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dialectical materialism Dialectical materialism has been widely thought of as the PHILOSOPHY of Marxism, in contrast and relation to Marxist science, distinguished as historical materialism. The term was probably first used by Plekhanov in 1891. It was in that first generation after Marx's death that 'Diamat' (a shorthand term which became current especially in the USSR) emerged, as the work of Marx and Engels gave way to that of their followers. Marxism itself crystallized out of that transition, and dialectical materialism was constitutive of it (see MARXISM, DEVELOPMENT OF). The first generation of Marxists was dominated by the two most famous books of the founders, Marx's *Capital* and Engels's *Anti-Dühring*. The former represented the basic economic science of historical materialism. It was Engels in *Anti-Dühring* who was regarded as having presented in its 'final shape' (Plekhanov 1908, p. 23) the philosophy of Marxism. Dialectical materialism was a powerful force in the Second International, and following the Russian revolution it became essential to communist party orthodoxy.

On its own understanding dialectical materialism is cross-bred from the union of two bourgeois philosophies: the mechanistic MATERIALISM of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, and Hegel's idealist DIALECTICS. The mechanicism of the former, which is incompatible with dialectics, and the IDEALISM of the latter, which is incompatible with materialism, are rejected and opposed as 'metaphysical' and 'ideological'. The result is a philosophy in the sense of a 'world outlook', 'the communist world outlook' as Engels calls it (*Anti-Dühring*, Preface to 2nd edn): a body of theory taken to be true of concrete reality as a whole, and conceived as in a sense scientific, as a kind of 'natural philosophy' generalizing and supported by the findings of the special sciences as they advance to maturity, including the social science of historical materialism. Thus, whereas Marx's theoretical work is a study of society, Engels founded dialectical

materialism by developing a 'dialectics of nature' (*Dialectics of Nature*), based on the claim that 'in nature . . . the same dialectical laws . . . force their way through as those which in history govern . . . events' (*Anti-Dühring*, Preface to 2nd edn). The central theories of dialectical materialism, then, are presented as scientific laws of a completely general kind, governing 'nature, society, and thought' (*Anti-Dühring*, pt. I, ch. XIII). The political point of such a theory, as of Engels's distinctive contribution generally, is to argue the scientificity of Marxism, recruiting for historical materialism the support of the cognitive authority enjoyed by NATURAL SCIENCE, and at the same time depriving of that support other political and cultural movements currently claiming it, like Dühring's work, or 'social Darwinism' (Benton, in Mephram and Ruben 1979, vol. II, p. 101).

The combination of materialism with dialectics transforms both. Properly understood, the materialism of dialectical materialism is not, like its traditional ancestor, reductive. It does not reduce ideas to matter, asserting their ultimate identity. It holds, dialectically, that the material and the ideal are different, in fact are opposites, but within a unity in which the material is basic or primary. Matter can exist without mind, but not vice versa, and mind was historically emergent from matter and remains dependent on it. It follows that the mature special sciences form a unified hierarchy with physics at their base, though they are not reducible to physics. It follows also, in epistemology, that physics gives us knowledge of a mind-independent objective reality. What the component of dialectics asserts is that concrete reality is not a static substance in undifferentiated unity but a unity that is differentiated and specifically contradictory, the conflict of opposites driving reality onwards in a historical process of constant progressive change, both evolutionary and revolutionary, and in its revolutionary or discontinuous changes bringing forth genuine qualitative novelty. It is as such an emergent novelty that the mind is understood by this materialist version of dialectics. At the most basic intellectual level of logic, the contradictory nature of reality is taken to imply that contradictory statements are true of reality and consequently to require a special dialectical logic that supersedes formal logic, with its essential princi-

ple of non-contradiction (see CONTRADICTION; LOGIC).

Thus the fundamental laws of dialectical materialism are: (1) the law of the transformation of quantity into quality, according to which gradual quantitative changes give rise to revolutionary qualitative changes; (2) the law of the unity of opposites, which holds that the unity of concrete reality is a unity of opposites or contradictions; (3) the law of the NEGATION of the negation, which claims that in the clash of opposites one opposite negates another and is in its turn negated by a higher level of historical development that preserves something of both negated terms (a process sometimes represented in the triadic schema of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis).

There is no doubt that Marx's theory of society is both materialist and dialectical, and claims to be scientific. If it is justified in claiming the cognitive advantage of scientificity it must have important continuities with the established natural sciences. But it may be that there are other and more reliable continuities than the one argued for by Engels and by dialectical materialism, namely a shared content constituting a very general theory about reality as a whole, 'the communist world outlook'. In any case, there is a problematic tension in the union of dialectics and materialism, especially the materialism of the natural sciences with its strong tendencies towards mechanistic reductivism and detached objectivism. It is that emphasis on the natural sciences and on historical materialism as a natural science of society that is distinctive, within Marxism, of dialectical materialism. In consequence, dialectical materialism has pressed historical materialism towards ECONOMISM, the supposition that, as the material base of society, only the economy, and even perhaps only its 'most material' aspect, productive technology, has real causal efficacy, the political and theoretical superstructure being epiphenomenal. Lenin and Mao Tse-tung, both committed exponents of 'the communist world outlook', resisted economism, but its anti-revolutionary effects were present in the Marxism of the Second International and later Communist Party orthodoxy.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as the Russian revolution degenerated into Stalinist tyranny and party bureaucracy, the general domination of Marxist

philosophy by dialectical materialism began to crumble outside the USSR and give way to a second Marxist philosophy, Marxist humanism. Its leading theorists were Lukács and Korsch, and their rejection of the materialism of the natural sciences and their Hegelian emphasis on dialectic seemed to be confirmed by the rediscovery of Marx's early philosophical writings. These Hegelianizing tendencies have themselves been heavily attacked by the schools of Althusser and Della Volpe in the last two decades. In contrast to this Western Marxism, SOVIET MARXISM has in general continued to adhere to 'Diamat', though there has been a recent tendency to reject the conception of a special dialectical logic superseding formal logic.

Reading

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dialectics Possibly the most contentious topic in Marxist thought, raising the two main issues on which Marxist philosophical discussion has turned, viz the nature of Marx's debt to HEGEL and the sense in which Marxism is a science. The most common emphases of the concept in the Marxist tradition are as (a) a method, most usually scientific method, instancing *epistemological* dialectics; (b) a set of laws or principles, governing some sector or the whole of reality, *ontological* dialectics; and (c) the movement of history, *relational* dialectics. All three are to be found in Marx. But their paradigms are Marx's methodological comments in *Capital*, the philosophy of nature expounded by Engels in *Anti-*