**Dialectical Materialism**

Dialectical materialism is a doctrine of late-nineteenth century German socialist philosophy, which later developed as a central tenet of Marxist political philosophy. The philosophical doctrine developed from a rejection of Hegelian metaphysics and idealism, advocating instead a materialist conception of humankind’s active role in the dialectical production of history. The works of Moses Hess (1812-1875) and Joseph Dietzgen (1828-1888), the latter of which coined the term in 1869, advocated this agentic view of human consciousness. Friedrich Engels first expounded on this early notion of historical materialism in *Dialectics of Nature* (1883) to identify a materialist dialectic in science and politics, specifically that of socio-economic structures. The term was then applied to the Marxist proposition that economic structures are intrinsically formed with internal contradictions, which serve to undermine their growth and efficiency. Later elaborations on Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* by Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) and György Lukács (1885-1971) further developed the concept and its connection with Marx’s notions of class struggle and the fundamental contradictions of social and production relations. Both writers identified the agentic nature of historical – and subsequently dialectical – materialism in the consciousness of the proletariat.

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**References and further reading**

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