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DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

A CRITIQUE OF MAX EASTMAN

by

Hugo Oehler

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DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SCIENCE OR PHILOSOPHY?

Unlike most fellow travelers of Marxism, Max Eastman from the very first let it be known that he was opposed to Dialectical Materialism, and in the same breath threw overboard the fundamentals of Marxism. When the Russian Revolution was at its height he merely gave verbal opposition to these concepts. But with world reaction gaining, and with revisionism of Marxism by Stalinism and other forces gaining strength, Eastman began to write his own concepts. As a result he is now considered by many liberals as an outstanding opponent to the theoretical structure of Marxism. One of his latest books on this subject, in which he summarizes material of previous articles, is "Marxism — Is It Science?". Eastman replies by saying no, and tries to give arguments to prove his case.

THE LAST STAND OF DIALECTICS?

Back in 1934 Eastman wrote a pamphlet called, "The Last Stand of Dialectic Materialism". In this book he argued that Sidney Hook's (revisionist, H. O.) position on Marxism was the last stand. But in his new book, published in 1940, he had to go far beyond Hook's position of the early thirties and deal with many other points. As in the past, the "Last Stand" of Marxism must always be "killed" anew — only to come to life again for more unscientific minds and for more defenders of the status quo to let out volumes of words against.

EASTMAN'S MAIN POINTS

Like Hook, Eastman says the dialectic concept is a myth and has nothing to do with reality. He says that the attempt to coordinate theory and practice into one factor of man's action, the attempt to change the world, is unscientific. He accuses Marx and Engels of making an equation out of their concept of science and ideology, to identify them as one. Eastman likewise argues against the position he attributes to the founders of Marxism; that the dialectic process is AUTOMATIC and an UPWARD process. This Eastman calls the Hegelian position quite correctly, and then accuses the Marxists of animistic thinking. The Marxian concept of Historical Materialism he calls Economic Determinism and proceeds to argue against the latter. More than once he refers to Marxism as a philosophy.

In presenting the points that Eastman deals with in opposition to Dialectics, it must be pointed out that outside of vague references to psychology HE DOES NOT PRESENT A COUNTER POSITION — **his** positive position against dialectics. He criticizes most Marxists for presenting dialectics mainly through a criticism of others; but fails to carry out his own suggestion and present his positive case. We may add that dialectics deals with STRUGGLE, a struggle of contradictions as the driving force of development and an effective way of presenting such, is through opposition to our opponents.

Like Hook he is guilty of arguing **for** and **against** a position at the same time, and presenting non-Marxian, revisionist concepts; and then of arguing against "Marxism" by attacking it.

HOOK AND EASTMAN

Eastman correctly states that Hook must be understood in his different periods, pointing out that in the early period Hook wrote books defending what Hook called essentials of Marxism and the dialectic; while in books written

at a later period he rejects dialectical materialism as a whole and with it throws out the the basic ideas of Marxism. Both Hook and Eastman want to keep the "good," the scientific, contributions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; and in so doing they perform some of the most amazing mental gymnastics by presenting a position of for and against at the same time.

One of Hook's main arguments is his claim that John Dewey's philosophy of "scientific" pragmatism is a continuation and DEVELOPMENT of Karl Marx' "philosophy". Hook argues that Dewey's instrumental philosophy is a rounding out and "correction" of Marx's position. Naturally Eastman blasts Hook on this score, but in reality does not even touch the essence of the problem of the relation of Dewey's concepts of man's behavior with the Marxian position. This we will deal with in a separate paper. Neither does Hook present the facts — because he is trying to recast and revise Marxism to his own false concepts.

Hook may (?) be the best pupil of Dewey and have his problem of reconciliation of his zig-zag political life to the pattern of Marx and Dewey, but Eastman also has his pet concept. Eastman points out that Marx made it clear that one must always make a distinction between the material transformation of economic conditions essential to production, and the ideological forms in which men become conscious of the conflict and fight it out in the class struggle — even though they are not aware of the fundamental class relations. From this correct Marxian position Eastman says, "In short, Marx anticipated in his doctrine of ideologies the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud." (p. 107). He says further, "The economic interpretation (he should say Historical Materialist position, H. O.) of history is nothing but a generalized psychoanalysis of the social and political mind." (p. 108).

Hook connects Dewey with Marx, and Eastman in his own way connects Freud with Marx. Eastman presents a PART of the concept of Historical Materialism within the false framework of "economic determinism," and thereby is unable to give a positive criticism of Freud to the same extent that Hook is unable to give a positive criticism of Dewey—that is, to reveal the positive contributions of these thinkers, as limited or developed as they are, and to show their relation to the more important parts of the SAME PROBLEMS entirely ignored by Dewey and Freud. Both ignore the relation of individual human conduct to society. They only take up the immediate local environment, but not the mode of production. Without a proper relationship of the individual to his socio-economic conditions (historical materialism) the isolated tid-bits of positive information of Freud and Dewey cannot be understood properly, nor utilized correctly by the individual or by society.

MARX'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Marx and Engels turned right side up the Hegelian idealist dialectic and thereby corrected the errors of this false system, saving the worth-while part and discarding the idealism and placing their theory of knowledge upon a firm material foundation. Engels in "Feurbach" says the following about this question, "Thus dialectics reduces itself to the science of the general laws of motion — both of the external world and the human thought — TWO SETS OF LAWS which are identical in substance, but different in their expression in so far as the human mind can apply them consciously; while in nature and also up to now for the most part in human history, these laws assert themselves unconsciously in the form of external necessity in the midst of an endless series of seeming accidents."

"Marx gave to the world as important a gift of scientific knowledge as any man of the modern era; he is one of the giants of science." (p. 20)

"It was in examining the existing society and all past societies, and trying to find out what forces control them and in what manner they change, that Marx did his really great work." (p. 24)

"It is impossible to exaggerate the influence of this simple idea (Marx' theory of History) upon the subsequent development of historic knowledge. All thoughtful men have profited by it, and they will forever. It marks a turning point in the whole art of the understanding of history."(p. 25)

When Eastman praises Marx to such heights, and then says the following, "Marx was able to assert that, 'All past history, with the exception of the primitive stages, was the history of class struggles.' What is the truth under this obviously preposterous assertion?" we become aware of the critic's inconsistency. Eastman cannot praise Marx and his contribution of the theory of History and at the same time cut out of this concept the theory of the class struggle. If Marx's "really great work" dealt with "examining existing society and all

past societies" it is a mockery and rejection to speak of the class struggle as false.

Eastman also says, "Marxism perpetuates itself as animistic philosophy while pretending to make an empirical investigation of history." (p. 24) If men have profited, and men will forever profit by Marx's theory of history as Eastman claims, then one cannot also make the assertion that this so-called empirical (rather dialectical) investigation of history is in reality nothing but animistic philosophy.

"Marxism", according to Eastman, "was a step from utopian socialism to a socialist religion, a scheme for convincing the believer that the universe itself is producing a better society, and that he has only to fall in properly with the general movement of the universe." (p. 33)

We will later take up the argument that the universe by itself is automatically producing a better society. We only point out now that if Marxism was not the step from utopian socialism to SCIENTIFIC socialism, but rather to a socialist religion, then Eastman cannot call Marx one of the giants of science.

EASTMAN DISTORTS MARXISM

To mechanically try to separate this or that part of the Marxian contribution on historical materialism is to misunderstand the problem in the first place, and in the second place, it means that Eastman has constructed a straw man (we shall prove this) in order to "kill" Marxism. For every statement **against** some concept of Marxism, Eastman's book also has a statement **for** the same concept. This will enable Eastman to confuse persons who have not read his works. You quote him one way — and he will pull out of his collection an opposite quotation to prove that the critic does not know what he is talking about. For example, Eastman says, "And Marx, if you gather the quotations with some care, leaves equally independent of human will or consciousness the historic necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and its transition to the society of the free and equal." On the same page he quotes Marx who says, "Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth; he does not make it out of conditions chosen by himself, but out of such as he finds at hand." (p. 48) If everything is automatic and independent of man as Eastman claims for the Marxian position, and if Marx says that "Man makes his own history..." one realizes that here are two opposite positions.

In one place Eastman rejects the class struggle, in the next place he accepts it. First Eas man claims that Marx is a great scientist in his field; next Marx is unscientific and animistic, etc., in the same field of reasearch.

Eastman has the same confused position regarding Lenin. He says, "...in Lenin, the basis for as brilliant a political leadership as the world has seen." (p. 51) "Lenin was one of the most impressive political thinkers in history, and he was one of the most adroit."(141)

Eas man's undialectical mind reconciles the above with the following: he says that Lenin should "abandon altogether the concept of the role of the party and its relation to the masses, which he introduced. Lenin's faith in the dialectic philosophy was more vital in his thinking, and more disastrous, than I realized." (p. 215) Eliminate Lenin's dialectical thinking, and analysis, eliminate Lenin's contribution on the question of a party of iron discipline, based upon active members and democratic-centralism and you negate, make void Lenin as a "political thinker" and Lenin as a "political leader" — for without this Lenin would not have been able to lead the revolution to power in Russia.

Eastman's most acute form of contradiction is his presentation of the question of Marxian philosophy — and later his denial (against Hook) of anything like philosophy in the Marxian structure, quoting Marx on the latter to prove his case against Hook. This we will deal with in more detail later.

WHAT IS UNSCIENTIFIC IN MARXISM?

Eastman makes a big point out of the use of the terms "inevitability" and "certainty" by Marx and Engels. On more than one occasion when they referred to the process of social development they spoke in this vein. Eastman gives one of Engels' quotations as follows: "With the same certainty with which from a given mathematical proposition a new one is deduced, with that same certainty can we deduce the social revolution from the existing social conditions and the principles of political economy." (Engels)

Eastman speaking of the above quotation says, "Such words reveal the essence of what is unscientific and untrue in the Marxist system; the reading of the desired results into the limiting conditions; the failure to realize the central role played in all science by the working hypothesis. Given the condition, if such

and such action is taken, the conceived results will follow: that is the language of science, and that is as far as the knowledge of man can reach." (p. 29)

Much has been confused in this one sentence. Eastman is at least correct on one point. If one tries to read the desired results into a given limiting condition then one is unscientific — that is true. But Engels, following the scientific method of Marxism, has first analyzed the limiting conditions and then made predictions based on that analysis. Newton discovered laws of motion for the physical world and scientists apply these laws of motion to predict eclipses five hundred years away, just as the analysis of society's laws of motion make predictions scientific. We have already clearly stated our position on the conditions and ends in relation to one's desires. We will expand that later. Now we want to deal with the question of the CERTAINTY of the social revolution flowing out of the existing social conditions as Engels states. Eastman has lived through a period of history, of existing social conditions that have **produced** over two dozen social revolutions. These social revolutions developed out of the capitalist social conditions and could no more be eliminated than the growth of seed in fertile soil.

These social revolutions were the product of OBJECTIVE social conditions. But here is where Eastman stops his analysis and the real problem only begins. To transform the conditions of social revolution into a SUCCESSFUL revolution, that is, into the seizure of power by the exploited class, the SUBJECTIVE factors are needed. What are these subjective factors? A program, a party, a leadership, a will to power and the masses of exploited in motion against the exploiters, under this program and leadership. As Marx said, "Man makes his own history, but he does not make it out of the whole cloth..." As Lenin said, "Without a revolutionary party there can be no successful revolution."

The quotation of Engels referred to above does not say that a SUCCESSFUL revolution is inevitable. It says that social revolutions will "inevitably" spring out of the existing social conditions.

One of the most important contributions of Marx and Engels in the field of political economy, namely the prediction that the prevailing mode of production and its contradictions will lead to social revolutions, is called the "essence of what is unscientific and untrue in Marxism" by Eastman. The slight of words, of the use of the terms, Engels' "desired ends", does not alter the facts. That is the strawman part of the argument. Engels did not have desired ends that he read into the conditions as an "automatic" "upward" process. Marxism proved by a scientific analysis of the existing society that conditions would lead to revolutions. Incidentally, it was also a desired phase of the process for those who wanted to change the existing order, providing they knew how to take advantage of the revolutionary stage of social conditions.

Eastman states in the above quotation that, "Given a condition, if such and such action is taken, then the conceived results will follow." In relation to the Marxian prediction of social revolutions this sentence is meaningless. Because, as stated before, the objective factors bring about the revolutionary condition. In relation to a SUCCESSFUL revolution, the Eastman sentence has much meaning. But Eastman, not Engels, confuses these two aspects of the problem of revolution.

THE INEVITABLE REVOLUTION

Marxists use the term, inevitable, but like most words it has more than one meaning. We fill it with a different content than the fatalist and the religious person. Eastman also argues against the Marxist use of this word. He says, speaking of Karl Marx, "He started in by deciding in general what the universe is made of and how it operates, and then gradually worked down toward a demonstration that by the very nature of its being and the laws of its operation this universe is inevitably going to revolutionize itself." (p. 20)

"For it is a relic of a religious attitude to attribute your plan of changing the world to the world itself, and endeavor to prove that the 'inner law' of this world is engaged in realizing your ideals." (p. 22)

This is a continuation of the previous criticism by Eastman. So let us now approach the same problem from a different angle. There is a standard joke, that the Germans, and especially Marx, always first started to analyze the universe and then gradually worked down to the concrete problem of the moment. Eastman, however, is trying to use this joke as serious scientific argument. And he is completely wrong on the whole argument once it is properly presented.

Do the three volumes of Capital start out with such a round about method of investigation? Of course not! Marx starts his analysis of the capitalist system by an analysis of the commodity. What could be more concrete and to the point? Does the Communist Manifesto burden one with this involved method? Eastman referring to the Communist Manifesto said, "The Communist League declared concretely in the language of common sense and of practical science that such and such are their 'views' and such their 'aims' and that these aims can be attained only by such methods." (p. 30) Again Eastman is kind enough to prove himself wrong. One can check any other book by Marx, Engels or Lenin and find the same concrete analysis. Except, of course, where their subject matter was the universe.

Eastman, Hook and many others seem to forget that there is a difference between Marxism and Dialectical Materialism. They don't seem to understand that Dialectical Materialism is the theory of knowledge (as a reflection of the process of nature), and ITS APPLICATION to the field of social development and the class struggle is Marxism. As scientists who deal with dialectics, they must of necessity deal with the universe. So as Marxists, they are criticized for dealing with the broader subject in their struggle against ALL types of philosophy.

SCIENCE OR RELIGION

If it is a "relic of religious attitude" to predict revolution based upon the "inner laws" of the capitalist mode of production, then how does Eastman account for the following passage from his book: "There is little doubt that he (Marx) did demonstrate the inevitability under our present capitalist system of the recurrent crisis of overproduction, and bound up therewith, the inevitablity of the imperialist wars. His contribution to the understanding of business crisis and the cause of war will not often be denied today, even by the most bourgeois economists." (p. 28)

Eastman sees nothing wrong in stating categorically that crises of overproduction and imperialist wars are inevitable under the present capitalist system. But for Marx also to state that revolutions are inevitable, is unscientific. The crises of over-production and the imperialist wars are exactly what Eastman tries to deny — changes brought about by the inner laws of capitalism.

Like Hook, Eastman agrees with those aspects of the Marxist theoretical structure that "will not often be denied today, even by the most 'bourgeois' economists." But those points in the system of Marxism that breath REVOLUTIONARY LIFE INTO THE SYSTEM are fought against by Hook and Eastman, along with all defenders of exploitation.

When Eastman claims that Marx attributes HIS plan of changing the world to the world itself, he fails to make clear just where the plan of Marx comes from. Eastman talks about "religious attitude," "animistic," "unscientific," etc., which helps leave the impression that the "plan" of Marx is obtained from the MIND OF MAN, that it is an Idea, gathered from the skies as a good goal to strive toward. Eastman does not say this directly, but all of his arguments imply such. But this is completely false, when we double-check the plans, the aims and the ends. We find that these theoretical concepts are themselves nothing but a summary and reflection of OBJECTIVE REALITY. Now let us consider Eastman's formula from two opposite positions. First let us take a "plan" or a goal, based upon a religious or idealist concept,— a plan that is a **desire** of mankind. Apply this "plan of changing the world to the world itself," to the inner laws and you not only have a religious attitude, but a plan that will not materialize.

On the other hand, let us present a plan or goal based upon a scientific investigation of the subject matter, which merely presents a theoretical premise for the objective investigation. Such a plan of changing the world or whatever it is, is based upon the condition under consideration and is scientific. Such examples as the prediction of "crisis of overproduction", "imperialist wars" and their cause that for Eastman are inevitable. What about the prediction of Astronomy, and the "laws" of chemistry which are based upon the world itself?

In reality, in all history, the only plans that have WORKED were plans based upon and reflecting the objective condition to be changed, finding its inner laws, which are separate and apart from the individual. How did man's "plan" to fly materialize? By a religious, idealist plan or by the plan based upon the "world itself" (objective reality) — upon the inner laws of matter in motion on the earth's surface — plans which are "changing the world"?

DO WE DEFEND PHILOSOPHY?

Throughout the book under discussion, Eastman continually talks about the philosophy of Marxism, etc. Let us take a few quotations to show how he used the term to define Marxism as a philosophy:

"...Marx conceived himself to be writing a **philosophy** of history, an explanation of the whole thing as a single process, and one which was leading up to and with necessity including his proposed plan for the future." (p. 25) But on the same page Eastman says that Marx' "theory of history"..."marks a turning point in the whole art of understanding history."

"For Marx as a philosopher, a class struggle of its 'inner' essence was not a concrete fight between people but an abstract contradiction between generalities — between 'forces of production' and 'production relations'." (p. 24) Of course, Eastman's whole argument dealing with the abstract generalities of the class struggle attributed to Marx is wrong, but above all to call the concept of the class struggle part of his philosophy is beyond words.

"Marxism perpetuates itself as animistic philosophy." (p. 24)

"Marx's philosophy of Dialectical Materialism." (p. 100)

"But the philosophy of Dialectical Materialism rests upon the assumption.." (p. 112) The content we will deal with later. Here we only want to point out that from Eastman's view point Dialectical Materialism (and Marxism) is a philosophy.

In the latter part of the same book, Eastman is polemicizing against Hook and says the following against Hook, "Instead of presenting this puzzling state of affairs as it was, Hook keeps under the table Marx's explicit but untranslated repudiation of philosophy, and baldly reports that Marx, in perfect Dewey-like manner, declared that philosophy was henceforth to be 'an instrument in changing the world, an instrument of social liberation.' " (p. 342)

Eastman criticizes Hook but is guilty of the same error.

Marx's Thesis on Feuerbach states as point 11 that "The philosophers have only **interpreted** the world in various ways; the point however, is to **change** it." This terse point is the key to part of the false position Eastman presents. Marx and Engels in repudiating ALL philosophy not only explained the world (even Eastman admits this in quotations we have already presented), but their scientific, (not philosophical) interpretation of history is merely moulded as a guide to action to help CHANGE the world. Throughout the book Eastman harps on this "unscientific" idea but facts of all fields of science prove that all of our progress, discoveries and inventions we owe to the scientific attitude of finding the "inner laws" of the given condition, and then using this interpretation as a guide to action to change the given condition for the needs of man and society.

A distinction must be made here between Hook and Eastman on the question of Philosophy and Marxism. Hook claimed Marxism was a philosophy, and thereby attempted to revise Marxism and to present this position, as a "defender" of Marxism(?); while Eastman rejects Marxism and claims that it is a philosophy. However, as quoted before, Eastman contradicts himself. First he speaks of the great contribution and then he speaks of it as a philosophy.

Eastman and Hook both argue that Marxism is a philosophy, regardless of the fact that each had different aims in the dispute. On that one point they are both wrong.

In his pamphlet of 1934 on Hook, Eastman speaking of Marxism says, Marx repudiated "the very idea that there can be such a thing as philosophy, repeated time and again." (p. 19) This is quite correct.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

As a further development of the argument on the question of interpreting the world and changing it, is the Eastman position on theory and practice. He criticizes the Marxists for their position on the relation of these two factors, and also blasts Dewey, through Hook, for similar views. On this point Eastman is also wrong.

In criticizing Marx on this question, Eastman says, "It was because he had thus succeeded in conceiving the real world and the knowing mind as cooperating in a practical activity, that Marx could declare the highest wisdom to be 'the revolutionary,' practical-critical action. It is because he has succeeded in fusing the object and the true perception of it into a single act, a process toward a goal, that he was able to identify theoretical and practical knowledge, science of history with program of action toward communism, and find

the end of all philosophy, the triumphant swansong of every supreme effort to understand the world, in the very act of changing it for the better, because **that act of practical change is what the real world is.** That is what Marx meant and that is what his words say in the 'Thesis on Feuerbach.' " (1934—A Study of Sidney Hook)

More quotations could be given to present Eastman's argument, but I think it is clear. At one point he says: "It is true, however, that with his metaphysical conception of society and the mind as cooperatively evolving on a dialectical pattern toward the goal he wanted it to reach, Marx anticipated a social engineering attitude and invented a technique of engineering with class forces, which might have been a very late result of that more purely scientific development." (p. 52)

While Hook wants to give Dewey credit for some of Marx's research, Eastman wants to give himself, with his "engineering attitude," credit for the "good" part of what Marx presented. In both cases it is revisionism, and far worse than Bernstein's attempt.

Here we must separate two different positions which Eastman lumps together as one. He speaks of theory and practice, and of society and the mind as cooperating toward a goal Marx WANTS THEM TO ARRIVE AT. Eastman read into the argument the wish-desire of Marx. Marx examined in detail the concrete mode of production, and from this drew his conclusions and his goal. It is one thing to say that I strive toward a "Heaven on Earth" based upon the return of Christ on the basis of the Bible. This is in reality what Eastman attributes to Marx — a religious, metaphysical idea.

It is the opposite to state that ALL OF THE MATERIAL PREREQUISITES ARE AT HAND TO ESTABLISH A SOCIALIST SYSTEM, where all can obtain the necessities of life on the basis of production for use. This would eliminate the exploitation of man by man and bring in man's collective action against nature, and would result in social steps toward greater heights. The latter is practical scientific analysis based upon objective conditions. This is the position of Marxism.

To palm off these two opposite concepts as the same is Eastman's method of debate. Furthermore, to hold to the position of a proper relation between theory and practice — and to equate this with the mind cooperating with society, is also a lumping together of opposites and not of equals as Eastman claims—unless they are presented in the framework of the above second argument dealing with objective factors and not wish-fulfillments.

Only where a scientist who is carrying out research work in a given field of investigation combines to the fullest extent theory and practice, can he make progress toward a solution of the problem confronting him. This position starts with the premise that theory is defined to mean a generalization of the known objective facts to be used as a guide for further understanding. Only on this basis is there any sense to Eastman's argument about society and mind cooperating. Let us give a few examples. If, as Eastman agrees, we can inevitably predict the crises of overproduction and imperialist wars, then those individuals who understand this process can prepare for the coming events. This is also true with revolution. Or one can say that a drought is predicted for a given area. Man's mind can then cooperate with nature as a whole to overcome the most devastating effects of the event. A hurricane is moving up the coast. Man cooperates with the forces at his disposal to overcome it, and save as much as possible from its effects. Only in this practical matter of fact way do the Marxists refer to theory and practice, to the proletarian movement "cooperating with" historical forces that favor us. If these summaries are not based upon objective analysis of the process under consideration they are false.

On the question of theory and practice, John Dewey is far ahead of Eastman on a correct road to understanding.

ON JOHN DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY

Since we have on more than one occasion placed John Dewey above Eastman in our discourse, let us give a brief summary of our position on Dewey so no one will obtain a false view. It is true that Dewey's philosophy of instrumentalism has scattered tid-bits of factual material, but as a system its framework is false and as a philosophy it is idealistic and subjectivistic, in spite of the claim to scientific materialism.

Based upon Experience, under this Philosophy, practice MAKES an idea true or false; while under dialectical materialism an idea is proved by experience and practice true or false. For Dewey truth is "wholly a process within experience". They hold that mind and matter are characters of events. Marxists re-

ject the concept that mind and matter are characters of events. Marxists hold to an objective reality, a world outside of us and outside of our experience. We hold that experience is derived from the interaction between the subject and the objects. Dialectically speaking, ideas are both reflective and instrumental, that is, within the framework of the dialectical process, always grounded in the objective situation.

Above all, John Dewey, like others of the philosophers, psychologists and psycho-analysts, etc., fail to grasp the fundamental importance of a scientific approach to the question of the individual and his environment, by only considering the individual in his immediate surroundings, completely divorced from what we Marxists term, historical materialism; from the mode of production under which these individuals live, its stage of development or decay, its peculiar national combined development which has everything to do with the ideas and thoughts of humans.

Eastman says Marx "..conceived of economics as a genuinely historical science and traced the development of modern capitalistic business out of the previous systems of production and exchange." (p. 117) Yes, Eastman is correct on this. Marx dealt with a "genuinely historical science" and within that objective framework — the **theory** of the working class struggle for freedom is bound up with class **action,** the "mind with society."

Marx reveals the relation of theory to practice in the following quotation from a letter to Ruge, "It does not hinder us from linking our critique (of philosophy) to the critique of politics, from linking it to partisanship in politics, that is, to real struggle; and from identifying it with them. We do not therefore, come before the world as doctrinaires with a new principle: Here is the truth, here kneel down. **We develop from the world new principles from the principles of the world."**

SCIENCE AND IDEOLOGY

"The reason why Marxists have blurred the distinction between science and ideology, that is inextricably involved in Marx's classical statement of his theory of history, is that this distinction is inconsistent with Marx's own philosophy of Dialectical Materialism." (p. 100). This is what Eastman says about Science and Ideology. However, the whole assertion is completely false. In the first place the "distinction" between science and ideology is not "inconsistent" with Dialectical Materialism. Neither have Marx and Engels considered science and ideology as one.

Let us give a couple of quotations. Marx said, "In studying revolutions, one must always distinguish between the material transformation in economic conditions essential to production — which can be established with the exactitude of natural science — and the juridicial, political, religious, artistic, or philosophical, in short the ideological, forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out."

Engels says: "An ideology is a process which is carried out, to be sure, with the consciousness of the so-called thinker, but with a false consciousness. The real motive powers which move him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process."

It makes no difference if the individual is conscious or unconscious of the ideological process, his class position in the struggle, the fact remains that only by the furthest stretching of the imagination can this ideology be considered the same as the science. The statements of Marx and Engels need no comment. They clearly refute Eastman's charge.

But this does not settle the question. Eastman makes a mistake most so-called "Marxists" make. So many students of Marx use terms so loosely that they confuse rather than clarify. Such is the case with many Stalinists especially who in one sentence speak of the proletarian ideology and in the next speak of the proletarian science and mix these concepts up into one knot. But even more important than the mental reflection is the actual material conditions of a process Eastman is trying to study. Engels on more than one occasion states "that the material conditions of life of the men in whose heads this thinking process takes place, ultimately determine the course of the process, necessarily remains unknown to these men, otherwise there would be an end of the whole ideology." If the person becomes conscious of the process and his relation to it — there is an end to the whole ideology. That is, one becomes conscious of the process through scientific understanding, and in reality Engels is posing science **against** ideology, even though the term ideology has been used on many occasions by the radical movement to mean our CONSCIOUS class ideas. In other words, this term has been used in more than one way, and filled with more than one con-

tent. Eastman does not care to stop and give the different definitions of its use. Rather it is a weapon to seize upon for the sake of confusion.

Here is what Marx says about ideology, in his work "German Ideology." We may add that this not only deals with ideology and clearly shows that Marx did not consider ideology and science as an equation, but it also gives the correct materialist position on the question of our mental processes.

"The production of ideas, concepts, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of actual life. Conception, thought, the mental intercourse of men, then still appears as the direct efflux of their material relations. The same is true of mental production, as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion and metaphysics of a people. Men are the producers of their concepts, ideas, etc. — but real producing men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and the intercourse, up to its most far-reaching forms, which correspond to these. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men in their actual life-process. If in all ideology men or their relations appear upside down, as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the reversal of objects on the retina does from their directly physical life-process."

THE WORD "DIALECTIC"

Eastman writes a book against Dialectical Materialism, (in reality not one book, but several books), throughout a period of years, in which you would think that at least he would give a definition of dialectics — but he does not. Eastman can retort — "I give several definitions, and trace the history of the word back to the Greek philosophers." This Eastman does, but Eastman DOES NOT give the Marxian definition of the term. To devote a whole chapter to the subject titled, "The Word Dialectic", and to leave out of it the Marxian definition, no matter where you deal with it indirectly elsewhere, is not a scientific method. It is a sign of weakness.

Here is how Eastman prejudices his reader to the term. This is the same trick that Hook uses — and by the way, the same treatment the word receives from John Dewey in his works. Eastman says, "It (dialectics) is the science of intellectual conversation or debate.." (p. 35) And again, "...Aristotle's rules for thinking, true knowledge could be spun out of man's head by a thought process, this word regained a high position." (p. 35) (for those who read this — this is exact quotation).

Many more "definitions" are given and a whole section of the book dealing with Hegel's contribution on the word dialectic, but not one sentence of one section of the book dealing with the Marxian use of the term. If dialectics is what Eastman, Hook, and John Dewey claim it is in their definitions — then I would reject and fight against this theoretical position as would all other Marxists.

One of Engel's classical definitions is as follows: "The dialectic is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought..." Marx, in the preface to Volume One of Capital says, "My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i. e. the process of thinking which, under the name of "the Idea" he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me, on the contrary, the idea is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought."

From Eastman's false definition and false arguments he can say the following: "But the philosophy (again philosophy!—H.O.) of Dialectical Materialism rests upon the assumption that a hundred years ago Hegel knew all about the mind and substantially finished the science of it. The philosophy of Dialectical Materialism lives or dies with that assumption." (p. 112)

Later we will deal in the concrete with the Marxian position on mind an thoughts, refuting Eastman's claim. Now we merely want to deal with this assertion from a different angle. If dialectics "rest upon the assumption" of what Hegel said about the mind 100 years ago, the whole dispute would be over long ago. Dialectical Materialism would be in its grave long ago.

Dialectical Materialism is THE PROCESS OF NATURE and as a reflection of this process it is THE MOST SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF REASONING. From this premise and reflection, through objective investigation it becomes the theory of knowledge.

MATERIALISM AND IDEALISM

A whole jumble of arguments on sensation and material reality, on sensation and activity, on materialism and idealism is given by Eastman to "prove" that Marxism is not scientific materialism. In reality he takes part of a quotation, or isolated quotations, where a dozen other quotations are there to prove the opposite content; Eastman tries to read in the one quotation, and he also states things falsely and at the same time argues against himself.

"In my opinion," says Eastman, "the dialectical materialists have never actually confronted the true problem of materialism." (p.308) "The proof that they have not is that they continue to lump sensation and ideas together and merely to assert that the mind as a whole or, consciousness, is a copy or reflection of the external world." (p. 308)

He continues and argues that even Lenin in his works against the philosophers, never even touched the problem raised by Mach. Even if it were true that the Marxists, in presenting dialectical materialism, "lumped" sensations and ideas together this in itself would not prove that they never actually confronted the true problem of materialism. That is an important part of the problem but not the key. Eastman forgets his own arguments. On the page preceding this argument Eastman says, "Lenin is quite right when he asserts that 'the doctrine of the independence of the outer world from consciousness is the fundamental proposition of materialism.' " (p. 307) Eastman claims he agrees with Lenin — that the fundamental proposition of materialism is the independence of the outer-world from consciousness — the existence of objective reality. If that is the fundamental proposition, then Eastman cannot argue at the same time that the dialectical materialists never touched the true problem of materialism.

Let us retrace our steps and deal with the quotations from Marx to which Eastman objects. We do not apologize, or find excuse, but we do state that the quotations from the Thesis on Feuerbach were "jotted down in Brussels in the Spring of 1845" as notes, at this early period in the development of Marx's ideas and structure. When they were first published, Engels in a preface said, "These are notes hurriedly scribbled down for later elaboration, absolutely not intended for publication, but they are invaluable as the first document in which is deposited the brilliant germ of the new world outlook." Therefore, if one takes these notes and uses them, they must be taken in relation to other later documents and considered as the ideas in "germ" form. But Eastman takes only ONE quotation from this material and uses this one quotation to build his whole argument that the Marxists are still Hegelian, and don't really understand the true problem of materialism. Even on this one point Eastman is wrong.

Here is the quotation from Marx that Eastman "hangs his hat on": "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism — that of Feuerbach included—is that the object, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the **object** or **contemplation** but not as **human sensuous activity, practice,** not subjectively. Thus it happened that the **active** side, in opposition to materialism was developed by idealism — but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really differentiated from the thought-objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as activity **through objects.** ...Hence he does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary', of practical-critical activity." (First Thesis on Feuerbach)

"This identification — 'hastily scribbled down' — of sensation with material reality, and the two of them with practical human action, enabled him (Marx) to combine his revolutionary will with his conception of the world, and that once accomplished, he fled from the scene where he had 'planted the genial seed of the new philosophy' and never took a stroll in that Marxian position on mind and thoughts refuting direction again throughout his life." (p. 316)

"Marx," according to Eastman, "did not say that sensations are not knowledge-bearing reports of the external world, nor did he say that sensations are stimuli to knowledge, nor did he say that they enable us to react and change the external world. He said, on the contrary, as plainly as words can say it, that sensations and the external world are the **same thing,** and that thing is to be conceived subjectively as practical human-sensible activity." (p. 306)

According to Eastman, Marx stood for the following position on this question:

He "lumped 'sensation and ideas' together merely to assert that the mind as a whole or 'consciousness' is a copy or reflection of the external world." (p. 308)

Marx identified, "sensation with material reality, and the two of them with practical human action," (p. 316)

Marx identifies, "sensation and the external world as the **same thing...**" (p. 306)

In that first thesis Eastman finds all the above! So if we sum up Eastman's different quotations against Marx, he states, that Marx — identifies sensations with ideas, sensation with material reality, and sensation with the external world, and therefore he identifies ideas with material reality and with the external world.

After making this key point against Marx to prove him a sloppy thinker, a non-dialectician, a half-hearted materialist, etc., Eastman says, "Of course, (Of course?) Marx did come further over into the commonsense view of the world than these words imply. In their mature reflection, neither Marx nor Engels identifies human sensation with objective reality of things." (p. 306) Then, if this is not the real position of Marx and Engels why try to build a mountain out of this mole-hill?

But even on the basis of Eastman's argument he is wrong. Let us assume that Marx did not "come over to commonsense". Does Eastman present the case correctly on the Feuerbach thesis? He does not. Nowhere in the eleven theses on Feuerbach does Marx identify sensation with the EXTERNAL world. Rather Marx says in point one, against Feuerbach, "he does not conceive human activity itself as activity **through objects.**" If one does not have a proper relation between "sensuous activity" of the individual (subjectively) and objects around us (objectively and independently of the individual) it will land one into mechanical materialism or in one of the schools of idealism.

"Social life is essentially practical," says the eighth point of the Theses on Feuerbach. Read some of John Dewey's argument in the light of this position — just as Eastman wants us to read Freud in the light of part of the Marxian doctrine, and one will see that Dewey is ahead of Eastman.

LENIN'S POSITION

Let us present a positive position on the question of ideas, sensation in relation to objects, as practical human-sensuous activity. First let us consider Eastman's argument that sensation and ideas are lumped together. Lenin says: "are we...to proceed from things to sensations and thoughts, or from sensation and thought to things? Engels sides with the first —materialism, Mach, with the second — idealism." Lenin again: "Things exist independently of our consciousness, independently of our sensation..." Again, Lenin says: "Our sensation, our consciousness is only a representation of the outer world." Again: "Such is the view of materialism, that matter, acting on our sense organs, produces sensation. Sensation depends upon the brain, nerves, retina, etc., upon matter organized in a certain way. The existence of matter does not depend upon sensation." (Vol. 13 Collected Works)

"For instance, Frederick Engels, the well known collaborator of Marx and co-founder of Marxism — constantly and exclusively speaks in his works of things and their mental images or reflections (Gedanken, Abbilder). It is obvious that these mental images arise only from sensation." "Engels does not say that sensations or ideas are 'symbols' of things, for a consistent materialist ought to use the term, image, picture or reflection instead of symbols..."

Do these few examples sound as if the Marxists say "sensation" and the external world are the same thing?

Lenin says, "To say that 'sense-perception is the existing reality outside of us', is to return to Hume or even Berkely..."

Making this argument absurd, in accusing Hook of a wrong translation which thereby enables Hook to read the opposite in the Thesis on Feuerbach, Eastman goes Hook one better and without a false translation reads the opposite in what Marx says. Eastman says, "Anyone in a state of youthful revolt against Hegel's mystical assertion (referring to Marx) that the essential reality is idea, and that in order to embrace reality in its purity we must move away from the crude impressions of the senses, from 'Sinnlichkeit', is naturally going to shout: 'Sinnlichkeit, — that is truth, reality. That is the real object. That thought-object is what is unreal.' That is what Feuerbach shouted, and that is what Marx repeated after him. That is what the Theses on Feuerbach are about." (1934 pamphlet vs. Hook)

Eastman argues that while Marx rejects the "idea" as truth and reality, in the Theses on Feuerbach, he only jumped over to "sensuality" as truth and reality. He lumps Feuerbach and Marx together, while the theses clearly reveals Marx's opposition to Feuerbach's position. Eastman misses the whole point of the relation between sensation and human activity THROUGH OBJECTS. Instead he says that Marx considered sensation and the external world as THE SAME THING.

Speaking of the Marxists, Eastman says, "They do not even touch upon the true problem of... materialism — the problem of the relation between sense-impressions and our conceptual knowledge of the external world." And again he says, "the increasing divergence between sense-impression and conceptual knowledge..." is at "least the starting point of the question of what the stuff of the world is."

THE KEY TO MATERIALISM

The proof of the Marxists' unscientific position is that they have lumped sensation and ideas together, as quoted before. It is the same argument as before in different form. In the first place this question of the relation of sense-impression and conceptual knowledge is NOT the key question of materialism. The key question of materialism is the question of the "independence of the outer world from consciousness." The existence of objective reality independent of the human, his sensations and his ideas, is the key regardless of the divergence between sense-impressions and conceptual knowledge; that is, does objective reality, NO MATTER WHAT ITS FORM, exist independent of the individual. Engels, dealing with Feuerbach, states it a little differently, but in the same content, when he speaks of "thinking and being" and speaks of, "to reflect about the relation between this soul and the outside world." Lenin says, "sensation is nothing but a direct connection of the mind with the external world; it is the transformation of energy of external excitation into a mental state." (Vol. 13, p. 31)

Eastman does not seem to understand, even though Marx did not deal in the concrete with the question of conceptual knowledge and sense-impressions, that the content of the Theses on Feuerbach, as hastily as the NOTES were "scribbled" down, did deal with the question. One cannot have a correct position on ideas and sensation, on sense-impression and conceptual knowledge if one does not understand THE RELATION BETWEEN SENSUOUSNESS, HUMAN ACTIVITY THROUGH OBJECTS as the Theses on Feuerbach state. If one does not understand that, "reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a pure scholastic question." Eastman isolated the question of the relation of sensation and thought from the question of PRACTICE as the theses on Feuerbach state, and then tried to give the real key to the understanding of materialism.

But, of course, this doesn't mean much to Eastman because his mind is closed. In an argument against Max Braun as late as 1941. Eastman says in "The Call", "We are in a new era — no less than that — and it is absolutely necessary for the labor and radical movement to base their efforts toward a rational society on psychology as well as economics." In reality, Eastman's argument against the Marxists is his insistence on psychology, as well as what he choses out of "economics". Braun, in reply to Eastman, says, "If you are going to take science as your foundation, you must submit to its discipline — which means in the present instance that you must be content to present your psychological hypotheses in terms of 'it seems plausible to me..' rather than 'It is established...' when in fact nothing so definite as you want is established, the evidence is not all in, and the body of psychologists (to state the case generously) is far from in agreement on the matter." More important than Braun's criticism against the psychology of Eastman is the fact that if Eastman presents his theses (that psychology is needed) he must state in the CONCRETE, which school of psychology, which theoretical system. Likewise in economics, since he discards much of the Marxian material. Then we would have a concrete plan to argue on. The same holds true with his question of sense-impressions and conceptual knowledge. Why did he not present his "positive" position as well as his negative and false criticism of Marx? Again we may call your attention to the previous argument with Eastman when he objects to the Marxian "identification", that is, relation of theory with practice. His false position on the theses on Feuerbach lays the basis for his childish statements on theory and practice.

ASPECTS OF DIALECTICS

"Modern Marxists will hasten to assure you that the triadic character of dialectic movement is not essential. And they are quite right." (p. 43) Then Eastman adds, "The essential thing is its going 'from lower to higher'..." First Eastman is in a hurry to agree with the modern revisionists who reject the triad character. Then he tells you that the essential thing is the going from lower to higher. Both statements are wrong. As we have stated before against such people as Hook, that the triad is not the most essential character of the dialectic, it is, nevertheless an important part or aspect of the dialectic process. As an example, I only refer you to the three volumes of

Capital where the factual movement of capitalism is presented in its many ramifications. And in every important aspect Marx reveals not only the ESSENTIAL thing — the contradiction and its motion in transformation, but also its triad development. Let Eastman, Hook, or any other "modern Marxist" explain any dialectic process without revealing its triad aspect.

"To declare that 'proletariat and wealth are opposites' is such loose thinking", says Eastman, "that it seems obvious that the purpose must be other than the definition of the fact with the view of verifying knowledge." (p. 43). It is Eastman, and not Lenin who presents loose thinking in this case. The position Lenin was presenting deals with the factual relation of the workers as the producers of value, who own nothing but their labor power, and the capitalists as the owners of the means of production, who thereby reap the harvest of surplus value. The one obtains greater unemployment, poverty and want; while the capitalists obtain more means of production. It is poverty at one pole and wealth at the other pole. In the dialectical relation of producer and owner Lenin's position on opposites is correct regardless of the exact expression. Eastman does not argue against formulation. He argues against the content.

"..This loose mixture of remarks, appear in almost every page of Lenin's notes (on dialectics—H.O.) This for instance from the next paragraph: quoting Lenin as follows: "Development is a 'struggle of opposites'... Only (this) concept affords a key to 'self-movement' of every existent thing; it alone offers a key to 'leaps', to 'interruptions of continuity', to transformation into opposites', to the destruction of the old and the arising of the new." The quotation of Eastman's is different in form than in some editions of Lenin's works, as is the case of otherEastman quotations: nevertheless, the substance of the quotation in this case is correct. If Eastman thinks what he says above about this clear, precise Lenin's statement on what factually takes place, no wonder he can say (and a lot of "14th Street Marxists" repeat after him) that Lenin's book on "Materialism and Empirio-Criticism" is so many words, is unscientific, and does not even touch the "scientific" problems raised by Mach and others.

When you meet a fellow like Voliva, who insists that the earth is flat, it is hard to find words to express your arguments because he refuses to accept all factual material. So too, with Eastman, on the process of nature. Let us break down Lenin's statement and analyze it. Let Eastman or anyone else reveal any development of anything in nature that is not a "struggle of opposites". Let him find one thing, condition or process in nature that can have its "movement," its "leaps," its "interruptions of continuity" and the destruction of the old and the arising of the new explained on any other basis than the struggle and unity of opposites, as presented by Lenin in these notes on dialectic. More absurd statements by Eastman could be given on different aspects of dialectics.

MARXISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

"Moreover, when the class struggle is over Marxism must lose its essential validity and give place to an entirely different science, for it is obvious that a system of ideas which merely reflects the struggle of classes can play no vital part in reflecting the evolution of a class-free society." (p. 99)

Eastman again makes an equation out of the theory of knowledge — Dialectical Materialism, and Marxism. Otherwise he could not make such a statement. If he understood that Marxism is the application of dialectical materialism to social development and the class struggle his question would already be partially answered. Yes, the Marxists would be the last to claim that their own position and their own leader will remain CONSTANT throughout all conditions, when on the basis of dialectical materialism the only constant factor is changeableness. But this must be understood in, if you please, its dialectical relation, and not in Eastman's, or in Hook's "logical" relation. Just as the capitalist system has its own "inner laws," and with the passing of capitalism new "laws" will take their place; so too, with the passing of classes, after Transition Economy has developed into a higher phase of socialism, Marxism will give way to a new "program of action."

Marxism explains the struggle of man against man and is the proletarian "program of action" against this — for the class struggle. But in a classless society, after classes and the state have by a process of further development become things of the past, man will then func-

tion on a new axis of man against nature; that is, collective man's activity against nature; instead of man against man first, and nature second, as today. This does not mean, as a mechanical presentation or understanding would have it, that competitive activity of man is over. Competitive activity, the struggle of classes, of man against man for the MATERIAL NEEDS OF LIFE will be over. Competition in other spheres, based upon the material needs for every man in society will develop.

In short, this means that the application of DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM to the new society will develop not only a new science, but MANY new fields of research now neglected, to say nothing of the fields warped and twisted by class "social" investigation. If Eastman means that dialectics will give way to a "new science" he does not understand the first principle of what he is trying to criticize. If he means its application to present day society— Marxism as it must be defined scientifically — then we can agree.

Eastman also asks, "how does it happen that scientific socialism, which is merely a reflection of another transitory phase of social development, knows all about the whole process of social development, and all about its relation to the bourgeois phase, and in fact all about the ways and phases of the universe in general." (p. 102)

Here again one can clearly see that Eastman does not understand the difference between Dialectical Materialism (not only as the process of nature and as a reflection of that, the scientific method of reasoning) but also the relation of theoretical system of Marxism to Dialectical Materialism. If the working class merely reflected ANOTHER transitory phase of social development the problem would be different. But historically the working class reflects the key turning point in the stage between social systems based upon the exploitation of man by man (Chattel Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism) and a system of society based upon social ownership and the elimination of the exploitation of man by man. As stated before, transition economy is the dividing period between the struggle now primarily of man against man and the struggle transformed to collective man's efforts against nature. When one is in the valley he does not see what is over the next hill, but when one is on a high mountain he can see over several hills and into several valleys. This is not only true historically for man; it is also true for the method of reasoning one uses. Eastman is still far down in the valley, despite his high education and ability.

THE TURNING POINT IN SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

When a class like the working class is at the turning point, from the rule of the exploiting minority to the rule of the exploited majority, the whole process of social development becomes clearer. It is not due to any intellectual superiority of the working class, it is due to the HISTORICAL CONDITIONS which our position of HISTORICAL MATERIALISM explains in relation to all scientific development of mankind. But when Eastman adds the clause — "and in fact all about the ways and phases of the universe in general," he is clearly mixing up the theoretical system of dialectical materialism with the specific application — Marxism. What was said about Marxism, in relation to historical materialism can also be said with more emphasis about dialectical materialism. It is no accident that the Church was the mainstay against progress yesteryear, and in science, especially in those spheres that exploit nature; where PROFITS can be piled up, was only released after many, many years of struggle. And it is no accident that capitalism as the system of exploitation of man by man fights against these spheres of scientific research (dialectical materialism, Marxism, etc.) which lay bare the WHOLE PROCESS, which help the working class shape weapons to push aside the exploiters as capitalism pushed aside the Church before. But there is still a difference. Whereas the Church and the capitalists BOTH live off exploitation and ignorance of fundamentals of society and the universe, and therefore, could compromise and come to terms with the Church serving the new masters, the working class, in its needs to eliminate all forms of exploitation of man by man, cannot compromise with the exploiters (for there are no others) as any such compromise only leaves open principled capitulation as in the cases of anarchism, social-democracy, centrism and Stalinism.

Aug. 30, 1941.