish Civil War or Scotland’s union organizing. Both themes generate the controlling leitmotifs in such poems as “Lamh Dearg Aboo,” “Crystals Like Blood,” “The Glass of Pure Water,” “On A Raised Beach,” the three hymns to Lenin, and others.

Such themes distilled here in schematic form, however, have to be mediated in a verbal design both *utile et dulce*. Aside from that twin Horatian dimension of classic art, what is desired above all is that the form should avoid “the irresponsible lyricism” of banal and futile feeling MacDiarmid identifies with the narcissistic sentimentality that plagues capitalist society. In “Utterly a Creator,” he conceives of the oscillation between idea and emotion, between passion and intellect, transpiring in the artistic process of inventing forms. He describes the process as one of “conflict/ Between discipline at its most strenuous/And feeling at its highest—wherein abrasive surfaces/Are turned upon one another like millstones,/And instead of generating chaos/Refine the grist of experience between them.” Art is thus conceived as a peculiar form of production, its product being “an intricately-cut gem-stone of a myriad facets/That is yet, miraculously, a whole.”

My favorite example of MacDiarmid’s *ars poetica* is the poem “Crystals Like Blood.” Here the analogy of imaginative creation and the operation of a grinding machine is used to suggest the condition of possibility for experiencing grief coalesced with love for the memory of a departed loved one. The speaker begins with a recollection: he found “Crystals like blood in a broken stone” he picked up one day, one face of the broken chunk torn from the bedrock “caked with brown limestone.” Then follow telltale notations of the “greenish-grey quartz-like stone/Faintly dappled with darker shadows” streaked with “veins

and beads/Of bright magenta.” From this tableau, the speaker shifts to another recollection, this time a scene in a factory where one precious mineral (mercury) is extracted from the red ore of cinnabar crumbled by iron piledrivers and lifted up into a kiln:

And I remember how later on I saw
How mercury is extracted from cinnabar
–The double ring of iron piledrivers
Like the multiple legs of a fantastically symmetrical spider
Rising and falling with monotonous precision,
Marching round in an endless circle
And pounding up and down with a tireless, thunderous force,
While, beyond, another conveyor drew the crumbled ore
From the bottom and raised it to an opening high
In the side of a gigantic grey-white kiln.

So I remember how mercury is got
When I contrast my living memory of you
And your dear body rotting here in the clay
–And feel once again released in me
The bright torrents of felicity, naturalness, and faith
My treadmill memory draws from you yet.

One cannot help noting in the brute force of the piledrivers performing one repeated motion over and over and its thunderous sound an intimation of feelings the speaker is struggling to control; such feelings are bound to the logic of an image taken from the realm of industrial technology. The elegy acquires an “objective correlative” for a melancholy that, if not displaced appropriately, would damage the ego (as psychoanalysis has shown). The spare, monosyllabic phrasing of the last stanza demonstrates a calculated mimesis of the process of extracting mercury itself, with the rapid flow of the line “The bright torrents of felicity, naturalness, and faith” capturing the moment of “release”—only to be reined in by the laconic tone of the last line. The modulation here captures poignantly the flow of mourning.

What is striking is how the mercury of memory and the rotting body in the clay symmetrically evoke the two contrasting surfaces of the fragment of bed-rock painted earlier. What is surprising, however, is not any supposed parallelism between the

mill and the imagination but the proposition that the tension between the poet's "living memory" of the loved one and his full consciousness of her physical decay is what releases the radiant burst of vital life that sustains the speaker's mind. The point then is not loss as such but loss as a mode of recovery.

The theme of a mind in control and triumphant over time and death is refracted in "The Terrible Crystal." The poet addresses a white stone "formed in tragedy/And calcined in catastrophe." In the "white intensity of that single central radiance" found in the stone he contemplates, he glimpses "visions of a transcendental country/Stretching out athwart the temporal frontiers." The crystal embodies "the cataclysm and central fires" of life kindled at those moments "When consciousness is crucified upon circumstance." Here, the Marxist axiom of the dialectic between matter and consciousness, social being and the psyche, is modulated to assign to thought an unexpected locus of agency:

Clear thought is the quintessence of human life.
In the end its acid power will disintegrate
All the force and flummery of current passions and pretences,
Eat the life out of every false loyalty and craven creed
And bite its way through to a world of light and truth.

(1967, 30)

Lest MacDiarmid be accused of philosophical idealism here, as well as in other poems like "On a Raised Beach," I might venture to remind readers that thought, for Engels, is a modality of matter in motion. Here, the logical culmination of thought's adventure is the mystical "diamond body" MacDiarmid celebrates in the poem "Diamond Body in a Cave of the Sea," where "seeming deception prefigures truth" in his achieving knowledge that the earth ebbs and flows, the water remains steady—the revelation of the "Great Tao" of the world (1967, 17–21). The stones in "On A Raised Beach" deliver the same epiphanic epistemology.

In the Western tradition, one can valorize MacDiarmid's quest for a poetry of knowledge as a refunctioning of the Horatian ideal of art combining knowledge and pleasure in a context where everything is commodified. MacDiarmid's

affinity, however, is with Brecht's mode of teaching/learning via alienation effects. One example is his image of technical process at the end of what began as a salute to the heroic archaic past, "Lamh Dearg Aboo." He is concerned here with how the meaning of Scotland's history, its ancient heroic greatness, can be captured by evoking the unified action of fifteen hundred men in battle. To convey this discipline and singleness of purpose, the poet abruptly shifts to a scene of machinery in motion acutely delineated—the foil to the "fog of oppression and cant" scattered by "fluent Gaelic sunlight":

To see this is as when in a great ship's engine-room
Through all the vastness of furnaces and clanging machinery is
found
The quiet simple thing all that is about—a smooth column of steel,
The propeller shaft, in cool and comfortable bearings, turning
round and round with no sound
—All the varying forces, the stresses and resistances,
Proceeding from that welter of machinery.
Unified into the simple rotation of this horizontal column,
And conducted calmly along its length into the sea.

Conventional opinion attributes to MacDiarmid an obsession with the heterogeneous, with incompatibilities and opposites. We have seen that a preoccupying task for the poet is the drive for mastery through singular dedication to one's craft, the concentration of the imaginative will in inventing form. In "The Terrible Crystal," the poet seeks a poetry with "the power/Of fusing the discordant qualities of experience,/Of mixing moods, and holding together opposites." The yoking of opposites and contradictions in his poems is not just an exercise of multiplying metaphysical conceits, an exhibition of Caledonian "Anti-syzygy," but is an integral part of the cosmological poetics he is trying to evolve. He longs for "an imaginative integrity/That includes, but transcends, sensibility as such," an integrity that struggles "through complexity to simplicity," a necessary and equally difficult task. After the organized gallimaufry of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, MacDiarmid replaces the emblematic thistle with Cencrastus, the Curly Snake, which "represents not only all the sinuosities of ancient Celtic wisdom

but also the devious resourcefulness of MacDiarmid himself, who has said of the winding path near Langholm called the Curly Snake: "It has always haunted my imagination and has probably constituted itself the ground plan and pattern of my mind" (1978, xv).

I suggest that MacDiarmid's hybrid and syncretic art be seen as one of those recurrent efforts in Western culture to reconcile classic and romantic polarities. Indeed, the precise term to subsume his poetic strategy is "dialectical." Underneath the poet's will to achieve encyclopedic scope is a passion for multiplicity and variety. He valorizes the experience of change and shifting of positions; he strives to dramatize process and mutability amid the illusion of stasis. His imagination traces its genealogy to the dialogue between Heraclitus and Parmenides at the dawn of Western science and cosmological speculation. In "Poetry and Science," MacDiarmid invokes Walt Whitman's call to conform to "the concrete realities and theories of the universe furnished by science." More crucial is his quote from the philosopher Santayana: "The heart and mystery of matter lies in the seeds of things, *semina rarum*, and in the customary cycles of their transformation" (1970a, 244). In "The Terrible Crystal," he pursues "the hidden and lambent core" : "A teleology essentially immanent,/God's relation to the world being in some general way/Like the relation of our minds to our bodies."

MacDiarmid's conception of a scientific poetics inheres in a view of reality as process where facts are events, where phenomena dramatizes the laws of motion. His predilection for description of facts (geological formations) or physical motions as vehicles for staging the evocation of felt thought may be illustrated in many of his longer poems, especially "On a Raised Beach." In a short one entitled "The Skeleton of the Future (At Lenin's Tomb)," the symbolic play of colors and the chiaroscuro of background/foreground elements function as tropological networks that compress a whole range of ideas and values about the permanence of a significant life, its precision and objectivity, vis-à-vis the transience of the body:

Red granite and black diorite, with the blue
Of the labradorite crystals gleaming like precious stones

In the light reflected from the snow; and behind them
The eternal lightning of Lenin's bones.

In many poems, MacDiarmid's mind orbits around the sense of sight: for instance, he refers to Lenin's "lizard eyes." He vows to revenge Lorca's death inspired by the poet's pupils "that had known how to see/Unique colours and foreshortenings of wonder." Sight recoils from ecological blurring: Edinburgh, like most cities, suffers from the dark "monstrous pall" of industrialism for which Lenin's clairvoyance would be a way out. Such clairvoyance is "the result of a profound and all-sided knowledge of life/With all its richness of colour, connexions and relations."

Sensitive to manifold and subtle linkages, MacDiarmid can perceive the paradox of "Light and Shadow," of ignorance and knowledge coalesced; "Cross-lights of errors" share with "shadowy glimpses of unknown thoughts" a subliminal power to illuminate the limits of rationality so that the poet is led eventually to pray: "May I . . . never fail/To keep some shining sense of the way all thoughts at last/Before life's dawning meaning like the stars at sunrise pale." This humility, or more exactly materialist wisdom, serves to circumscribe a strong neo-Platonic or even quasi-Hegelian idealism in MacDiarmid ascribable perhaps to his faith in the transcendental power of the imagination: "Know that thought is reality—and thought alone!—/And must absorb all the material—their goal/The mastery by the spirit of all the facts that can be known." That affirmation, however, is repeatedly undercut and qualified by the poet's intuitive mastery of what Engels calls "the dialectics of nature."

Corollary to the exaltation of the individual spirit is his conviction that such mastery is made possible only by the collective labor of millions. Spirit is interpreted here as a refinement of the energy that circulates in the socioliberal economy of matter. In the masterly four lines of "On the Ocean Floor," MacDiarmid seems to counterpoint his belief in individual genius or courage by discovering "what as a Communist he should be aware of—the masses themselves, dying and falling anonymously like the foraminifera, but from whom something is going to rise up, a new society like the chalk cliffs rising from the depths of the sea" (Morgan 1976, 21):

Now more and more on my concern with the lifted waves of
genius gaining
I am aware of the lightless depths that beneath them lie;
And as one who hears their tiny shells incessantly raining
On the ocean floor as the foraminifera die.

The foraminifera here may be deemed the microcosmic counterpart of the stones in "On a Raised Beach." Meanwhile, in the poem *In Memoriam James Joyce*, MacDiarmid expresses the cosmological aspiration of totalizing all the richness and diversity of phenomena in art. Again the drive is toward synthesis, the proof of interdependency, via dialectical action. The poet strives to make "a moving, thrilling, mystical, tropical./Maniacal, magical creation of all these oppositions" under the pressure of circumstances. To absorb the "abysses and altitudes of the mind of man," he seeks for a language with "A marvelous lucidity, a quality of fiery aery light,/Flowing like clear water, flying like a bird./Burning like a sunlit landscape." In effect, the production of poetic art involves the analytic of distinguishing materials and methods of articulation that engage "the central issues of life," "reality in motion." Or, as MacDiarmid puts it more precisely: the dialectics of the era expressed in "the class war, the struggles and ideals/Of the proletariat bent on changing the world./And consequently on changing human nature" (1978, 67).

The most elaborate exposition of MacDiarmid's aesthetics is found in the chapters "The Kind of Poetry I Want" and "The Ideas Behind My Work" in his epic self-study *Lucky Poet* (1972). In essence, MacDiarmid's lifelong pursuit of comprehending the "interdependencies of life" compels him to orient his imagination toward "problems of value" embodied in everyday experience and to do justice "to the disruptive as well as to the cohesive forces" in society (1978, 94). One of the finest illustrations of MacDiarmid's dialectical mode of mapping reality in motion is the poem "The Glass of Pure Water" (1992, 174–76). Critics who fault MacDiarmid for his self-indulgence in polemical and propagandistic statements—never mind their failure to discriminate between mimetic, didactic, and allegorical genres—often ignore poems with complex figural dynamics that

escape the formulaic typology of Nietzschean deconstruction. They are then missing the authentic MacDiarmid.

In "The Glass of Pure Water," the problem of writing political poetry is posed most sharply: what is the relation between the poet-persona with his revolutionary vision and the oppressed masses sunk in mute suffering, the object contemplated, whom the poet wants to help liberate? Is the emancipatory consciousness always inserted from the outside? Or is there a spontaneous impulse for change in the masses that poetry aims to channel and intensify to bring about their deliverance? In short, is the imagination a messiah for the nation-people, or is it an agitprop catalyst for radical transformation?

MacDiarmid begins with problematizing our capacity to discern "the essence of human life":

Hold a glass of pure water to the eye of the sun!
It is difficult to tell the one from the other
Save by the tiny hardly visible trembling of the water.

By our own unaided perception, we cannot grasp difference. But "the lives of these particular slum people . . . like the lives of all/The world's poorest" remind the poet less of the glass of water he delineated earlier than of the feeling of those "who saw Sacco and Vanzetti in the death cell/On the eve of their execution." The reference to these exemplary anarchists victimized by a racist capitalist state introduces the observation that the language of bare hands, universally understood by all, defies speech or utterance. "Hands" operate as simultaneously synecdoche and metonymy for human labor, praxis, all transformative action. The Angel who reports on the condition of human life to God exploits the infinite resources of signs produced by the intricate movement of the hand:

And look at the changing shapes—the countless
Little gestures, little miracles of line—
Of your forefinger and thumb as you move them. . . .

The only communication between man and man
That says anything worth hearing
—The hidden well-water; the finger of destiny—
Moves as that water, that angel, moved.

Truth is the rarest thing and life
The gentlest, most unobtrusive movement in the world.
I cannot speak to you of the poor people of all the world
But among the people in these nearest slums I know
This infinitesimal twinkling, this delicate play
Of tiny signs that not only say more
Than all speech, but all there is to say,
All there is to say and to know and to be.
There alone I seldom find anything else,
Each in himself or herself a dramatic whole,
An 'agon' whose validity is timeless.

Our duty is to free that water, to make these gestures,
To help humanity to shed all else,
All that stands between any life and the sun,
The quintessence of any life and the sun;
To still all sound save that talking to God;
To end all movements save movements like these.

We confront here the nullity of speech, the futility of words; the imperative is to fight the "monstrous jungle/of useless movement; a babel/Of stupid voices." So the speaker calls for the Celtic peoples, Gaeldom, to "overcome the world of wrong" and end "the essential immorality of any man controlling/Any other," in particular government with its "monopoly of violence" (as experienced by Sacco and Vanzetti). What follows this challenge, however, is not an anarchist's moral fable but a satiric denunciation of corruption inflicted on millions by a system of property relations (capitalism) that has dammed water and shrouded the sun. First things first. However, the poem's logic is more labyrinthine than my paraphrase would make it. The rhetoric of biblical indignation does not end in a fiery climax of retribution; rather, it urges solidarity with the poorest and lowest, where truth ultimately resides because movement inhabits "the bottom of that deepest of wells" where presumably water (which cannot be owned or appropriated by a privileged few) abounds:

For the striking of this water out of the rock of Capitalism;
For the complete emergence from the pollution and fog
With which the hellish interests of private property
In land, machinery, and credit

Have corrupted and concealed from the sun,
From the gestures of truth, from the voice of God,
Hundreds upon hundreds of millions of men,
Denied the life and liberty to which they were born
And fobbed off with a horrible travesty instead
—Self-righteous, sunk in the belief that they are human,
When not a tenth of one per cent show a single gleam
Of the life that is in them under their accretions of filth.

And until that day comes every true man's place
Is to reject all else and be with the lowest,
The poorest—in the bottom of that deepest of wells
In which alone is truth; in which
Is truth only—truth that should shine like the sun,
With a monopoly of movement, and a sound like talking to
God. . . .

The assertions in the last three lines provoke more questions than they answer: Are the poor buried under “accretions of filth” and denied any power of speech capable of redeeming themselves? Will God descend to talk to them, to communicate the message of deliverance? Is the truth of being in the bottom, in the water associated with “the monopoly of movement,” enough to destroy the apparatus of oppression that conceals the sun? Language indeed fails to discover the timeless regenerative “agon” in each person in the slums, an essentializing “agon” that equalizes everyone, yet still requires the Celtic peoples to unite and fulfill their world-historic mission. Is there a submerged unintended irony here? It seems that at this juncture MacDiarmid's Scottish nationalism fuses with his proletarian internationalist conscience to engender a pathos of what I may call the “socialist sublime,” that is, the vision of the oppressed in possession of truth, endowed with abundant energy for action, waiting for the moment of reckoning.

On the other hand, this may be a realization of Rosa Luxemburg's notion of the spontaneous revolutionary instinct of the masses.

What is perhaps more challenging is Carl Freedman's argument that MacDiarmid's style of uneven and discordant idioms, overlaid with “idiosyncratic rhetorical overkill” and “unabashed

didacticism” such as that exemplified by *The Battle Continues*, is a symptom of the poet’s predicament: “an artist who refuses to temper his uncompromisingly militant stance, and yet who understands that this stance has no effectivity within any larger social collective” (1984, 53). Given the unrevolutionary conjuncture of Scotland in MacDiarmid’s lifetime, his poetry assumes highly “individual” and “contingent” forms; and because he is not connected with any working-class militancy, MacDiarmid fails to become an organic intellectual of the Scottish proletariat. On the other hand, precisely because of this failure, so it is alleged, MacDiarmid succeeds in composing a disjunctive, radically decentered postmodernist art, such as the first two hymns to Lenin. Freedman claims that MacDiarmid’s political aesthetic responds to the absence of a mass revolutionary audience; it is “an art which, in its radical formal structures, comes to terms with its own frustration of immediate political effectivity without surrendering an explicitly revolutionary posture” (1984, 54). Obviously this opinion doesn’t take account of MacDiarmid’s total body of work. While the argument may be specific to *The Battle Continues*, it does not engage with the twin aspects of MacDiarmid’s vocation explored here: first, the critique of the ideological milieu of Scottish subalternity, and second, the prophetic or utopian disclosure of transformative possibilities, this latter being the chief burden of the poems I examine here. As for his not becoming an organic intellectual of the Scottish proletariat, so much the better: MacDiarmid has avoided this workerist and sectarian ambition. I submit that it is the hegemonic potential of the Scottish nation-people, not the corporatist working class, that is the raw material for the theoretical-poetic imagination operating on the terrain of ideological contestation. MacDiarmid’s singular achievement in constructing a national-popular speech (both in Scots Lallans and English) with a radical democratic content cannot be facilely dismissed, especially in the context of what prevailed before and what has followed after his death. His influence, now incalculable, continues to grow around the world; the critical appreciation of his many-sided accomplishments has just begun. Surely, everything needs to be historicized once more! But more important, I contend that

MacDiarmid's Scottish nationalism cannot be erased or preempted by proletarian vanguardism without forfeiting everything to the enemy. On the rock/crucible of this nationalism, all pronouncements about MacDiarmid's inadequacy as a revolutionary writer must needs be tested.

In "Reflections in a Slum," MacDiarmid returns to a more realistic calculation of empirical reality. He seems to register caution in responding to such scenes of misery: "Alas! how many owe their dignity,/Their claim on our sympathy,/Merely to their misfortune." Suffering has no value in itself—unless it posits its antithesis or alternative. One explanation for this aporia between the socialist principle of mass action and a quasi-religious belief in the messianic destiny of the oppressed is MacDiarmid's concept of the "unconscious goal of history," the cunning of Reason which uses human purposes for its own ends. As the poet of *To Circumjack Cencrastus* puts it: "By thocht a man mak's his idea a force/Or fact in History's drama: He canna foresee/The transformations and uses o' the course/The dialectics o' human action and interaction'll gie/The contribution he mak's." While MacDiarmid concedes that humans (with their intelligence and integrity) make history under fortuitous circumstances, within determinate historic parameters, he concurs with the cardinal insight of historical materialism that the conditions determining our actions are not altogether willed by us but are in fact inherited from the past and reproduced by the inertia of received "common sense," by the inveterate routine of hegemonic practices and institutions. In effect, politics cannot be reduced to economics, nor revolution to an explosion of unruly crowds no matter how righteous the cause.

A final evidence of MacDiarmid's project of forging a materialist poetics can be found in "On A Raised Beach," considered by Alan Bold and others to be "arguably his greatest poem in English." Edwin Morgan is impressed by "its obstinate questioning of the unanswering—the million-year-old stones of a beach, which (like the "eemis stane") could tell us so much about our prehistory if we had any means of unlocking their secrets—it brings out the most original, the most bleak, the most deeply speculative aspect of the author" (1976, 23). Whatever signs of

speculative metaphysics discernible in the texture of the poem, however, cannot warrant inferring (as Bold does) a “solipsistic credo” pivoting around a quest for formal essences, or a principle of individuation derived from the single reference to Duns Scotus “hacceity,” that presumably structures this protracted meditation on life, death, and all creation. The paradigm is to be found elsewhere.

The poem begins by posing alternatives: “All is lithogenesis—or lochia”: either the emergence of solid matter and all its manifold and distinctive heterogeneity, or the soggy cluttered discharge of blood, tissue, and mucus from the vagina after childbirth. Either a disciplined focus on the form-giving act, or the messy evacuation that attends all production. I think the first strophe presents the infinite variety of geologic formations observed in this beach (with a spatiotemporal referent), a diversity that defies human powers of discrimination. But the speaker is not an idle empiricist cataloguing facts. Rather, he is concerned with the search for a historic/mythical event involving matter: “But where is the Christophanic rock that moved?” To loosely translate that line: Where is the achieved form that renewed life? The question links matter and motion, conjoins time and space, in exploring on “this shingle shelf” the stones’ resolve to thwart injury by iconoclasts and quacks (of which more later). The perspective of the seer occasions a felicitous telescoping of stasis and flux, center and circumference. It exhibits a point of view which affords a dialectic mapping of locus and optic: “Nothing has stirred/Since I lay down this morning an eternity ago/But one bird.” A play on the permanent openness of the bird’s “inward gates” and the stones follows; but through the stones’ gates “wide open far longer” no human can see. Why? The poet then compares himself to the stones:

I too lying here have dismissed all else
Bread from stones is my sole and desperate dearth, . . .
I am no more indifferent or ill-disposed to life than death is;
I would fain accept it all completely as the soil does; . . .
I must begin with these stones as the world began.

Process and product coalesce in the stones. Matter then is imperishable even as all organic life will perish and subsist in the

soil and stones. "So these stones have dismissed/All but all of evolution, unmoved by it." Their permanence seems to belie humanity's "fleeting deceit of development" which has engendered "iconoclasts and quacks." What follows this is a reflection on how conflict and "psychological warfare" bring about "animal life's bolder and more brilliant patterns"—the panorama of punctual history—but "no general principle can be guessed" from this evolutionary phenomena. What we apprehend doesn't give a clue to the ultimate telos of life: "What the seen shows is never anything to what it's designed to hide." And these variegated forms and functions around us "all come back to the likeness of stone." Is the stone then the paradigmatic form or substance, or is it symbolic of the principle of matter-in-motion? The answer is an affirmation of the presence of an elemental energy (energy being one inflection of matter) investing the forms of stone and all worldly phenomena:

We must be humble. We are so easily baffled by appearances
And do not realize that these stones are one with the stars.
It makes no difference to them whether they are high or low,
Mountain peak or ocean floor, palace, or pigsty.
There are plenty of ruined buildings in the world but no ruined
stones.
No visitor comes from the stars
But is the same as they are.

More than the democratic or egalitarian aspect of the stones is at issue here. What establishes the correspondences is this energy that makes possible "an adjustment to life" and allows spontaneity and "prelapsarian naturalness" to evolve into a "divine rhythm" harmonizing heaven and earth. Again it is the will to unity that enables the penetration of appearances. The poet, however, rejects these illustrations and exhorts us to just accept the stones—the *thisness* or *hacceitas* of particular objects in the circumstantial world. But he does not end here.

Because of this single-minded concentration on the reality of the stony world, one commentator faults MacDiarmid for contriving a poetry of statement or fact in which propaganda, persuasion, and argument predominate so that poetic intensity is

lost (Smith 1980, 157–62). I think this is a narrow New Critical dogma: there may be moments of brilliance and pathos in the poem, yet the deployment of ideas distracts because such ideas can win only intellectual assent and are often liable to stimulate dissent. In short, the poem is wrongheaded because it provokes thought! Moreover, our commentator goes on, the tendency to demonstrate belief in animism or a kind of pathetic fallacy that imputes life to stones somehow weakens the intuitive stoicism pervading the poem. Are these objections valid? Is stoicism the singular message of the poem? Is there no latitude in our aesthetic theory for entertaining the classic genre of didactic art, *logopoeia* (in Ezra Pound's terminology), as a legitimate species? I submit that this poem is not mainly about facts and ideas, but rather about the dialectical action between them. In brief, it is about the process of making meaning of the world, of renewing our apprehension of life and its interdependency with death or nonbeing. It is also about the reaffirmation of art's function in society, of the integration of artist and audience, of the responsibility of the imagination to the human community. This will be what I hope to elaborate after this digression.

We now confront the thematic core of the poem, "the imaginative act/ That wins to the reality in the fact," as MacDiarmid puts it earlier. The stage of recognition arrives when the speaker refuses metaphor and symbol, language as such or more precisely rhetoric, as surrogates for what is apprehensible by the naked senses: "It is a paltry business to try to drag down/The arduous furor of the stones to the futile imaginings of men./ To all that fears to grow roots into the common earth." Textuality is superseded by the terrestrial ur-difference.

I think the last line drives home MacDiarmid's tellurian vision and needs to be underscored: the "common earth" as matrix or embodiment of eternity and immortality. The poet urges us: We need to learn infinite patience, the tact of controlling our emotions. We need to endeavor to "sustain a clear and searching gaze." What is privileged here is the will to discipline our bodies and minds, our instincts and desires, in order to grasp the cosmic telos or "ordered adjustments" in the material universe. It is the regimen of becoming a separate and singular person within the community:

This is the road leading to certainty,
Reasoned planning for the time when reason can no longer avail.
It is essential to know the chill of all the objections
That come creeping into the mind, the battle between opposing
ideas
Which gives the victory to the strongest and most universal
Over all others, and to wage it to the end
With increasing freedom, precision, and detachment
A detachment that shocks our instincts and ridicules our desires.
All else in the world cancels out, equal, capable
Of being replaced by other things (even as all the ideas
That madden men now must lose their potency in a few years
And be replaced by others—even as all the religions,
All the material sacrifices and moral restraints,
That in twenty thousand years have brought us no nearer to God
Are irrelevant to the ordered adjustments
Out of reach of perceptive understanding
Forever taking place on the Earth and in the unthinkable regions
around it;
This cat's cradle of life; this reality volatile yet determined;
This intense vibration in the stones
That makes them seem immobile to us)
But the world cannot dispense with the stones.
They alone are not redundant. Nothing can replace them
Except a new creation of God.

Lest this verse paragraph be construed as a mystical pantheist celebration of organic life, I would like to underscore the phrase “this reality volatile yet determined” as key to the philosophical insights the poet registers in the next paragraph: he penetrates the stone world and perceives “a stupendous unity,/ Infinite movement visibly defending itself/ Against all the assaults of weather and water, . . . /The foundation and end of all life.” Note here how the unity of the stone world is constituted by “infinite movement” counterposed against the flux of weather and water.

In the next section, the poet pursues again the theme of will and the imperative of self-discipline. The faith that builds mountains cannot be discovered by humans “unless they are more concentrated and determined,/ Truer to themselves” and also inerrant and unshakable as the stones. So the poet urges: “It is necessary to make a stand and maintain it forever.” The stones

have gone through “empires, civilizations, aeons”; and so “They came so far out of the water and halted forever,” God’s creation confronting the maker. Wisdom proceeds from understanding the process of determination and the moment of resolution, and from this wisdom comes the acceptance of death, its interdependency with life:

The moon moves the waters backwards and forwards,
But the stones cannot be lured an inch farther
Either on this side of eternity or the other. . . .
These stones will reach us long before we reach them.
Cold, undistracted, eternal and sublime.
They will stem all the torrents of vicissitude forever
With more than a Roman peace.
Death is a physical horror to me no more.
I am prepared with everything else to share
Sunshine and darkness and wind and rain
And life and death bare as these rocks though it be
In whatever order nature may decree. . . .

The music of ideas is eloquent and finely orchestrated here. We are not provoked to counter-argument or skepticism, as others have warned us. The quest for a coincidence of individual psyche and cosmic law is attained here when the poet learns the teaching of the stones as the emblem of energy-matter and its law-governed existence; the precept concerns a decision taken and carried out without hesitation because it concurs with nature’s decree. Rationality and feeling and will converge. The acceptance of death as part of the circulation of energy does not mean, however, a fatalistic submission to a nihilistic doctrine. On the contrary, the poet emphasizes: “It is reality that is at stake.” We have touched here the nerve center of MacDiarmid’s dialectical-materialist faith: death’s logic doesn’t introduce a reunification of what has been separated, of object and image, of the storm beach and the speaker’s self. It is a problem of subsuming our limited ego to the larger determinations that position us in the world: “What happens to us/ Is irrelevant to the world’s geology/ But what happens to the world’s geology/ Is not irrelevant to us.” So we must reconcile ourselves to the stones, not the stones to us. Consciousness does not dictate the shape of the

world; the world shapes the mutation of consciousness. We may ignore secular limits, but they will not ignore us.

In the next passage we hear again the theme of conforming our lives to the reality that, allegorized by the stones in this anonymous beach, assumes a rigor and austerity mirroring a disciplined mind, a cohesive wholeness of will that enables “great work” opposed to the commercialized life of the “crowd.” Instead of dispersal, a gathering and centralization demand priority. The reality at stake involves the education of a creative sensibility, a practical imagination:

Here a man must shed the encumbrances that muffle
Contact with elemental things, the subtleties
That seem inseparable from a humane life, and go apart
Into a simple and sterner, more beautiful and more impressive
world,

Austerely intoxicating; the first draught is overpowering;
Few survive it. It fills me with a sense of perfect form,
The end seen from the beginning, as in a song. . . .

But the kindred form I am conscious of here
Is the beginning and end of the world,
The unsearchable masterpiece, the music of the spheres,
Alpha and Omega, the Omnific Word.
These stones have the silence of supreme creative power,
The direct and undisturbed way of working
Which alone leads to greatness.
What experience has any man crystallized,
What weight of conviction accumulated,
What depth of life suddenly seen entire
In some high supernatural moment
And made a symbol and lived up to
With such resolution, such Spartan impassivity?
It is a frenzied and chaotic age,
Like a growth of weeds on the site of a demolished building.
How shall we set ourselves against it,
Imperturbable, inscrutable, in the world and yet not in it,
Silent under the torments it inflicts upon us,
With a constant centre,
With a single inspiration, foundations firm and invariable;
By what immense exercise of will,

Inconceivable discipline, courage and endurance,
Self-purification and anti-humanity,
Be ourselves without interruption,
Adamantine and inexorable?

It now becomes clear that what the poet seeks is a “manifestation of the human spirit” that approximates lithogenesis, that is, the summoning and exercise of “inconceivable discipline, courage, and endurance” that will lead to possession of the truth embodied in the stones. The open mind the poet claims to have, “A mind as open as the grave,” evokes the Christophanic rock of the beginning; the imagination functions as the sepulcher from which the messianic power has been resurrected. That Christophanic rock is the burden of the poem, the utterance of the truth of enduring matter that “crushes, gorgonizes all else into itself.” Dispel the haze and the hesitation that paralyzes vision by accepting “The hard fact. The inopugnable reality” of a world beyond our wishes or desires. We don’t need a world hereafter if we can replace our romantic “infinite longing” with “manly will” which is rare in contemporary society. Such a will also articulates the cunning of reason in history—to use Hegelian language.

The poem arrives at the concluding stage of accepting what is at stake: secular or worldly reality. The moment comes when the poet confesses that he is “enamoured of the desert at last” where he can contemplate “spiritual issues/ Made inhumanly clear.” This is reminiscent of the anti-humanism of Althusser’s science, the passion for concrete truth devoid of ideological mystification. For MacDiarmid, the imagination corresponds to “a self-determined rhythm of life” and is tested by the “capacity for solitude.” However, this does not mean that this desert inhabitant escapes from social engagement. On the contrary:

—a question of acquiring the power
To exercise the loneliness, the independence, of stones,
And that only (come)s from knowing that our function remains
However isolated we seem, fundamental to life as theirs.

The poet affirms the desideratum of independence grounded on a

conviction of individual strength, founded on the rock of self-discipline. This follows from the need to reject the commodified market society of late capitalism, the dispersal and reification of humanity in the circulation of exchange-values. The poet's conception of culture is centered on the idea of lithogenesis as a process of hardening, of acquiring form as displayed by the stones, "the beginning and end of the world," in which the poet sees himself. This experience generates a sentiment of solidarity: the intelligentsia of artists needs to bring culture to the "mob," "our impossible and imperative job!"

Recalling the invocation of the Christophanic rock in the beginning (MacDiarmid thus unfolds his original name, Christopher, in a punlike way), we complete the circle of thought. This is indeed the resurrection envisioned in the beginning, the rolling of the stone away from the tomb of the masses of people, when the artist realizes that the sublimity inscribed in matter can be found in all men since "The masses too have begged bread from stones,/From human stones, including themselves" So the poet urges detached intellectuals to share their possession of the truth with their fellow humans because it is this sharing, this communication of the gift of the imagination, that is the rolling of the rock from the tomb, the overcoming of death.

I suggest that this return of the solitary poet to the people—the lithogenesis of the spiritual power of the imagination—is what MacDiarmid is really aiming at. Not to do so is to betray the artist's vocation, to welcome the stones' revenge, to allow ignorance and indifference to seal us in death, or in the miasmatic lochia:

It is not
The reality of life that is hard to know.
It is nearest of all and easiest to grasp,
But you must participate in it to proclaim it.
—I lift a stone; it is the meaning of life I clasp
Which is death, for that is the meaning of death;
How else does any man yet participate
 In the life of a stone,
How else can any man yet become
Sufficiently at one with creation, sufficiently alone,

Till as the stone that covers him he lies dumb
And the stone at the mouth of his grave is not overthrown?

Each stone “covers infinite death,” but the poet counsels: “let us not be afraid to die” because that is part of discovering the truth of the stone world, the infinity and permanence of matter-energy, and the phase of death (the separation of the poet from the mob) as a necessary ordeal. The statement that “in death—unlike life—we lose nothing that is truly ours,” affirms the continuity of matter as a moment of the circulation of energy determining the movement of all life in the universe. At any rate, “reality,” Becoming as integral to Being, is saved.

“On A Raised Beach” poses the problem of how we can tell “what is truly ours,” and attempts to answer the question of the artist’s connection with society and the natural world. It dramatizes the coming to a recognition that lithogenesis occurs when the poet, temporarily exiled in the desert and achieving self-recovery there, rejoins humanity and participates in the collective project of communal renewal and resurrection. MacDiarmid once declared that he aspired to conceive of nature “in terms of human activities, being alert to the historical processes and careful to avoid the heresy of separateness” (quoted in Maxwell 1980, 204). Rivaling Lucretius’s *De Rerum Naturae*, MacDiarmid’s poem celebrates not a mystical glorification of minute particulars but a materialist thinking process: the dialectics of consciousness and matter; totality grounded in the historical laws of motion of society, nature, and thought interacting with each other.

David Daiches calls MacDiarmid a transhumanist—someone, I take it, who transcends the boundary of nationality and communicates with all humankind. He writes: “MacDiarmid’s political vision was hardly political at all, but a vision of a society redeemed from all second-handedness in living, united in an intense relishing of the reality of experience” (1979, 2329; for a contrasting view see Riach 1993). But MacDiarmid is by no means a modernist romantic like Dylan Thomas, or a self-reflexive modernist like Wallace Stevens. The praise by Daiches, though well intended, reduces the necessary and ineluctable

mediations whereby MacDiarmid's rendering of his experience becomes a universal vision accessible to everyone.

What distinguishes MacDiarmid's poetic achievement is, I think, precisely its genuinely political inspiration—political in the sense of a profound concern with justice, liberty, and virtue in the world *polis*, in the community of equal nations. But because such a community characterized by justice and virtue is absent in the contemporary world dominated by capital, by class exploitation and imperial oppression, MacDiarmid's art becomes doubly political in its critique of the ideology of individualist aesthetics espoused by Daiches and others, and in its projection of an alternative, even utopian, society in his prose and poetry—an alternative that, in the spirit of the *Communist Manifesto*, only expresses what is already germinating in the womb of the present. In this political context, the poetry acquires its ultimate cultural value and significance. While the nationalist MacDiarmid acts as a prophet of a liberated and renewed Scotland forecast in the future, the socialist MacDiarmid enables Scotland to participate in the emancipation of all oppressed people and nations in our planet. Such incommensurable effects distinguish the enduring power of MacDiarmid's art.

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State Monopoly Capitalism— Still a Valid Concept?

Ian Jasper

Over the last two decades a wide-ranging debate has taken place in Britain over the nature of contemporary capitalism. The suggestion made by Tom Meisenhelder in his article “Whatever Became of State Monopoly Capitalism?” (*Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 5, no. 4 [1992]: 261–80) that “transnational capital is not tied to any particular national capitalist class” (268) came to assume quite central importance in the debates between the sections of the labor movement that held to the idea of class being a central issue in British politics, and those calling themselves post-Marxists. The role of class in British politics underlay all the essential disagreements between these two trends (see Miliband 1985), not least in the debate about the nature of the state.

This debate, which to many initially appeared to be a wholly theoretical discussion of which phrases most appropriately described the nature of contemporary capitalism, actually became a decisive political question with far-reaching practical consequences. To a large extent the lines of division on this issue ran parallel to that on the immediately decisive questions of work in trade unions, alliances, and the role of the working class in future transformations of British society.

The claim that “capital has no country” became a key argument of those who argued for the labor movement abandoning the fight for the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). The AES has long been a touchstone for the Left of the Labour Party and

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the Communist Party; it was generally accepted that adherence to the AES was one area that delineated the forces explicitly fighting for a socialist transformation of Britain from those who wished to carry out reforms but remain within a capitalist framework. The AES still has this function, but it is not so obviously to the fore in British politics as it was in the seventies or eighties.

Opponents of the AES argued that a Labour government taking power in Britain and fighting for such a strategy would place itself in a hopeless position. It would be faced with an unstoppable flight of capital, it would discover that its attempts to direct the economy would prove unworkable, and if it brought the largest monopolies under public control it would only possess empty office buildings, since "capital" would be whisked abroad. According to this argument capital was so internationalized that any national government attempting to restrict its freedom would be isolated and eventually brought down, and instead, a new government would need to build a democratic consensus with monopoly capital. Those who opposed this type of thinking have been labeled variously as "fundamentalists," "Stalinists," or sometimes even "dinosaurs." Those who support the AES argue that although capital is now highly internationalized it nonetheless remains possible to contemplate taking decisive actions toward the construction of socialism within a state such as Britain.

The debate within the British socialist movement over the nature of the European Union (EU), formerly called the European Economic Community, clearly linked to the role of the nation-state* in the contemporary world. Those who supported EU membership argued that Europe represented a more democratic type of state based on a modern form of capitalism that operated above the level of the nation-state. It is still claimed that the EU offers the possibility of allying "progressive capitalists" in Europe who will push for reforms in Britain. Socialists opposed to the EU argue that it represents a wholly undemocratic attempt to coordinate the expansion of European monopoly capital through the exploitation of the resources that could be provided by a unified European state structure.

It would probably come as a surprise to Meisenhelder to find that his arguments for "state transnational finance capital" are in

some very important ways similar to those of European social democracy, and to those sections of the Communist movement that have decisively moved toward social democratic positions. Some representatives of these forces argue against programs such as the AES by denying the feasibility of carrying out any fundamental changes within a national framework. This is certainly the position of forces grouped around the Fabian Society within the Labour Party, and of key figures who support the Democratic Left in Britain.

Since the 1970s capital has passed through a period of unprecedented globalization. Most of the world's major transnational corporations (TNCs) are active in all the countries of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Major banks, finance, and investment companies operate all over the globe. This partially explains why the impression that monopoly capital is "stateless" can gain purchase over some political forces. Certainly globalization has occurred, but this has in many ways increased the extent to which monopoly capital is tied to the state, especially its "own state."

In 1910 Hilferding drew attention to the dialectical process in which capital became more active outside the borders of its own state and simultaneously more closely dependent on the power of its own state. He pointed out that ideally finance capital

needs a politically powerful state which does not have to take account of the conflicting interests of other states in its commercial policy. It also needs a strong state which will ensure respect for the interests of finance capital abroad, and use its political power to extort advantageous supply contracts and trade agreements from smaller states; a state which can intervene in every corner of the globe and transform the whole world into a sphere of investment for its own finance capital. (1981, 334)

This quotation from Hilferding indicates that from its earliest development the idea of state monopoly capitalism was bound up with the idea of capital being "internationalized." The last two decades have witnessed the enormous growth of this tendency. Capitalism has since 1945 become truly global, its imperialist character even more pronounced than at the time that

Lenin, Hilferding, or Bukharin wrote. It can scarcely be argued that these figures “presumed a national context for observing capitalism” (Meisenhelder 1992, 268). In a short passage that does not usually receive attention, Lenin almost seems to put forward the idea that imperialism is precisely the international relationships between capitalist powers. In a preface to his pamphlet *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, he wrote:

The main purpose of this book was and remains, to present, on the basis of the summarised returns of irrefutable bourgeois statistics, and the admissions of bourgeois scholars of all countries, a composite picture of the world capitalist system in its international relationships at the beginning of the twentieth century. (1982, 9)

It hardly seems possible to argue, as Meisenhelder does, that state monopoly capitalist theory following from either Hilferding or Lenin assumes a national context for observing capitalism. On the contrary, it assumes that the national context is no longer adequate.

The claims against state monopoly capitalism

Meisenhelder argues along the following lines:

Beginning with the 1970s capitalism entered a new stage that can be called “state transnational finance capitalism” characterized by the hegemony of institutions representing the interests of transnational finance capital. Contrary to Bukharin, Lenin, and other early state monopoly capitalism theorists, capital is increasingly globalized and detached from any national base. (268–69)

The form of words used is not an issue. The label “state transnational finance capitalism” does not necessarily tell us anything different from the description “state monopoly capitalism.” What carries the weight is the claim that capital is now detached from any national base. This argument is then developed. “There is now a global capitalist economy in which ‘stateless’ money and a ‘stateless’ financial system dominate national economies and nation-states” (269). The relationship between state and capital is presented in the following terms:

Finance capital has become a global factor operating through multilateral institutions and transnational corporations; on the other hand, the state remains a political organization tied to specific national territories. Capital has outgrown the nation-state. It is no longer possible to conceptualize the merger of state and capital, for they operate at different levels of social reality. Nor is it any longer conceivable that the state possesses the kind of autonomy that would enable it to exercise control over transnational finance capital. Now, it is clear that—though a notion of *relative* autonomy may remain useful in specific cases—“in the final analysis” capital is determining. The nation-state is subordinate to the power and interests of transnational finance capital while also of course conditioning its continued existence. (271–72)

This passage echoes similar claims made by other supporters of the “stateless capital” theory. The clear implication is that capital has not only outgrown the state, but that, in the contemporary world, capital is no longer connected to the state in any fundamentally necessary way. This is a key feature of Meisenhelder’s “state transnational finance capitalism” theory.

The political implications of Meisenhelder’s arguments may be indicated by the following quotation:

The idea of state transnational finance capitalism helps to illuminate some recent developments in the history of capitalism. As the world economy grows beyond the possibilities of the nation-state, the hegemony of the United States is further and further reduced. No one country controls transnational finance capital, which itself has no particular national identity. (274)

Sweezy (1990) is offered as an authority in support of this argument. Meisenhelder is arguing that at a world level a new bourgeoisie has been formed that is not tied to any state and that the rivalries between different state monopoly capitalist formations, (interimperialist rivalries) are being replaced by the trend toward worldwide integration. Meisenhelder asks,

how long can it be before the European, North American, and Asian free-trade areas become fully integrated into a

single global economic area under the hegemony of transnational finance capital? (276)

This selection of statements from Meisenhelder's article has been made to draw attention to two main points. Firstly, the assumption is that state monopoly capitalism is an outdated concept. This opinion supposedly follows logically from the proposition that capital now operates above the level of the state and is no longer tied to national economies. Secondly, Meisenhelder seems to believe that there is no longer a life-and-death struggle between competing capitalists organized on a national basis, or within an alliance of several national groups. This is capitalism without competition. It is hard to see how the "stateless capital" theory can allow for competition and still claim that the age of state monopoly capitalism has passed. If competition exists between these transnational associations of capitalists—and it most certainly does—then it must exist as transnational competition, in which case the state becomes a key weapon in the competition against rivals.

The concept of state monopoly capitalism has come in for much criticism in recent years, with different authorities holding differing but perhaps not always mutually exclusive positions. Harris provides a brief yet clear outline of the problems (1983). The different positions largely rest on the description of the relationship between the state and monopoly capital. The debate is wide ranging; here only the question of the "statelessness" of capital is addressed.

Some features of state monopoly capitalism

Meisenhelder argued that the state is no longer autonomous and is therefore unable to exercise control over transnational capital. The relationship between the state and monopoly capital suggested by Lenin (1982), Hilferding (1981), and most of the theoreticians who have followed their analysis, is based on the idea of the development of an interdependent relationship between monopoly capital and the state. The specific forms of this interdependence change from country to country and

between historical periods, but the interdependence is a constant factor.

State monopoly capitalism can only be understood as the mutually conditioned development of the state and monopoly capital, not the control of one over the other. This meshing together of the interests of the state and monopoly capital takes place in thousands of different ways. To pose the question (as Meisenhelder does) as being one of the power of one autonomous thing (the state) over another autonomous thing (capital) is to miss the essence of the dialectical relationship between them.

As an illustration it is worth briefly considering the role of the state in developing technology. The field of scientific research is an increasingly important area in modern production. It is also increasingly expensive, and at the same time the race for a technological advantage over competitors is now more important than ever before. In this crucial area the state is ever more important to monopoly capital. The example of the U.S. computer industry shows this clearly.

The United States is home to the world's biggest computer companies such as IBM, Apple, Dell, and Hewlett Packard. All of these companies depend upon state research to maintain their leading positions; the research institutes of the United States and the universities provide much of this. The budgets required and the risks involved in such projects—for instance, the upgrading of communications between countries or the development of satellites—are beyond the capacity of even a giant company like IBM. The U.S. state in large measure provides these resources and in so doing seeks to ensure that U.S. companies retain their dominance of the world computer market by staying ahead of their rivals. A similar story could be told about aircraft building, defense technology, nuclear research, biotechnology, the newest forms of materials technology, etc.; in thousands of different ways capital and state work together.

Dividing or uniting the world?

Meisenhelder seems to claim that the international nature of contemporary monopoly capitalism has led it to operate “above”

the level of the state, to exist separately from the state. Hilferding (1982) and Lenin (1981), writing in the second decade of this century, analyzed the trend toward “internationalization” as leading in a totally different direction. Hilferding was the first to draw attention to the connection between the desperation of monopoly capital to increase the “economic territory” in which it held a privileged position over its competitors.

The larger the economic territory and the greater the power of the state, the more favourable is the position of its national capital on the world market. That is why finance capital has come to champion the idea that the power of the state should be strengthened by every available means. But the greater the historically produced disparities between the power of [different] states, the more the conditions on which they engage in competition will vary, and the more bitter—because the more rewarding—will be the struggle of the large economic territories to dominate the world market. This struggle is intensified the more developed finance capital is and the more vigorous its efforts to monopolise parts of the world market for its own national capital; and the more advanced this process of monopolization, the more bitter the struggle for the rest of the world market becomes. (331)

Monopoly capital must be linked to a state apparatus of some sort or it will operate at a tremendous disadvantage in competition with those that have such backing. It is undoubtedly true that capital is increasingly internationalized but this does not in any way diminish its links to the state. State monopoly capital developed largely as a result of the competition between capitalists becoming international. The unevenness of capitalist development manifests itself in state policy. Lenin (1982) describes this in the following way (it is helpful to quote him not because he represents orthodoxy but because he is bracingly precise).

The capitalists divide the world, not out of any particular malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to adopt this method in order to

obtain profits. And they divide it “in proportion to capital,” “in proportion to strength,” because there cannot be any other method of division under commodity production and capitalism. (71)

It is certainly not enough to quote Lenin and then sit back and consider a question to be resolved. The real task is to try and see how things are actually taking shape in the real world, and then judge Lenin or any other of the classics against the historical developments about which they wrote.

Of the top one hundred transnational corporations, most have more than half of their total assets, total sales, and total employment in their “home countries” (United Nations 1993, 26, 27). Companies that depart from this norm fall into two main groups: those in the petroleum industry—but surely no one will wish to claim that conglomerates like Royal Dutch Shell or British Petroleum are not merged with the British and Dutch states—and the TNCs of Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, and New Zealand, which have more than half of their activity outside their own borders. Interestingly, these countries are either in the process of becoming members of the EU, or, in the cases of Australia and New Zealand, important voices have been raised expressing a desire to be integrated into a new Asian trading bloc.

Meisenhelder chose Rank Xerox as an example of a corporation “detached from any national base” (269). An examination of the data reveals something different. Xerox is listed by the United Nations as being the world’s fiftieth largest corporation, with total assets worldwide of \$31.5 billion. Of this less than one third, \$8 billion, are invested outside the United States. Xerox had total world sales of \$18.4 billion in 1990, slightly more than one third; \$7.5 billion are attributed to operations outside the United States (United Nations 1993, 26, 27). Companies like IBM and Rank Xerox are in fact dependent on their operations “at home” and are tied in with the U.S. state to a tremendous degree.

A glimpse at where TNCs invest is revealing, as they tend to invest where they are best placed to either defend their own markets or weaken those of their rivals. When TNCs compete they place a high priority on attacking their rivals where it hurts most,

above all in their home market. This has the double advantage of expanding their own sales and directly reducing those of their rivals. A striking example is the enormous investment of Japanese car manufacturers in the United States and Europe. This explains why the owners of General Motors or Ford, who are so desperate for the countries of Eastern Europe to become open markets, are less enthusiastic when it comes to maintaining a free market in the United States for Honda or Toyota.

In 1992 foreign direct investment (FDI) was divided among the countries of the world in a strikingly unequal manner. Approximately \$126 billion was invested, only \$40 billion of which went to the so-called developing countries. Of the FDI in the developing countries, \$26 billion went to just these countries: Argentina, Brazil, China, Indonesia, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, and Venezuela. In this same year FDI in Europe amounted to \$77 billion. It would appear that competition for markets takes place primarily in the countries that are home to the TNCs (United Nations 1993, 41, 45). The attempts to build trade blocs are of course linked to attempts to exclude rivals from "home markets." An examination of the trend toward the emergence of trade blocs would reveal an even higher concentration of the activities of TNCs within the home region when the area of the bloc is regarded as home.

There is an important reverse side to the tendency toward building trading blocs that exclude rivals. Many TNCs realize that if foreign goods are excluded from the home market then foreign states will take reprisals that may affect their own overseas operations. Moreover, many monopoly capitalists also benefit from the operations of foreign TNCs within their own countries. This leads to contradictory pressures among the capitalists, some wishing to protect their home market, while others are fearful of being excluded from a foreign market by reprisals. In the United States the steel lobby is keen to prevent the importation of cheaper foreign steel, but tariffs are not widely imposed for fear of provoking a backlash against U.S. goods.

The creation of a unified European market including Sweden and Finland, with Norway and Switzerland willingly or unwillingly obliged to join in; the formation of the North American Free Trade Zone; and the creation of some type of Pacific area

common market including Japan, Australia, and New Zealand will put every single one of the top one hundred TNCs within one of three trading blocs. Far from capital becoming less closely tied to the state we are looking at a world in which transnational capital is becoming forced to create even bigger “home” markets, by creating new trade zones. As the Uruguay round of GATT talks indicated, the pressures to exclude rivals from either the U.S., European, or Asian markets are already considerable.

It is worth considering the proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that is disposed of by the state in the countries that are home to the biggest TNCs. Much of this expenditure goes to the construction of the infrastructure needed to continue production, education, and research, to the police and armed forces, public administration, and health. Within all the countries of the OECD, Government expenditure in 1989 exceeded a figure equal to 33% of GDP. In the majority of cases it actually exceeded 40% of GDP (Rowthorn 1992); of the G7 group only the United States (35%) and Japan (33%) were below this figure. The Thatcher government was unique in the OECD in forcing a reduction in government expenditure during the eighties. Representatives of British monopoly capital, though they undoubtedly supported Thatcher’s policies as a whole, will nevertheless admit that reductions in state expenditure during this period have grievously weakened the research base of British technology, have all but destroyed industrial training, and have forced them into dependency on foreign companies in key technological areas such as computing, and robotics. This extremely serious long-term damage resulted from a policy of cutting state investment in these areas with great ruthlessness. The “savings” reduced state expenditure from 48% in 1981 to 41% in 1989. State expenditure at “home” is very important to most TNCs, and in many cases the state of the country of origin is their single largest customer and supplier of trained labor, transport infrastructure, legal protection, etc.

Various European Communist parties and others have long argued that the EU represents an attempt by European TNCs to build a superstate to rival those of the U.S. and Japan. That the preparations are well advanced is shown by the creation of a European-wide police intelligence network, the extension of

military cooperation, the formation of common employment laws, the creation of common immigration and nationality policy, etc. (see Bunyan 1993). The emergence of a more or less united front among the European powers at the GATT talks allowed the EU to challenge the United States in a way not witnessed before. The EU commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, who led the delegation to the final round of negotiations, made much of the ability of the EU to stand up to the United States. The London-based journal *The Economist* coolly remarked at a time when the GATT negotiations were at an impasse:

The best reason for optimism is that America and the EU, probably the only trade powers with both the might and the audacity to prevent a deal, genuinely seem to want the round to succeed. (*The Economist*, 11 December 1993, 65)

The same article pointed out that Japan would be presented with a *fait accompli*. The United States can now be effectively challenged by a serious competitor, according to a journal that is so closely connected to the most powerful capitalist circles in Europe that it almost functions as their own “in house” publication.

How the contemporary situation can be linked to the general description of international competition between monopoly capitalists as described by Hilferding or Lenin is in the broadest terms quite clear. The challenge facing those who wish to oppose the imperialist world system is to try and grasp the specific features of the contemporary system. The overall tendency in contemporary capitalism appears to be toward the creation of even closer links between the state and monopoly capital as competition becomes increasingly bitter and indicates the potential to become a confrontation between power blocs. It is obvious that much needs to be done to determine with greater accuracy the all-important particulars that follow from this general prognosis.

As the world has learned to its cost, the imperialist system creates pressures that lead to wars. The struggle between national monopolies can become the struggle between states or alliances of states. It is worth quoting Lenin once more as he offers a succinct yet illuminating presentation of the basic mechanism at work:

The epoch of the latest stage of capitalism shows us that certain relations between capitalist associations grow up, *based* on the economic division of the world; while parallel to and in connection with it, certain relations grow up between political alliances, between states, on the basis of the territorial division of the world, of the struggle for colonies, of the “struggle for spheres of influence.” (1982, 72)

Meisenhelder’s “transnational state finance capitalism” seems to neglect this aspect of international relations in the epoch of state monopoly capitalism. He views the drive toward war as manifesting itself exclusively in the form of punitive expeditions against those “peripheral” states that transgress against the code of international finance capital. These brutal acts are vile enough, but even a slaughter on the giant proportions of the Gulf War or the invasion of Panama pales beside the horrors that would devour humankind in the event of an interimperialist war. That real conflicts exist between the most powerful monopolies of capitalist states is almost completely excluded from his model of “state transnational finance capitalism.”

There is a real danger, though not imminent, of confrontations between the states of the various emerging blocs. Any description of contemporary capitalism must take this into account as it could become a serious threat to humanity. An analysis that seems to exclude even the possibility of such a confrontation is potentially extremely dangerous. The necessity and possibility of defending peaceful relations between states did not end with the collapse of the socialist world system. The class forces opposed to such confrontations taking a more warlike form are considerable. It is extremely important that those who seek to organize and develop such opposition are fully aware of the potential for conflict, an analysis that logically precludes the possibility of interimperialist conflicts is close to one that upholds a vision of capitalism as a peaceful system.

Stateless banks and financial capital

Those who argue that transnational capital is not tied to any particular state place great emphasis on banking and financial

capital. The enormous flows of capital through the centers of world finance has led to the development of the aptly named "casino economy." It is generally reckoned that 95% of all financial flows through the City of London are speculative in nature (Michie 1993). If any type of capital appeared to be free of a base in a national economy this would be it.

In Britain the journal *Marxism Today*, which for the last few years of its existence set itself the goal of opposing Marxism-Leninism and of organizing intellectual currents toward that end, operated with an analysis that held that finance was detached from any national base. In his article Meisenhelder seems to advance similar claims, but from a totally different point of view. He offers examples of banks such as Citibank that obtain more than half of their profits from outside the home country. These claims need to be analyzed with a little more depth.

In the case of banks it is necessary to know how far their profits derive from involvement in foreign operations with TNCs from their own country. This is traditionally one of the reasons for the ascendancy of what is known as finance capital within the classical tradition of Hilferding and Lenin. If a substantial part of a bank's income is derived from foreign operations in conjunction with TNCs from the bank's own country, this would indicate that these banks are indeed closely tied to a national base. The role of the state in guaranteeing such ventures is also of key importance in promoting the lending of finance overseas.

There is another general reason to reject the claim that in the case of banks "it is no longer possible to conceptualize the merger of state and capital." The international operations of banks are extremely dependent on the ability of their home state to manipulate exchange rates. That finance capital is moved around the world does not mean that it is separated from any national base. The example of Deutsche Bank given by Meisenhelder (270) is a good example of the relationship between state and capital. In their international operations German banks depend on the famed stability of the Deutschmark. The stability of the Deutschmark is perhaps the top economic priority of the German bourgeoisie and one to which they devote

a great deal of resources. German bankers are not prepared to entrust the control of the national bank to the elected government and it is entirely controlled by the nonelected representatives of the bankers, who reach their decisions and then inform the government. The famed independence of the Bundesbank is no more than the power of the German banks to subordinate the elected government and other capitalists to the policy that best suits the banks.

Meisenhelder would, I expect, agree that in the case of the United States the maintenance of the dollar as the world's leading international currency has been the cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy since 1945. It is hard to see how he could square this against his contention that it is "no longer possible to conceptualize the merger of state and capital."

Thatcher's free-market state monopoly capitalism

A closer examination of the case of Britain during the last fifteen years presents an impressive, specific case of how financial capital is tied to nation states. An excellent summary of the Thatcher years by Jerry Coakley and Laurence Harris provides a picture of how City of London-based finance capital mobilized the resources of the British state while bombastically operating under the banner of "market forces" (Coakley and Harris in Michie 1992). This study, entitled "Financial Globalisation and Deregulation," traces the methods by which successive governments following the electoral victory of the Conservative Party in 1979 pushed through a series of measures designed to create the best conditions for British financial capital to compete on the world market. This was undertaken not only to raise profits generally, but also in an effort to preserve the position of the City as one of the world's leading financial centers, in the face of increased competition from New York, Tokyo, and Frankfurt.

State monopoly capitalism theory is useful as a description of contemporary capitalist states such as Britain. It helps provide a viable framework for the study of a reality in which the state is placed at the service of key sectors of monopoly capital. That the Thatcher government operated under the slogan of unrestrained

free trade makes no difference. Behind the mendacious phrases were the objective realities of monopoly capitalism.

Among the first measures taken by Thatcher to increase the internationalization of capital operating within the City was the removal of exchange controls on overseas investment. This measure taken in 1979 allowed many companies to invest overseas and the result was a relative decline in investment in British industry. During the period of the Thatcher government many policies were formulated that weakened British industrial development to the supposed advantage of financial capital. Coakley and Harris also draw attention to a process that they call "financialization."

The infamous privatization policy of the Thatcher governments by which state holdings were sold to the private sector at ludicrously low prices had various objectives, of which the most important was perhaps to fuel the expansion of the financial sector. What existed as state assets was to be transferred into "tradeable" equity. This applied to companies such as British Aerospace, British Airways, to North Sea Oil, and to a whole range of natural assets. The effect was to boost the profits to the City of London by increasing the volume of trade on which dealers made commission; by actually selling the assets cheap the government ensured that a huge amount of wealth was transferred to speculators who sold these shares at greatly increased prices, often within hours of the opening of trading in the shares of these privatized companies. The volume of foreign speculative investment in the British stock market also increased significantly.

In the years immediately following the end of the war in 1945, the British state undertook at the behest of the labor movement and the Labour Party an extensive program of municipal housing. In the brave new world of the postwar years this housing was often of the highest possible quality, although standards declined in later years. The Conservative Party and their financial backers had always eyed this sector of state property with hungry eyes. The Thatcher government introduced the 1980 Housing Act which, under the slogan of promising home

ownership to people renting municipal housing, forced local government to put their housing stocks on the market.

The state compelled local governments to fix the price of these homes at some 70% of their actual market value. The tenants were in many cases obliged to buy the houses in which they lived as it was very clear that the Conservative national government intended to let all the state-sector dwellings deteriorate. Approximately 1.5 million homes were purchased on loans taken out with private companies. The expansion of business for the Building Societies that provided the mortgages was enormous. Millions of families incurred tremendous debts, which contributed to the increased “financialization” of the City of London.

It is true that financial capital is moved around the world in search of the quickest and biggest profit, but what is often forgotten is that at the end of the chain even this type of speculation is closely connected to the competition between nationally based financial monopolies. There could scarcely be a better example of the linking of private capital with state policies than the so-called free market policies of Mrs. Thatcher or her successor John Major. In the case of Britain the “globalization” of capital in recent years is very definitely connected to state policies formulated through the Conservative government. The privatization policies of the eighties are held by right-wing commentators to represent the “rolling back of the state.” What they actually represent is the even closer fusion of the policies of the state with the needs of finance capital. The British state was used to transfer an enormous amount of national wealth into privately owned “financialized” wealth.

Conclusion

The above arguments do not represent a complete presentation of what the term *state monopoly capitalism* encompasses. The central task was to demonstrate that the trend toward “globalization” does not in any way contradict the concept of state monopoly capitalism. There is every reason to continue to hold that the link between monopoly capital and the “home”

state is extremely important, and that socialists must continue to consider it when formulating policies.

How state monopoly capitalism will develop cannot be predicted, especially as this depends on many different things, not least the struggle between classes. Even if we limit ourselves only to looking at the unrestrained logic of capitalism, the contemporary world situation clearly shows conflicting tendencies. In Europe it is by no means clear what form the EU will take, except that, on its present foundations, it will be overwhelmingly reactionary. The Gulf War indicated the contradictions between the large capitalist powers notwithstanding their effusive displays of "togetherness." The war showed that the U.S. was the most powerful military force in the world but it also showed that it could be challenged. Germany and Japan joined the alliance but at a price. Both of these imperialist powers demanded an increased role in international affairs and "permission" to expand their own armed forces. The loyal ally Britain seems to be showing signs of turning away from its alliance with the United States. Any attempt to present a composite picture of the emerging system of international relationships of monopoly capitalism must try to analyze all of these events and tendencies in addition to trying to grasp the dynamics of political and social changes in the former socialist countries. This task is one that is pressing and can only be accomplished in any meaningful way by the combined efforts of many, and especially through the study of the accumulated experience of those struggling against monopoly capital. It is not possible to trace anything other than the outlines of this process at the moment as it is moving so rapidly.

Meisenhelder closed his original article by saying that "socialism in one country is not a viable option in an age of state transnational finance capitalism." At a time when the Communist movement has been forced to examine itself and to reject dogma or face a desperate future surely those on the left who criticize the communists should also look at themselves and not commit what was probably the communists' biggest mistake: assuming that they had the answers ready made. Surely attempts at building socialism must be supported wherever they appear feasible, and this can never be decided by dogma.

Many thanks to Ron Bellamy, and others who participated in the discussion of the drafts of the “British Road to Socialism.” Many of the ideas in this article developed during these discussions, though perhaps not all would entirely agree with my interpretation of them.

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NOTE

*The term nation-state is used in this article despite several serious reservations. One problem seems to be that it implies that nations form states and neglects the extremely important role of the state in forming nations.

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History of Marxist Philosophy: A View from China

Huang Nansen

In China, the study and development of the history of Marxist philosophy as a science actually began in the late 1970s. In the last ten years, frequent and heated controversy relating to the theory and history of Marxist philosophy have taken place. Some involved differences of opinion arising from earnest and serious theoretical explorations, while some involved a struggle between two different philosophical ideologies.

Quite a few of the issues in controversy are related directly to major questions concerning the history of Marxist philosophy. For instance, is the history of Marxist philosophy the history of a philosophy in progress or one in retrogression? How was Marxist philosophy actually founded and developed? How to evaluate the role and position of Engels and Lenin in the development of Marxist philosophy? How to evaluate Stalin's philosophical thought? How to evaluate Mao Zedong's philosophical thought? Is Marxist philosophy outdated? What will be its fate in history?

Besides, there are also a number of more specific issues debated. For example, how to evaluate the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*? How to understand practical materialism correctly? How to correctly understand the relation between Marxist philosophy and humanism? How to evaluate *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*?

While systematically and comprehensively enunciating its founding and development, a scientific history of Marxist philosophy should answer these questions realistically on the basis

of conclusive intellectual evidence. In this article, we shall give a preliminary explanation in principle to general questions concerning the history of Marxist philosophy and elucidate our basic attitude towards these important questions.

I. Objects of the history of Marxist philosophy

The history of Marxist philosophy, just like any other history, has two aspects: the objective and the written. The latter takes the former as its object. As a science, the history of Marxist philosophy must of course study the objective process of the founding and development of Marxist philosophy as its object. Therefore it is first of all necessary to define clearly the contents and component parts of Marxist philosophy when it was first founded historically.

After more than ten years of extensive study and deep discussion, most Chinese scholars hold that Marxist philosophy is a theoretical system founded by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels which combines the Marxist world outlook and concept of nature and history, with theory of knowledge and other philosophical views. Of course, the materialist conception of history, later known as historical materialism, was the first component part that was later enunciated as a system of thought. Only later and gradually were the Marxist world outlook, concept of nature, and theory of knowledge worked out as systems of thought. Marxist ethics and aesthetics came into existence even later.

This overall theoretical system consists of several major component parts, which include the Marxist world outlook, the concept of nature, history, and the theory of knowledge. They later came to be known as dialectical and historical materialism. Therefore, the objects of the history of Marxist philosophy are: the history of the formation, development, and evolution of dialectical materialism and historical materialism as well as their major component parts. These include the history of Marxist political philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, etc. However, these topics, which are more thoroughly covered under specific headings, are usually only touched on in comprehensive works on the history of Marxist philosophy and are not even included in brief summary outlines.

It should be pointed out, in particular, that the Marxist worldview or *Weltanschauung* is the core of Marxist philosophy. Its history plays a decisive role in the history of Marxist philosophy. It is common knowledge that worldview predominates in all histories of philosophy, whether in China or abroad, and, therefore, it is known as “first” or “pure” philosophy. The ideas of all great thinkers in history were based, without exception, on their world outlook. This remains true today. Marxist theories, including philosophical theories, naturally can be traced to a Marxist world outlook.

Contemporary positivism negates the possibility of a world outlook becoming a science and calls for a “repudiation of metaphysics” (denial of world outlook). In recent years, this trend of thought has been rather influential in China’s philosophical circles. Some people tried to place Marxist philosophy on a positivist footing, belittling or even denying the role played by world outlook on Marxist philosophy. This trend does not conform with the historical development of Marxist philosophy and definitely does not represent its future.

The history of Marxist philosophy must continue to study the development of the Marxist world outlook as its main object. Of course, the development of its other component parts, especially its concept of history and the theory of knowledge, are also important objects of study for historians of Marxist philosophy.

Marxist philosophy also includes some other core topics, such as methodology, dialectical logic, and the theory of the human being. Although the authors of the Marxist classics provided many related commentaries, they did not develop integrated scientific systems in these fields, and theoreticians have not as yet reached maturity in their research. Therefore, divergent views persist and consensus remains difficult. Historians of Marxist philosophy obviously cannot exclude these important topics from their range of study.

What was discussed above is related to essential components of Marxist philosophy. As to historical figures whose works are to be studied as a part of the history of Marxist philosophy, they can be classified as follows:

The philosophical works of Marx and Engels, founders of

Marxism, are undoubtedly primary objects of study. Philosophical ideas discussed in their nonphilosophical works should also be analyzed. For example, though a masterpiece of political economy, Marx's *Das Kapital* includes rich philosophical thinking, and must be studied as of great significance by historians of Marxist philosophy. The philosophical works and ideas of comrades-in-arms and students of Marx and Engels, such as Joseph Dietzgen, Franz Mehring, Karl Kautsky, Paul Lafargue, Antonio Labriola, and George Plekhanov, should also be studied. Philosophical works and ideas of later proletarian revolutionary leaders, such as Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong, should also be included as of major importance.

Some academic philosophers in Western countries refuse to recognize these revolutionary leaders as philosophers, alleging that they have not authored volumes dedicated to developing their own philosophical systems but, at best, only published a few polemics and short theses with some philosophical content, or advanced certain philosophical views in their other nonphilosophical works. This is not a correct viewpoint. Marxist philosophy is a philosophy of practice. Its ideological source, though extending far into the historical past and wide in its scope, is deeply rooted in the revolutionary practice of the proletariat. It guides revolutionary practice while at the same time enriching its own scientific content. All proletarian revolutionary leaders, without exception, conscientiously apply Marxist philosophy in their revolutionary practice, and thus contribute to its development. They are not professional philosophers, nor do they have the time to engage in comprehensive systematic and detailed studies of various specific questions in Marxist philosophy. Nevertheless their philosophical ideas should be studied by historians of Marxist philosophy. They are fully entitled to be addressed as philosophers.

Further, their philosophical ideas should be evaluated for their specific merits and not taken as an undifferentiated whole. Take Stalin as an example. Besides his serious political mistake of intensifying the suppression of counterrevolutionaries, he also erroneously oversimplified philosophy. But it is one-sided to seize upon these errors and completely negate the positive role

played by Stalin's philosophical works, i.e., his popularizing of Marxist philosophy and other useful contributions. Some go to the extent of alleging that his philosophical works are as worthless as the writings of primary-school pupils. Quite a few political leaders, such as Karl Kautsky and Chen Duxiu, committed serious mistakes both in practice and in theory, but this does not justify the exclusion of their philosophical ideas from studies of the history of Marxist philosophy.

Since the success of the October Revolution in Russia, and especially after the victory won in the Second World War, the People's Republic of China and a series of other socialist countries were founded. Numerous professional philosophers have come forward in these countries. They were given the task not only of disseminating and studying Marxist philosophy, but also of building and developing it. Marxist philosophers must devote themselves to its study and development. This is their task, one that is difficult for revolutionary leaders to undertake. Due to various causes, for decades professional philosophers have not been able to play their role fully in the development of Marxist philosophy. As a result, it has not reached the theoretical level it should have. Nevertheless, they have done much work and achieved some success. The reform and open policy make it possible for them to achieve even greater advances. Their philosophical works and ideas have enriched Marxist philosophy. Moreover, their successes and failures will provide useful reference for the development of Marxist philosophy. Their philosophical ideas are part and parcel of the objects to be studied by historians of Marxist philosophy. In the years to come, they will be the basic element in popularizing and developing Marxist philosophy amidst an academic atmosphere of "letting a hundred schools of thought contend."

Revisionist philosophical trends in history should also be studied by historians of Marxist philosophy. These trends are expressions of bourgeois thinking in the ranks of Marxists. But they are different from bourgeois thinking in general, because they try to use Marxist language to answer questions confronted by Marxism in its development, even though their answers are wrong. Revisionism should be studied as an object of history of

Marxism, because truth develops in its struggle against falsehood. Only by studying and criticizing revisionism can the development of Marxism be traced in its entirety. For the same reason, only by studying and criticizing revisionist philosophical trends can the development of Marxist philosophy be understood in its entirety, and the experience and lessons in the development of theories be summarized.

The “Neo-Marxist” and “Western Marxist” philosophies of today should also be studied as objects of the history of Marxist philosophy. What schools of thought are found in these two trends? Who are their representatives? How to evaluate their ideas? Concerning these questions, drastically different opinions exist among philosophical circles both in China and abroad. Yet, no matter how they are evaluated, they after all use Marxist language in their attempt to answer questions faced by Marxism and Marxist philosophy. Even though their answers are wrong, they still provide a reference for the development of Marxism and Marxist philosophy.

All the topics mentioned above should be included as data to be studied by historians of Marxist philosophy. A number of other topics form a part of the background for the history of Marxist philosophy. As such they should be taken into consideration, including: 1) the economic and political situation in different areas, 2) people’s revolutionary movements throughout the world, 3) the development of various branches of natural and social sciences, and 4) contemporary bourgeois philosophical ideas.

II. The development of Marxist philosophy

The development of Marxism and its philosophy entered a new stage in the twentieth century. Lenin is undoubtedly the first representative of this era, because he not only led the proletarian socialist revolution in practice, but also heralded a new stage in the development of Marxist philosophy. In a new historical period, Lenin applied Marxist philosophy to analyze and solve problems in Russia’s revolution. As a result, the socialist revolution won a victory in a country that was comparatively backward, and developed Marxist philosophy in the process of its

application, making two important contributions in its systematic development. First, in order to defend dialectical materialism Lenin systematized the Marxist theory of knowledge. In *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, he advanced Engels's theory of the basic problems of philosophy. Starting from the viewpoint of practice, he drew three important conclusions of the theory of knowledge and also elaborated the theory of truth and the importance of basing subjective activity on the mastery of objective laws. Furthermore, from a careful study of dialectics, he put forward in his *Philosophical Notebooks* the theory and task of developing a scientific system of Marxist philosophy. He delineated sixteen "elements of dialectics," which, in fact, constitute a scientific system of Marxist philosophy in embryonic form. But Lenin himself could not accomplish the task of developing a complete system of Marxist philosophy, because of his heavy workload after the victory of the October Revolution and his untimely death. This task was carried out in the 1920s and 1930s by many professional Soviet philosophers.

Using passages taken from Engels and Lenin, they developed a philosophical system with two parts, dialectical and historical materialism, to meet the needs of propaganda and education. The first of these two, dialectical materialism, includes materialism (world outlook and theory of knowledge) and dialectics (world outlook and methodology). This framework conforms with what was envisioned by Engels in his *Theses on Feuerbach* [*Ludwig Feuerbach and End of Classical German Philosophy*] and by Lenin in his *Karl Marx*. Its original sources include *Anti-Dühring*, *Dialectics of Nature*, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, and other works.

These first attempts did not provide a comprehensive and thorough scientific system developed through serious and prolonged study and discussion, nor did they fully reflect the sociointellectual level of the time. The results were even different from what Lenin envisioned in his *Philosophical Notebooks*. Even though they provided a theoretical system for Marxist philosophy, it failed to reach the comprehensive and thorough level that twentieth-century Marxist philosophy should have done.

The system put forward by Stalin in the *History of the*

Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1938 gives a brief summary of the ideas prevalent at that time. It was understandable that a condensed description of the system was included in one section of the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*. But when it was later treated as the most ideal and perfect system by Marxist philosophical circles and was made into a blueprint for all textbooks on philosophy without any alteration whatsoever, the development of a basic scientific system of Marxist philosophy was strangled and its development impeded. Of course, it should also be pointed out that Stalin's system, when used as the standard textbook on philosophy by communists all over the world for nearly two decades, did play a positive role in disseminating and popularizing Marxist philosophy.

After Stalin's death, Marxist philosophical circles repudiated his ideas and restored the system of the 1920s and 1930s. Over the past thirty years, Soviet philosophers have engaged in studies on the question of systems. Though no brand new philosophical system has been established which received the approval of a majority of philosophers, several theories on building a philosophical system have been put forward and several models have been suggested. Moreover, Soviet philosophical circles have carried out more profound studies and achieved remarkable success in fields such as the concept of nature and history, theory of knowledge, logic methodology, ethics, aesthetics, etc.

The success of the Chinese Revolution represents a victory for Marxism and Marxist philosophy. Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu, Mao Zedong, and other Chinese communists of the first generation paid great attention to popularizing, applying, and studying Marxist philosophy. They especially used historical materialism to analyze the character of China's society and visualize the outcome of its revolution. Chen Duxiu mistook the vulgar theory of productive forces for historical materialism and committed the opportunistic mistake of right deviation. Mao Zedong greatly developed Marxist philosophy through unswervingly applying it to guide China's revolutionary movement. He authored philosophical theses and dissertations such as "Oppose Book

Worship,” “On Practice,” “On Contradiction,” and “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People,” which summed up the experience accumulated in China’s revolution from the heights of philosophy. He also wrote many other works rich in philosophical content to deal with questions faced in the revolution. These include “Problems of Strategy in China’s Revolutionary War,” “On Protracted War,” “On the New Democracy,” etc. It can be said that most of Mao Zedong’s works embody philosophical concepts in different ways. His contributions are especially remarkable in the theory of contradiction, the theory of knowledge, military dialectics, the theory of basic social contradictions, and the theory of two different kinds of contradiction.

During the period of the democratic revolution, a number of theoreticians had already emerged in China who devoted themselves fully to studying and popularizing Marxism and Marxist philosophy. These included Li Da, An Siqi and others. They made important contributions in disseminating Marxist philosophy. Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China, many professional philosophical workers have emerged in response to the needs of propaganda, education, and scientific research. They have done much work in the last forty years. Since the Third Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Eleventh CPC Congress, in particular, they have faithfully implemented the policy of “letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend.” Freeing themselves from old ideas, they thoroughly studied and discussed a great number of philosophical questions, including the Marxist philosophical system and its philosophical fundamentals. In light of recent developments in world economy and politics, natural sciences, social sciences, and philosophy, as well as the great changes brought about by China’s socialist modernization, reform, and open-door policy, they have tried to reconstruct and further develop Marxist philosophy over the last ten years.

The first question discussed was the criterion for verifying truth. Discussions on other questions included the following topics: humanism and the human alienation, the modernization of

the Marxist philosophical system, the status of ontology, the essence of dialectics, the nature of knowledge, socioeconomic formation, how to develop Marxist philosophy by applying new achievements in natural sciences, dialectics in socialist societies, the status of applied philosophy, etc. In short, philosophy flourished.

Other countries disseminated, studied, and developed Marxist philosophy as well. East European countries, when they were under the socialist system, taught and popularized it. By the late 1950s, these countries had gradually taken the path of independent study and development. They began integrating Marxist philosophy with traditional philosophy, specific social conditions, and problems of their own countries. Certain local Marxist philosophical schools with their own characteristics developed and a number of key topics were studied. For instance, Bulgaria was internationally renowned for its research on the theory of reflection. The philosophy of science and technology in Czechoslovakia received world-wide attention. In Yugoslavia two major movements developed, the school of dialectics and the school of praxis. In Hungary, Georg Lukács's ideas of the 1920s heralded a humanist trend of thought from within the ranks of Marxist theoreticians. Though later he partially abandoned his viewpoints, they remain influential even today.

In developed capitalist countries of the West, those who do research on Marxist philosophy may be roughly divided into two groups. One group consists of communist philosophers who have enriched and developed Marxist philosophy by studying historical and natural problems and reality along the path blazed by Marx, Engels, and Lenin. The other group consists of Western Marxist thinkers whose ranks are highly heterogeneous. Some are fallen-away party members, others were never party members, while still others are politically connected to social democracy. They are critical of the October Revolution, the Soviet model of socialism, and Soviet philosophy.

Of this second group, those with humanist tendencies, in particular, assert that they directly inherit Marx's humanist ideas in his early years, and hold that Engels and Lenin deviated from Marx. They strive to blaze new trails by integrating Marxism

with one or another Western philosophy and by proposing theories that combine economics, political science, philosophy, and socialism to answer questions brought forth by reality.

The humanist school that first appeared in the 1920s was greatly encouraged by the publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. It especially flourished after World War II. Responding to the two major philosophical trends of the time, i.e., humanism and scientism, the scientific school also emerged among Western Marxists. Its influence and impact, however, were far weaker than the humanist school. Some of the viewpoints of Western Marxists, especially in philosophy, run counter to Marxism. Yet the emergence of this trend still shows that there are people in contemporary Western societies who resort to Marxism to resolve social problems. Marxism is once again drawing attention and being studied in the West.

III. The challenge of the times and the fate of Marxist philosophy

As stated above, though the post-World War II era did not bring about a total break with the past, still there were many great changes. Events never envisioned before have appeared, to which Marxist philosophy must give new answers.

First, the developments in the natural sciences required Marxist philosophy to change accordingly. This is a challenge that should be handled seriously. The theory of relativity and quantum mechanics proposed in the first half of this century require a response from Marxist philosophers. According to the theory of relativity, every subject has its own reference frame in observing matter, while in quantum mechanics people cannot survey the movement of microscopic particles without subjective effect. If so, can we still demonstrate the existence of an objective world independent of human will, and the knowability of this world?

In the latter half of this century, various interdisciplinary sciences developed, including systems theory, information theory, cybernetics, synergetics, mutationism, and deconstructionism. In addition, there have been breakthroughs in new theories on the structure of matter, molecular biology, cognition psychology,

and artificial intelligence. Consequently, the contents of old philosophical concepts were changed and new ones added. Many topics have been reevaluated in recent years, such as causality, regularity, system, gradation, information, order and disorder, contradiction, qualitative change and quantitative change, reflection and construction, and control and feedback. Some of these topics did not exist before, while others use the old name but with the content changed. Differences of opinion on these questions are quite considerable at the present time.

Second, changes in the economic and political situation, both nationally and internationally, also pose new problems to Marxist philosophy. Developments in the immediate post-World War II years were favorable for socialism and adverse to capitalism. A number of socialist countries emerged. The capitalist world as a whole, with the United States the only exception, were struggling from the wounds and suffering caused by the war. Under such circumstances, Marxism and its philosophy won high esteem. It was widely studied by broad masses of the people and cadres, especially in socialist countries. But in later years, the world situation did not develop in the way originally envisioned.

After a quick recovery from war damages, the major capitalist economies grew rapidly, due to the new scientific and technical discoveries of the 1960s. In addition, a series of measures were taken to mitigate their inherent contradictions. Productive forces reached unprecedented heights, and a certain level of economic prosperity and political stability was achieved.

In contrast, although as a whole, their economic and political strength reached an unprecedented level that would have been difficult to attain under the old systems, the socialist countries experienced many economic and political problems. Repeated turmoil occurred in economic and political life. Under such conditions, Marxist philosophy faced a new challenge. Its lofty stature in the peoples' minds was shaken. Differences of opinion and controversies appeared in a series of important theoretical questions, such as: Is the law of evolution of the five economic formations valid? Is the materialist-monist concept of history

valid? What is the nature of the contemporary era? Can or should countries backward in economy and culture take the socialist road? How should socialist countries proceed with their reforms? What is the future of the capitalist system? All these and many other questions have been the focus of attention in theoretical circles. Of course, these problems do not involve Marxist philosophy alone, but quite a few of them are basic to Marxist philosophy. Whatever answers one may give, these problems cannot be resolved if one disregards the new situation and its sources, or does not advance new viewpoints and provide an adequate demonstration for them.

Third, Marxist philosophy is challenged by contemporary Western philosophical thought. This challenge not only manifests itself in the existence and development of the thought, but also in its criticism of and attacks on Marxist philosophy. Humanism and scientism, the two major trends of Western philosophy, are closely related to the continental and the Anglo-American tradition of Western philosophy. But a more important source can be found in two outstanding phenomena of Western societies: the sophistication of social relations and the tremendous development of science and technology.

Humanism, for the most part, studies the concept of history and the theory of the human being. It tries to explain the development of human society on the basis of human nature, will, and desires, as well as on the need for self-realization and free development. Scientism mainly engages in studying the theory of knowledge, methodology, logic, and linguistics, as seen in scientific activities. It regards "experience" (i.e., positivist experience) as final, and negates everything else. Within these two trends, there are numerous schools which change constantly, with new schools frequently replacing old ones. In contrast to Marxism, contemporary Western philosophy seems versatile, colorful, and dazzling. The plurality and variety, especially its study of every aspect of the human being, and its exploration of different scientific and technological fields, provide much to be used as reference and much to be assimilated. Both of these aspects are idealistic ones. They use various new arguments to refute Marx-

ism as “metaphysics” or as a world outlook devoid of human beings. Therefore, we should deal with this challenge seriously.

These are all challenges of our times. The fate of Marxist philosophy depends on whether it can answer them satisfactorily. We cannot agree with the viewpoint which holds that Marxist philosophy has gone backward instead of forward, from Marx to Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.

According to the people who hold this viewpoint, Marxist philosophy is “practical materialism,” which to them means the same thing as practical ontology (existence = practice) or practical monism (unity of the world in practice). They believe that dialectical materialism is direct materialism or matter monism, which means going back to Feuerbach.

Therefore, they hold that (1) “practical materialism” should be restored to a higher position, so as to complete the negation of the negation, and that 2) “practical materialism” is the mode of thinking of the twentieth century, while dialectical materialism is that of the nineteenth century. This viewpoint runs counter to the actual history of Marxist philosophy. It is a negation of Marxist philosophy, not its revival, even less its development. The history of Marxist philosophy as outlined above forcefully refutes this viewpoint.

We can agree even less with the viewpoint that regards Marxism as obsolete and holds that all those who adhere to materialism, the theory of reflection, and historical determinism are desperate, guilty of ossification, conservatism, hollowness, and impoverishment. Is this true? Of course we should not overestimate the achievements of philosophical studies in the past ten years; there is still a long way to go. Nevertheless, China by itself may claim to have achieved great success in philosophical studies in the decade since 1978, with its discussions on the criterion of truth as the turning point. Progress in the following fields may be cited as outstanding examples:

1. The system of Marxist philosophy

A comprehensive and compact logical system is one of the prerequisites for any branch of science. But as far as Marxist

philosophy is concerned, this has remained a question never thoroughly resolved. The old theory of dialectical materialism and historical materialism, though a scientific system by itself, has many problems and shortcomings and is in dire need of improvement. In recent years, there have been heated discussions on how to assess the old system and how to build a new one. As yet, no system has won the approval of a majority of scholars. Nevertheless, agreement has been reached on basic principles to be observed in building a scientific system of philosophy, including the principle of proceeding from the abstract to the concrete. These agreements provide a sound basis for the solution of the problem of system.

2. World outlook

Influenced by the positivist “refutation of metaphysics,” quite a few Chinese scholars also have opted for the negation of matter ontology. This is, in fact, a negation of the very foundation of the world outlook of dialectical materialism. However, most of China’s philosophers disregard this erroneous deviation. Basing themselves on new achievements in the natural and social sciences, they pursue research on world outlook on a wide scale. They study in a broad and penetrating way the relations between human society and nature, people and the world, humanized nature and the humanization of nature, and various general dialectical laws of the world. They are trying their best to reconstruct a modern and scientific picture of the world. Though this picture has not yet been completed, it is taking shape through their concerted efforts.

3. The concept of history

Attention to the study of practice during these ten years has advanced the study of Marxist philosophy as a whole. This is especially true of the concept of history. History is the sum total of human beings’ practice. Practice can only be human practice. Proceeding from this fact, some people negate the historical determinism aspect of dialectical materialism. But most scholars stand for further developing and deepening historical determinism on the basis of practice. Thus, the laws governing the

development of history can be revealed and formulated more precisely and in greater detail. Much work with heated discussion has been carried out, and new breakthroughs are forthcoming.

4. The theory of the human being

The theory of the human being has been a popular subject in the past ten years. Because of hardships in times of revolution and war, the study of human beings as individuals was rather ignored in the past by theoretical workers, thus leading to insufficient research on questions relating to human beings. In this period, scholars have realized that it was impermissible not to study topics relating to the concept of the human being, such as human nature, human rights, human values, freedom and equality of people, interpersonal relationships, and relations between the individual and society. The problem is how to conduct such studies and whether they should be guided by Marxism. Most scholars are striving to guide themselves with the principles of Marxism, and disapprove of abstract studies which in fact apply bourgeois thinking. In China, the Marxist theory of the human being is becoming a new science.

5. The relationship between subject and object

This question was also ignored in the past or, when discussed, was confined to the theory of knowledge. In recent years, people have realized that the relationship between subject and object is first and foremost related to the concept of history, and not to the theory of knowledge. The human being in the first place is the subject of practice, not of cognition. Human beings are the subject of all activities. Their activities can be classified generally into practice, cognition, and evaluation. These three forms of activity intricately interpenetrate each other and, therefore, the relationship between subject and object is also intricately interwoven with them. In addition, there are questions relating to the subjectivity and objectivity of these three forms of activities as well as their relations to one another.

6. The theory of knowledge

In the past ten years, much has been published on the theory of knowledge. Though inhibited by the trend that negates the theory of reflection, the theory of knowledge has been studied thoroughly as a relatively independent branch of learning. Discussions at a relatively high level have appeared concerning (1) the conditions for the essence, process, and phases of knowledge; (2) intellectuality and rationality; (3) the verification of knowledge; (4) truth and falsehood; and (5) knowledge and decision-making.

7. Applied philosophy

Differences of opinion remain on the tenability of applied philosophy. But disregarding these differences, many scholars have conducted specific studies and published dissertations on different forms of applied philosophy, including the philosophy of reform, management, education, politics, law, man, language, science, etc. In fact, for some time scholars have been studying the concept of nature (philosophy of nature), the concept of history (philosophy of history), ethics (philosophy of morality), aesthetics (philosophy of art), outlook on life (philosophy of life), etc. These may all be termed applied philosophy. At any rate, applied philosophy may serve as a bridge between philosophy and various branches of science.

From the founding and development of Marxist philosophy as described above, we may draw the following conclusions:

1) Marxist philosophy is the philosophy of the proletarian revolution, and a philosophy of practice. It was born and developed on the basis of the struggle of the proletarian revolution. It, in turn, serves the revolutionary practice of the proletariat. Therefore, its history provides the integration of and the interaction between the revolutionary practice of the proletariat and philosophical theory.

2) Marxist philosophy is a scientific philosophy. It was born and developed on the basis of human practice in its totality and includes the development of all scientific theories. At the same

time, it guides human practice and the development of scientific theories. Therefore, the history of Marxist philosophy is that of the integration and interaction between the development of sciences and philosophical theories.

3) Marxist philosophy is a philosophy of continuous progress, and, therefore, its history is a process of going forward. Without doubt, there have been mistakes, twists and turns, and even temporary retrogression. But viewed as a whole, it has been advancing.

4) Marxist philosophy is a fighting philosophy. It was born and has developed in struggles against erroneous viewpoints. Therefore, it is a history of the struggle between the basic viewpoints of Marxist philosophy and all forms of idealism, metaphysics, and agnosticism.

5) Marxist philosophy is a philosophy with an unlimited future. It will be revised, enriched, and developed continuously alongside the continuous development of human society, but it will never be uprooted. Thus, the history of Marxist philosophy will be one of unlimited development.

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On the Validity of the Marxist Concepts of State and Democracy

Luis Fernandes

*(Special Presentation to the Eighth Congress of the
Communist Party of Brazil, February 1992)*

The Political Report presented to the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of Brazil reasserts the Marxist understanding that “the dictatorship of the proletariat is the essential content of the socialist state that emerges from revolution, guiding to classless society—communism—through a process of transition.” This is a fundamental and distinctive position that defines the proletarian-revolutionary character of our Party.

Lately, it has become commonplace in the bourgeois media (and even among some sectors of the Left) to credit the collapse of the former socialist camp to the adoption, by its previous member states, of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. On this basis, it is argued that this Marxist concept has to be abandoned in favor of the liberal principle of “democracy as a universal value.” The superficiality and inappropriateness of this explanation are revealed by this plain and simple fact: the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had already abandoned

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the Marxist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat (and substituted for it the concept of the “all people’s state”) since the adoption of a new party program in its Twenty-Second Congress in 1961. This is thirty years before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the “Soviet Bloc” in Eastern Europe!

The recognition of this fact, however, does not relieve us of the responsibility and necessity of critically examining and assessing the validity of the Marxist concepts of state and democracy in light of the recent socialist crisis and the transformations that have occurred in the capitalist countries throughout the twentieth century.

The foundations of Marxist state theory

The Marxist concepts of democracy and dictatorship of the proletariat are inseparable components of Marx’s theory of the state and the role of class struggle in human history. Marx’s theoretical rupture with the individualist, ahistorical, and abstract premises of liberalism brought about an authentic revolution in political thought in the midnineteenth century. He introduced into human thought the systematic analysis of politics from a class and historical perspective. This led him to the crucial theoretical conclusion that the state is an organ of class domination and oppression.

On this basis, Marxist theory presented and founded an entirely new horizon for humanity—that of superseding state power itself, by means of a proletarian-socialist revolution that progressively eradicates all class antagonisms and differences. This perspective does not imply the elimination of all mechanisms of representation, participation, and administration. With the increasing complexity of society these are, in fact, broadened. What Marxist political theory does point to is the perspective of overcoming the historical conditions that made the emergence of a special organ of class violence and domination necessary. Against the false and limited conception of liberal individualism, Marxism stresses the fullest assertion of human individuality in a classless society where “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” [*Communist Manifesto*].

The genesis of the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat

The first explicit formulation of the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat by Marx appears in his work *The Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850*. Here, he analyses the revolutionary process in France that sparked off a wave of antiabsolutist revolutions in Europe known as the “Peoples’ Spring.” All of these revolutions followed the same basic pattern—initially, the bourgeois opposition forces allied themselves with (and even armed) the proletariat to defeat autocracy; later, frightened by the emergence of the workers’ movement as an independent political force, these same bourgeois forces used their predominance within parliamentary institutions to reestablish an alliance with sectors of the landed aristocracy so as to isolate, defeat, and massacre the workers.

This historical experience led Marx to identify the class bias of the bourgeois state’s institutions and mechanisms of representation (even in its most democratic forms). This led him to stress the need for the proletariat, in its own revolutionary struggle, to dismantle (or, according to his own words, “smash”) the state machinery of the bourgeoisie and build a new one in its place materializing the domination and leadership of the proletariat in society. He called this state the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

Kautsky (“after he was no longer a Marxist,” according to Lenin), attacked and tried to “empty” this concept with the argument that Marx had only referred to it once (and very slightly) in his vast theoretical work. This is simply not true. Not only does the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat appear repeatedly in Marx’s writing up to his death, but he attached so much importance to it that, in a letter to Weydemeyer in 1852, he listed his three main contributions to social thought as:

1. having demonstrated that the existence of classes is linked to certain phases of the development of production;
2. that class struggle leads necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat;
3. that this dictatorship is nothing but the transition to the abolition of all classes and to classless society.

While formulating his fundamental critique of the political practices and institutions of bourgeois democracy, Marx never considered it indifferent for the workers if the bourgeois state was (or not) structured in democratic forms. He always indicated and emphasized the fundamental political importance of working-class participation in the struggles for more democratic forms of organization of capitalist states. What he did stress, however, is that the conquest of better conditions of struggle for the proletariat through these democratic reforms did not alter the class character of the state. For this very reason it was necessary to combat liberal illusions on the alleged “supraclass” nature of state and democracy, and struggle for a broad and profound rupture with the bourgeois state.

***Two levels of analysis of proletarian democracy
and dictatorship within Marxist theory***

Liberal and social democratic attacks on the Marxist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat always try to identify it with the perpetuation of dictatorial forms of state organization in socialism. In the political works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, however, the exercise of dictatorial forms of power is conceived and defended only for a limited period, linked to the consolidation of the new revolutionary state power. This is related to the possibility of Civil War and the necessity of guaranteeing the survival of this revolutionary power. As such, the duration of this period depends on the historical conditions faced by each revolutionary experience—the internal class structure, the type and intensity of contradictions existent among different sectors of the ruling classes, and the degree of paralysis of their capacity of reaction, the conditions of hostile capitalist encirclement, the scale of inter-imperialist contradictions, etc.

From a more “permanent” point of view, the Marxist concept of dictatorship of the proletariat refers to the essence and content of the state throughout the entire period of socialist transition until all class differences are effectively overcome and eradicated. This implies a strategic conception of democracy throughout the long historical period of socialist transition. Here, the progressive extension, deepening, and radicalization of

democracy is the concrete path for withering away and overcoming state power itself. This is not, therefore, just “any” democracy, but a democracy that materializes the domination and leadership of the working class in society. As is stated in the Political Report to this congress, this is the “dictatorship of a class, and not of an individual or a small group.”

This perspective, however, faces fundamental problems and challenges. Most crucial among these is the need to find mechanisms and institutions to build a state power that aims at its own historical dissolution, and not perpetuation. The theoretical and political problems associated with this challenge are aggravated by the fact that the “human resources” of socialist construction (the proletariat and working people in general) are still impregnated by bourgeois (or prebourgeois) values and prejudices, and do not tend “spontaneously” to the communist perspective of building a classless society.

On trying to confront these contradictions of socialist transition, we should bear in mind the important assessments made by Marx of the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871, and also Lenin’s indication that proletarian-revolutionary parties must constantly find the banners and objectives that are capable of rallying the bulk of their class and other workers, in each phase and at each moment, to confront the strategic challenges of socialist transition. In other words, throughout the entire period of socialist transition, the proletarian-revolutionary parties must permanently strive for political hegemony in society and struggle for the leadership of the state’s organs of popular sovereignty.

The superiority of the democratic perspective of socialism

The fundamental points discussed above confer on socialism a much broader and more profoundly democratic perspective than liberalism. While liberalism limits itself to proclaiming the juridical equality of individuals, Marxist theory points to the extension of basic social rights as essential components of democracy. Only the guarantee of basic human dignity for all—the effective right to work, education, health, nourishment, culture, sport, leisure, etc.—makes possible the active and conscious intervention of individuals in the administration of

their life and society. In this terrain, the socialist experiences of the twentieth century overcame in a few decades social problems capitalism was not able to solve in centuries. Refraining from the false solutions of narrow egalitarianism, they effectively materialized in society an equality that liberalism only proclaims in law. For us, here in Latin America, the most evident example of this is given by the comparison of the social conditions brought about by the Cuban revolution (despite the relative backwardness and small size of Cuba) with those of all the other Latin-American countries (including the much larger and more developed ones, such as Brazil). Because of this and despite all attacks and slanders of the bourgeois media and some hired voices of the Left itself, we can proclaim with all certainty and conviction that Cuba is one thousand times more democratic than any other country of our dependent and capitalist Latin America.

The superiority of socialism's democratic perspective is also materialized in the conditions it offers for society's effectively controlling its own development. From this point of view, private property—especially in its highly concentrated bourgeois-monopolist form—is profoundly antidemocratic, as it withdraws from society control over fundamental productive and intellectual resources. These become, in fact, instruments in the hands of a small minority of capitalist interests. This also shows how false it is to conceive one and the same “universal democratic value” for the bourgeoisie and for the workers. For the bourgeoisie, “democracy” means preserving and extending its private property (and, together with it, the conceptual separation of “private” and “public” spheres so characteristic of liberal thought). For the proletariat, it implies the socialization of this property and the establishment of effective democratic societal control.

This democratic potential of socialism, however, is not fulfilled automatically and mechanically. It is dependent on correct political leadership in the socialist transition, and also on favorable external conditions. The Political Report presented to this congress points to a number of deformations and deviations that occurred in the historical experience of the formation of the socialist state in the USSR (that ended up becoming a “model”

for most of the socialist experiences in the twentieth century). There is no reason for me to repeat that analysis here. I do, however, want to emphasize the inappropriateness of dealing with the challenges of socialist democratization in abstract or in general. We cannot simply ignore or think away the very concrete limits imposed to the fulfillment of socialism's democratic potential by imperialist encirclement.

The fact is all socialist experiences in our century faced or continue to face this hostile encirclement. This breeds a permanent tension between the necessities of survival (the defense of the integrity of revolutionary state power) and those of freedom (progressing along the path of the withering away of the state). Ultimately, this tension can only be resolved by establishing the predominance of socialism in the world. While this is not yet a reality, however, conceiving this tension in unilateral terms has fatal consequences for the socialist transition. The defense of "democratization" or "liberalization" in general implies giving imperialism instruments and room to maneuver in its quest to sabotage and destabilize revolutionary state power. The recent tragic outcome of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua is telling of this. In this same vein, imperialism uses the banner of "democracy in general" today in order to undermine and topple revolutionary state power in Cuba. On the other hand, the unilateral emphasis on "survival" leads to the closure and hypercentralization of the state, tending to the formation of privileged castes and social relations of degeneration that also operate against the challenges of socialist transition—as can be seen by the historical experience of the dissemination of opportunism and revisionism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Once again, the "key" to the solution of this permanent tension brought about by imperialist encirclement is Lenin's plea for the broadest possible mobilization of the proletariat and working people in defense of the conquests of their revolution.

New objections to the concept of dictatorship of the proletariat

On the question of the validity of the Marxist concept of dictatorship of the proletariat today, the fundamental assertion made

in this presentation is that the present crisis of socialism by no means alters the essence of the capitalist states as organs of class domination. We have already seen how it was the identification of the class bias of the capitalist state's mechanisms of representation and participation that led Marx to formulate the concept in the midnineteenth century. Has this reality been fundamentally altered from then to now?

Based on a partial and unilateral reading of Gramsci, some authors on the Left (highly promoted by the bourgeois media here in Brazil) argue this is so. They claim democracy has been expanded so profoundly in capitalist countries that there has been a "socialization of politics" with the incorporation of new actors from civil society into a "broadened" state. Because of this, they argue, Marx's classical defense of the rupture with (or "smashing" of) the bourgeois state machinery no longer holds. This is not, in fact, a new argument. It had already been formulated by the "father" of contemporary social-democracy—Eduard Bernstein—at the end of the last century. Bernstein contended, at the time, that a process of "flexibilization" of the modern democratic state had occurred, which annulled its class character.

All of these formulations stumble on Marx's fundamental critique of liberalism, which continues absolutely valid today: by preserving the division of society into class antagonisms founded on private property, the democratic institutions and mechanisms theoretically conceived by liberal thinkers and historically gestated by the political rise of the bourgeoisie are marked by the class domination of this bourgeoisie. It is true that the state is permeable to the influence and pressures of different interests. But it is even more true that these interests have an unequal impact on the state. Here, class bias is determinant. We have only to think of the power of the Globo Network private telecommunication monopoly here in Brazil.

Hence, these contentions on the "flexibilization" of the modern state or the "socialization of politics" lead to the scaling down of the Marxist critique of the class character of contemporary capitalist states, and to the abandonment of the perspective of overcoming (via revolution) the bourgeois state and state power itself. The political limits of these conceptions are

revealed by the present crisis of social democracy itself in Europe and by the tendency to roll back social programs of the “welfare state” as a result of the neoliberal offensive—clear indication of the predominance of the interests of monopoly capital in these states.

Another objection that has been raised against the Marxist concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat is that the technological and productive transformations of capitalism are diminishing the relative weight of the proletariat in contemporary capitalist societies, given the large expansion of the service sector. We do need to urgently confront, from the perspective of Marxist theory, the technological transformations that have been generated by the “third technical scientific revolution,” as well as their impact on the class structure and contradictions of contemporary capitalist societies. I would like to emphasize, however, that, from the standpoint of Marxist theory, even if the tendency to the relative diminution of the proletariat is confirmed in these societies, it is the wealth produced by these workers that sustains the expansion of the technical and service sectors. Even if the proletariat’s numerical strength falls, it not only maintains but intensifies its condition of social “antipode” to bourgeois accumulation. The present technological transformations have by no means relieved, but intensified, the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of appropriation in capitalist societies—a contradiction materialized in the expansion and intensification of fundamental social problems such as structural unemployment.

Because of this, from the perspective of Marxist theory, it continues to be valid to identify the proletariat as the social nucleus of the socialist state to be built in the place of the bourgeois state—even in the most developed capitalist countries where its numerical weight in society seems to be falling. I would also stress that, when referring to the dictatorship of the proletariat, both Marx and Lenin argue for the establishment of a broad system of political alliances in state power between the proletariat and other nonbourgeois social classes, strata, and sectors.

One last and very common objection to the concept of the

dictatorship of the proletariat refers to the incomprehension generated by the usage of the term “dictatorship” in common everyday language. It is a fact that in common language the term “dictatorship” is associated with dictatorial forms of government. Our present discussion of the concept, however, must concentrate on the validity of its content and on the theoretical precision of the term itself. The term “materialism” also generates incomprehension in common language, being normally associated with negative personal characteristics such as greed, narrow individualism, etc. Despite this, it is absolutely appropriate and correct to identify the materialist (and dialectical) philosophical basis of Marxist theory.

As we have seen, the Marxist concept of dictatorship of the proletariat simply means the state power (dictatorship) of the working class (proletariat), which, together with the other workers, constitutes a system of class alliances comprising the great majority of the population. The term used by Marx for the concept is precise. By recognizing that even a workers’ state (like any state) is a “dictatorship” (an organ of class domination), it preserves the perspective of a transitional state that is to be overcome (and not perpetuated) historically. Hence, although abandoning the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat may sound more democratic, it represents, in effect, a more conservative and authoritarian perspective, as it implies the perpetuation of the state (as opposed to its “withering away”). Of course, the confusion generated by interpreting this concept with the definition predominant in common everyday language does not allow us to transform this theoretical concept into a banner for political mobilization. Following Lenin’s political teaching, it is up to each proletarian-revolutionary party to find the banners and demands that are capable of addressing concretely the problem of revolutionary rupture for broad masses of people in each concrete historical context. This, however, does not negate the concept’s theoretical validity.

Some basic conclusions

The above discussion of the actuality of the Marxist concepts of state and democracy points to some basic conclusions:

1. The crisis of socialism and the transformations that have occurred in the capitalist world do not invalidate the Marxist concepts of democracy, the state, and dictatorship of the proletariat.

2. These concepts (and Marxist state theory in general), however, have to be creatively developed to fill in lacunae recognized by Marx, Engels, and Lenin themselves, and to confront a range of new problems and challenges. Foremost among these is the need to assess and generalize lessons from the historical experiences of socialist state-building in the twentieth century and to address the forms of structuring a socialist state that aims at its own historical dissolution (as a state).

3. This creative development of Marxist theory cannot be based on a return to pre-Marxist liberal dogmas and myths, such as the conception of “democracy as a universal value” (i.e., in nonclassist terms).

4. The organs of popular sovereignty must be asserted as the center of state power in socialism. Proletarian state power must be exercised by the broad working masses themselves confronting the decisive challenges of the socialist transition. This, in reality, is the fundamental question of socialist democracy, to which the existence (or nonexistence) of a multiparty system is subordinated. The latter depends on the concrete historical conditions faced by each revolutionary process and cannot be conceived as a dogma. Proletarian hegemony over these organs of popular sovereignty has to be conquered politically, and not by administrative decree.

5. Socialist democracy has to be extended and deepened as much as possible in each historical context, without putting in jeopardy the survival of socialism in the face of hostile capitalist encirclement and of counterrevolutionary tendencies arising from the contradictions of socialist transition themselves.

6. The state of the dictatorship of the proletariat must be structured as state that consecrates and preserves fundamental individual rights, freedoms, and obligations, protecting all members of society from possible violations and abuses of state authorities themselves.

Communist Party of Canada:

One World, One Movement—Eight Principles of Our International Relations

1. Despite the setbacks to world socialism suffered in recent years, the present epoch continues to be one of transition from capitalism to socialism, and ultimately to communism. In present circumstances, it is more vital than ever that Marx's and Engels's appeal, "Workers of all lands, unite!" find new concrete expressions based on mutual solidarity, cooperation and unity among the revolutionary, progressive and democratic forces in all countries.

2. In the present global conditions, imperialism strives everywhere and at all times to roll back socialism, to destroy the gains of working and oppressed peoples, and to undermine the independence and sovereignty of all nations in its relentless drive to capture new markets and extract surplus value. This drive for global hegemony, led by transnational capital and backed by the imperialist states—in the first place by the United States—can only be met by a united response of the peoples for peace, national independence and social progress.

3. We believe it wrong to counter-pose the struggle for socialism in Canada with the struggles of peoples elsewhere in the world against imperialism and for socialism. In each and every nation, anti-imperialist victories are achieved and maintained, thanks both to the efforts of its own people and to the broadest degree of international solidarity. In turn, each and every victory creates better conditions for the struggle of progressive forces in all other countries—including Canada—and brings closer the global victory of socialism.

4. **Our international relations are based on the principle of working class internationalism.** Based on this perspective, **our party seeks to foster international relations with all parties, organizations, liberation fronts and movements which promote the aspirations of their working people for peace,**

the extension of democratic and human rights, for national independence and sovereignty, for social progress and for socialism. The aim of such relations is to promote exchanges of experiences, dialogue on matters of common regional and global concern, and to enhance cooperation among all progressive forces.

5. **We place particular importance in strengthening bilateral and multi-lateral relations with those revolutionary, communist and workers' parties and movements with which we share a common ideological framework and world view, based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism.**

6. Our contacts and relations with these parties take varied forms, but **at all times are based on the principles of proletarian internationalism, mutual respect, full equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of the respective parties.**

7. We believe that the communist and revolutionary forces around the world must continually strive for greater ideological clarity and unity in action. Despite all past setbacks and present and future obstacles, **the international communist movement must be rebuilt and strengthened, not centred or dominated by any particular party or parties, but based on full equality and respect for differing views.**

8. While working consistently for greater and deeper unity of all communist and revolutionary forces, **our party reserves the right to criticize any policy or practice which harms the interests of the international working class and our common struggle for socialism.**

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Book Reviews

Cultures of United States Imperialism. Edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease. Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1993, 672 pages, cloth \$59.95, paper \$18.95.

The twenty-six essays in this anthology examine the vexed relationship of the United States to empire. The contributors intervene in the dominant narratives shaping American Studies, ushering in what the editors call the “New Americanist” approach to U.S. culture, literature, and history. The volume addresses a wide range of cultural developments, from the nineteenth-century court cases that legislated American citizenship and constructed racialized subjectivity, to the dominant media coverage of the Persian Gulf War; from the racist and imperialist underpinnings of early twentieth-century science fiction, to the colonizing gestures of Disney; from the politics of racial cross-dressing in minstrel shows and other forms of popular culture, to the crisis-management of the American frontier staged by Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show. With its variety of analytical approaches—including critical legal studies, New Historicism, colonial discourse theory, and cultural studies—this anthology serves as one of the first sustained attempts to examine the imperialist underpinnings of U.S. culture.

While critiques of European imperialism have been well underway in the academy for some time, U.S. imperialism has not received the same amount of attention. According to editors Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, a comprehensive analysis of the cultures of U.S. imperialism has long been overdue in part because of the dominant paradigms shaping academic inquiry in

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 6, no. 4 (1993)

the field. A prime reason for this belatedness is the ideology of American exceptionalism. By advancing the idea that battles for independence from Britain established the United States as inherently anti-imperialist, American exceptionalism encourages the notion that the United States, “once cut off from Europe . . . can be understood as a domestic question, left alone, unique, divorced from international conflicts” (7). Kaplan contends that the academy betrays its own complicity in empire by displacing imperialism onto other nations as “something only they do and we do not” (13).

According to the editors, the focus on multiculturalism in American Studies has also obscured a study of empire. With its emphasis on the politics of diversity surrounding issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality, multicultural studies has had only limited success in overturning the ideology of consensus that has traditionally dominated the field. The focus on internal strife encourages scholars to rely on a model that often fails to address how national borders and identities are themselves constituted. As a result, “American nationality can still be taken for granted as a monolithic and self-contained whole, no matter how diverse and conflicted, if it remains implicitly defined by its internal social relations, and not in political struggle for power with other cultures and nations, struggles which make America’s conceptual and geographic borders fluid, contested, and historically changing” (15). Several essays in this collection work against this tendency by examining identity formation as a process of struggle occurring both inside and outside of the nation’s borders.

The editors also note that a pattern of denial operating across several disciplines results in what they refer to as “the absence of cultural studies in histories of U.S. imperialism, the absence of empire in studies of American culture, and the absence of the U.S. from studies of imperialism” (11). Critics of U.S. imperialism often privilege an analysis of economics, relegating culture to the margins of their studies as if such developments had only a limited impact on economic ones. As Kaplan points out, a gendered division thus arises, whereby the foreign (the political, the historical) is figured as a primary, male domain, while the

domestic (the social, the cultural) is figured as a secondary, female one. She argues, however, that imperialism “as a political or economic process abroad is inseparable from the social relations and cultural discourses of race, gender, ethnicity, and class at home” (16). Chicano Studies, she points out, has brought an international perspective to the field by analyzing how U.S. foreign policy also operates as domestic policy.

Finally, according to the editors, studies of U.S. imperialism have often vexed critics because the nation’s development has not followed the traditional trajectory from colonial to post-colonial. Instead, as Donald Pease points out, the United States exceeds these categories, functioning simultaneously as a colonial, national, and imperialistic entity. Pease’s observations complicate rigid definitions of the colonized and colonizer, a critical point also developed by other contributors in the anthology.

This collection is divided into four sections. The first part, “Nation-Building as Empire-Building,” addresses imperialism as a project arising from the earliest European settlements in North America, rather than as a late nineteenth-century aberration. The second section, “Borderline Negotiations of Race, Gender, and Nation,” examines the false divisions between developments in the domestic and international spheres, analyzing the intersections between projects of U.S. domestic colonization and imperialist developments abroad. The articles in the third section, “Colonizing Resistance or Resisting Colonization,” also attend to the instability of national borders and cultural margins, examining the overlapping categories of the colonized and colonizer. The final section, “Imperial Spectacles,” highlights contemporary instances of U.S. imperialism, focusing primarily on the Persian Gulf war, but also examining the cultural imperialism of Disney, and the “Occidentalism” of the “New Cultural Anthropology.” Because space limitations prevent me from discussing all of these pieces in detail, I will only briefly highlight main points from a few of the articles.

Gauri Viswanathan’s essay, “The Naming of Yale College: British Imperialism and American Higher Education,” addresses

the important but often overlooked colonial relationship between India, Great Britain, and the North American colonies. She demonstrates that Anglo-Americans who resisted British colonialism themselves often relied on the spoils of imperialism for their projects of nation-building and independence. For instance, the idea for establishing Yale College came in 1676 from a party of American Dissenters who enlisted British merchants like Elihu Yale in efforts to fund the institution. The Dissenters successfully convinced Yale to support the college through appeals to his religious sentiments and desire for patrimony. In particular, they promised to name the college after Yale, who lost his only son while living in Madras. As Viswanathan points out, this case of institutional naming links with other instances of colonial inscription, and has the added significance of advancing surrogate paternity.

Jose David Saldivar's essay, "Americo Paredes and Decolonization" builds on the reconfiguration of margins and centers which Viswanathan investigates. Saldivar draws on Raymond Williams's formulation of borderland cultures and Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopias in order to reassess the imperialist constructions of U.S. landscapes. In particular, Saldivar focuses on the anti-imperialist literary work of Americo Paredes, whose own project highlights how dominant Anglo-centric discourses obscure regional differences in the construction of U.S. national identity. Throughout his essay, Saldivar also examines the sense of "inbetweenness" appearing in the lives of border inhabitants, an experience that is painful and conflictual, but that also serves as the means whereby revolt is made possible.

Meanwhile, in "Resisting the Heat: Menchu, Morrison, and Incompetent Readers," Doris Sommer shifts her attention to the critical act itself, demonstrating the ways in which academic reading practices are also implicated in colonialist relations of power. She argues that writers like Rigoberto Menchu and Toni Morrison use subversive narrative strategies such as silences, refusals of meaning, and other forms of selective telling as means of self-preservation. These narrative devices often go unrecorded by academic critics, however, who miss or fill in the gaps the text refuses to disclose. In urging readers to respect the

restrictions these authors incorporate in their writings, Sommers helps move the anthology onto another level of critical inquiry, from the text and its cultural production, to the critic and the politics of reading.

Kevin Gaines's article, "Black Americans' Racial Uplift Ideology as 'Civilizing Mission': Pauline E. Hopkins on Race and Imperialism," shows an awareness of the multiple and conflicting subject positions which African American intellectuals occupied at the turn of the century. Gaines argues that while Anglo-American nationalism encouraged racist and imperialist policies both at home and abroad, Black leaders, like other parts of the country, were often divided on the issue of imperialism. Gaines's essay focuses on the work of writer Pauline Hopkins, examining the ways in which she both resisted and recreated imperialist ideologies in her fiction. By adopting the racial-uplift rhetoric of the period and advancing Black American race pride at the expense of African peoples, Hopkins advocated colonialist ideologies similar to those of the European-American civilizing mission.

Eric Lott's essay, "White Like Me: Racial Cross-Dressing and the Construction of American Whiteness," is an important contribution to the critical analysis of whiteness now underway in the field of cultural studies. His piece traces different moments in the history of "blackface," a form of cultural appropriation central to constructions of white American manhood. According to Lott, blackface allows the negotiation of certain kinds of masculinity, including abandonment, coolness, and virility, all of which are white ideologies of Black masculinity. Blackface also operates within a homoerotic economy, advancing white men's sexual envy of and desire for Black men. Lott begins his analysis with the history of minstrel shows in northern white urban audiences during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He then addresses the development of blackface in Walt Whitman, Carl Van Vechten, Jack Kerouac, and Elvis Presley. According to the author, blackface serves as a space for fun and licence that seems to operate outside of Victorian bourgeois norms, but is in fact structured and enabled by them.

Susan Jeffords's article, "The Patriot System, or Managerial

Heroism” addresses the discourses shaping U.S. foreign policy in the Persian Gulf war. She argues that this rhetoric functioned not only to assure the future of covert actions by government organizations like the CIA, but also to produce a viable subject able to serve as the U.S. contribution to the New World Order. Operating within a technological imperial manner to reinforce U.S. interests, this “managerial elite” embodied the ideals of management, efficiency, and accomplishment, and was perhaps best demonstrated in Bush’s performance when he convinced U.S. citizens of the necessity for war. Jeffords also addresses the cultural work performed by the Patriot Missile System, a technology used to redeem the managerial elite that was challenged during the Iran-Contra scandal. Both the Persian Gulf War and the Patriot Missile operated as advertisements for the United States’s imperial mission in the New World Order. The message broadcasted involved celebrating the work of managerial heroes as defenders of the U.S. from outside threats, rather than as perpetrators of these acts.

Finally, in “Mickey Bwana: Constructing Cultural Consumption at Tokyo Disneyland,” Mary Yoko Brannen complicates dominant notions about cultural imperialism, arguing that in the case of Tokyo Disneyland, the importation of the artifact, rather than its exportation, needs to be interrogated. Pointing to the Japanese desire to maintain the cultural purity of Disneyland, Brannen demonstrates the manner in which the Japanese resist U.S. imperialism. According to her, resistance “operates by continually reinforcing the distinction between Japan and the Other, by keeping the exotic exotic” (626). Rather than serving as an example of U.S. imperialism, Japanese consumption of U.S. culture operates as a means by which Japan retains its own identity. Brannen’s argument encourages critics to rethink how notions of domination operate by critiquing the notion that one group always remains dominant while another always remains subordinate.

The wide range of subjects addressed here serves as one of the strengths of the book. To a certain extent, however, the anthology suffers from a need to theorize its relationship to colonial discourse studies. What remains missing is an

acknowledgment of the intellectual debt the “New Americanists” owe to studies of colonialism and postcolonialism conducted by critics like Franz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and others. The editors are careful to point out that they want to resist collapsing their study of U.S. imperialism into European models, and avoid reproducing a new thesis of American exceptionalism. The collection, however, would benefit from further analysis of the problems and possibilities involved in adopting colonial and postcolonial studies to a North American context. Nevertheless, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* remains an important contribution to the field of American Studies, and should encourage other critics to launch further investigations of this sort.

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Stalin and Great-Power Chauvinism. By Tetsuzo Fuwa. Tokyo: Japan Press (4-25-6 Sendagaya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, Japan), 1982; English edition 1994, 222 pages, paper, 1000 Yen (\$10.00).

Interference and Betrayal. By Tetsuzo Fuwa. Tokyo: Japan Press, 1994, 456 pages, paper, 3000 Yen (\$30.00).

These two books can be of great help to those in the United States who are trying to rebuild the movement for socialism after the collapse of the Soviet model on which most of the world’s movement for socialism had come to place their hopes for bringing about a more just society.

How the failings were glossed over and the errors and injustices excused is not the subject of either of the books, but it is impossible to read either of the books without thinking about this side of the past.

Fuwa is chair of the Presidium of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), also an elected member of the Japanese House of Representatives, and a skilled research worker. Scholarship has been so abused by the apologists of capitalism it is a relief to find it used in the service of historical clarity. *Stalin and Great-Power Chauvinism* (only now published in English translation) was written in the Brezhnev era, well before the collapse and the opening of the secret files. Using all the material then available, it is written in the light of the JCP's long struggle to develop its policy for socialism independently despite interference by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), which felt it had the right and duty to direct and control world socialism. The book is directed against the ideology and policy driving this action that violated socialist science and morality and put a blight on the whole world movement for socialism. In addition to the international history of the communist movement, it relates particularly to the *Works* of Stalin and the edition of Lenin's *Collected Works* revised to contain Lenin's memoranda and "Letter to the Congress" kept concealed until Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin, and even then never really considered or acted upon. The book is compact, indexed, and clearly and very convincingly documented.

Fuwa and the JCP did not know, when this book was written, that the interference was supplemented by the recruitment and financing of Japanese communists as agents of the CPSU operating from the theory, promoted worldwide, that every communist's primary loyalty must be to the Soviet Union and its leaders. This discovery fills out the picture of the case history presented by the second book, *Interference and Betrayal*.

Interference and Betrayal, subtitled *Soviet Secret Documents: The Japanese Communist Party Fights Back Against Soviet Hegemonism*, takes its start from the attack on the JCP in 1992 that began with the bombshell publication from the secret archives by the right-wing weekly *Shukan Bunshun* of evidence that Sanzo Nosaka, then one hundred years old and president emeritus of the JCP, had in 1939 written a letter informing against a comrade who was then shot by Stalin. The JCP had been unshaken by the Soviet collapse. Even the *New York Times*

noted, in running the sensational story, that the JCP was gaining the reputation as the only honest political party in Japan. The use of the Soviet archives by *Shukan Bunshun* was obviously calculated to destroy this reputation.

Far from running away from the matter, the JCP demanded and obtained from Moscow a photocopy of the letter and confronted Nosaka, who said “unfortunately, it is true.” The JCP published the full information to date—the letter, the interview with Nosaka, the information that he had been removed as president emeritus but “due to his great age,” his pension would be continued, and that the investigation was continuing.

Investigating teams were sent to Moscow and were able to find the CPSU’s records of its contacts. When the attack was resumed in April 1993 with charges that Soviet funds had been supplied to leading JCP members and amounts paid and “that therefore the JCP lied in saying it had never accepted Soviet funds,” the JCP was able to prove from the rest of the documents that, though money was indeed paid to JCP members, they had been recruited as CPSU agents working to help the CPSU regain control of the JCP, and that Nosaka, himself, had been recruited as an agent just as the war was ending and had remained concealed all this time.

All this data was made fully public as it unfolded and this book, a case history of the whole CPSU control campaign and the struggle against it over the past forty years, with the new evidence of the secret documents to fill in what had been unknown, was run serially in the party’s paper, *Akahata*, which has a Sunday circulation of three million.

This settled the secret archive question for Japan, but the question of use and manipulation of the files is a world problem. As Daniel Singer wrote in the *Nation*, “We are now witnessing in Russia (though it is probably being prompted from abroad) a vast operation involving the doctoring of documents and the manipulation of memoirs for purposes that go well beyond commercial exploitation. . . . We are for truth, but the whole truth; for the systematic publication of documents (and not just in Russia) under the supervision of serious historians. Otherwise you never know whether the text was tailored to suit a purchaser who

wants to prove that the Rosenbergs were guilty and Alger Hiss was a spy" (20 June 1994).

That this was attempted in the Japanese case may be of benefit to others who come under fire, as in the case, for example, of Elinor Langer's careful and painful re-examination of her biography of Josephine Herbst in "The Secret Drawer" (*Nation*, 30 May 1994), under attack by Stephan Koch in "Double Lives," in which he invokes the Moscow files.

Both Fuwa books are products of a long struggle, beginning with the JCP's emergence from illegality after the war, to build a policy of scientific socialism for this second-most-advanced capitalist and imperialist country, with U.S. military occupation and now Clinton's world police force also to deal with.

The JCP's chair, Kenji Miyamoto, placed the problem in a quite memorable manner in his congress report back in 1970:

No revolution has yet actually been realized in an advanced capitalist country anywhere in the world. Therefore, this is truly a new field of great human groping and practice. There will be a new complexity as well as a new possibility. It is an important duty of our Party to the people and truth to make every effort to search for the way of social transformation and socialist construction courageously and wisely with the least sacrifice on the basis of science of liberation of the people, liberation of the working class, respecting the democratic orientation of the people's majority."

Fuwa's book on the chauvinism in Russian policy beginning with Stalin is straightforward history, but is clearly a product of that kind of thinking. What cheered this reader most, in its dissection and enumeration of the distortions of the international socialist movement by tying it to purely Russian, and often Russian imperialist decisions, was its detailed affirmation of Lenin's role, his warmth and real concern for people—all people of all countries—and his struggle to pull everything together and against all that destroyed the Soviet Union in the end.

Fuwa quotes Lenin's memo to the Politbureau in 1922 when he was suffering a severe toothache and could not attend a meeting: "I declare war to the death against Great-Russian

chauvinism, I shall eat it with all my healthy teeth as soon as I get rid of this accursed bad tooth.”

At the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1919, when Bukharin and Pyatakov had been promoting the concept that “self-determination of the working people” had precedence over self-determination of nations (Stalin, who was the real architect of the policy, stayed in the background and did not raise it at the congress), Lenin took on the issue directly and said in his closing speech that whether the people of a nation will rise and take power is wholly an internal question of that nation. He said that the demand of Bukharin and the others that the right of nations to self-determination should not be recognized where the laboring masses had not yet taken power, was nothing less than great-power intervention to impose a revolutionary government by force. The congress supported Lenin, and the right of nations to self-determination remained inviolate in the program.

Again, in 1921, Lenin wrote regarding Turkestan, where Tomsy, from the Central Committee, had aroused hostility, “I personally suspect very much that Tomsy’s line engages in Great-Russian chauvinism. . . . It is terribly important for all our Weltpolitik to win the confidence of the natives; to win it over and over again; to prove that we are not imperialists, that we shall not tolerate any *deviation* in that direction. . . . This is a world-wide question and that is not an exaggeration.”

The two chapters on “Lenin’s Last Struggle,” against Stalin’s mistreatment of his native Georgia, quite vividly re-create Lenin’s concern for the health of the revolutionary movement and his sharp perception. But his “Letter to the Congress” with its warning about Stalin and his memoranda were not, Fuwa concludes, regarded as serious by the Russian Communist Party. His suggestion that Stalin be removed as general secretary, though serious, was expressed in considerate terms, that his “harshness may appear a negligible detail” but “it is a detail which can assume decisive importance.”

Stalin was able to smooth it all over and in the report he delivered to the congress on nationalities, he “adopted” the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism with what might be called

“Jesuit logic”: He said the fight against Great-Russian chauvinism was the most important issue on the question of nationalities, but that it was the responsibility of Russian communists, not of other nationalities: “If the struggle against Russian chauvinism were undertaken not by the Russian, but by the Turkestan or Georgian communists, it would be interpreted as anti-Russian chauvinism.”

The Moscow trials, the nonaggression pact with the Nazis, the over-the-table deal with Churchill on the Balkans, the “excommunication” of Yugoslavia, and later, under Khrushchev, the “excommunication” of Albania and the split with China, and, under Brezhnev, invasion of Czechoslovakia and the intervention in Afghanistan, and through it all, the pressure and in some cases bribery to keep other communist parties in line—all related to this same chauvinism. Fuwa lists the consistent succession of JCP refusals to join in the excommunications and its condemnations of the invasions and interventions, up to and including Soviet promotion of the Jaruzelski regime in Poland.

Put all together and in order, this chronicle of Russian chauvinism-hegemonism makes the contradictions that have crippled the world movement for socialism much more understandable. Chauvinism, which often masks as patriotism, exists in all countries. It is inherent in capitalism, in its competition. The just, cooperative society we hope and work for can only be based on trust, and on so living that we can be trusted. Benito Juarez, the Indian who was the first president of Mexico, said upon the defeat of Emperor Maximilian, “Respect for the rights of others, is peace.” Richard Leakey, the paleoarcheologist who discovered the oldest hominids, took to the mainstream press in 1982 to reply to those who were saying war is inevitable. The human, he said, is above all a cooperative animal. “We are surely able to choose our own destiny.” And, “if there is anything that makes humans human, it is cooperation, not aggression” (*U.S. News and World Report*, 15 February 1982).

To build the new society and keep the world together we have to change ourselves. It may not be easy, but experience (including that of the Soviet Union) demonstrates that it is possible. As

Lenin said, “Many of us harbor such sentiments [of chauvinism] and they must be combated.”

These two books are an important contribution toward clarity on what went wrong and the dangers to be avoided.

John Manning

Prague

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ABSTRACTS OF ARTICLES

Luisa Redondo Botella, “Engels on the Origins and Development of Mathematics”—The close relationship between formal logic on the one hand and the axiomatic foundations of mathematics and the symbolic language employed in mathematics on the other gives rise to the illusion that mathematics is disconnected from its material content. The author discusses Engels’s efforts to disclose the material origins of mathematics and to uncover the dialectical content in what appears to be the purely formal logical content of mathematics. The material bases underlying processes studied in the social sciences account for differences between the types of mathematics used in the natural and the social sciences.

E. San Juan, Jr., “Hugh MacDiarmid: Sketch of a Materialist Poetics”—MacDiarmid’s poetry seeks to render in symbolic form a “dialectics of nature” by using the trope of class struggle as a paradigm of his art. The multiplicity of concrete phenomena becomes for the poet a sensory register of complex sociohistorical contradictions. Conversely, sociohistorical conflicts bear cosmological implications. Synthesizing the sensuous particulars of everyday experience, the poet’s imagination maps matter (lifeworlds of individuals and groups) in motion, disclosing immanent forces of change. Mediated through a powerful cognitive but lyrical voice, MacDiarmid’s project of shaping poetry as a political weapon proceeds necessarily through a radical critique of capitalism and a prophetic vision of its transformation through a creative, organized, and collective revolutionizing of language, consciousness, and social relations.

Ian Jasper, “State Monopoly Capitalism—Still a Valid Concept?”—In *NST*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1992) Tom Meisenhelder put forward the argument that “transnational capital is not tied to a particular national capitalist class.” This idea is rejected and a case

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is made for holding with the traditional concept of state monopoly capital. Some recent developments in capitalism such as “globalization” and the European Union are interpreted within the conceptual framework of state monopoly capitalism.

Huang Nansen, “History of Marxist Philosophy: A View from China”—Originally written as an introduction an eight-volume history of Marxist philosophy, this essay surveys contemporary Chinese views on a wide range of philosophical areas.

Luis Fernandes, “On the Validity of the Marxist Concepts of State and Democracy”—The Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of Brazil viewed dictatorship of the proletariat as the essential content of a socialist state, necessary to guide the revolutionary process to a communist classless society through a period of transition. The author examines past and present criticisms of the concept and concludes that though not a slogan for broad mass appeal the concept remains theoretically valid.

ABREGES D’ARTICLES

Luisa Redondo Botella, «Engels sur les origines et le développement des mathématiques.»—Le rapport étroit entre la logique formelle d’une part et les fondements axiomatiques des mathématiques et le langage symbolique employé en mathématiques d’autre part donne naissance à l’illusion que les mathématiques se détachent de leur contenu matérialiste. L’auteur discute des efforts de la part d’Engels de divulguer les origines matérielles des mathématiques et de dévoiler le contenu dialectique de ce qui semble être un contenu de la logique formelle pure. Les bases matérielles fondamentales des processus des sciences sociales expliquent les différences des genres des mathématiques employé dans les sciences naturelles et sociales.

E. San Juan, Jr., «Hugh MacDiarmid: une esquisse d’une poétique matérialiste.»—La poésie de MacDiarmid cherche à rendre en forme symbolique une «dialectique de la nature» en

utilisant le trope de la lutte des classes comme un paradigme de son art. La multiplicité des phénomènes concrets devient pour le poète un registre des sens des contradictions complexes sociohistoriques. Inversement, des conflits sociohistoriques portent des implications cosmologiques. En synthétisant les détails voluptueux de l'expérience quotidienne, l'imagination du poète trace la matière (les mondes réels des individus et des groupes) en motion tout en divulguant les forces immanentes du changement. Sa voix puissante, cognitive mais lyrique, sert de médiateur du projet de MacDiarmid de former la poésie en arme politique qui critique d'une manière radicale le capitalisme et qui envisage d'une manière prophétique sa transformation à travers une révolution créatrice, organisée, et collective du langage, de la conscience, et des rapports sociaux.

Ian Jasper, «Le Capitalisme monopole de l'état—un concept encore valable?» En *NST*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1992), Tom Meisenhelder avance l'argument que «le capital transnational ne se lie à aucune classe capitaliste nationale.» L'auteur rejette cette idée et explique pourquoi le concept traditionnel du capital monopole de l'état est toujours valable. Il analyse quelques nouveaux développements dans le capitalisme tels que la «globalisation» et l'Union européenne dans le cadre conceptuel du capitalisme monopole de l'état.

Huang Nansen, «Histoire de la philosophie marxiste: une vue de la Chine.» Cet essai, écrit pour introduire une histoire en huit tomes de la philosophie marxiste, discute des vues chinoises actuelles sur un champ large des domaines philosophiques.

Luis Fernandes, «Sur la justesse de la théorie marxiste de l'état.» Le huitième congrès du Parti communiste du Brésil envisagea la dictature du prolétariat comme le contenu essentiel d'un état socialiste, nécessaire à guider le processus révolutionnaire à travers l'état de transition vers une société communiste sans classe. L'auteur examine la critique passée et actuelle du concept et conclut que bien qu'il ne soit pas un slogan d'un appel aux masses larges, le concept reste théoriquement valable.