

# Lenin and Philosophy and other essays

LOUIS ALTHUSSER

Introduction by Fredric Jameson

Translated from the French by Ben Brewster



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## Introduction

by Fredric Jameson

The Althusser we reread today is no longer the center of those heated polemics and ideological battles that characterized the Marxisms of the 1960s and 1970s. Has he now become a Marxist classic? That will partly depend on what Marxism becomes in the new century, and partly on the new post-Cold War situation of globalization and universal commodification which it confronts as a target and a field of action. His work has aroused fierce theoretical opposition, most notably in E.P. Thompson's *Poverty of Theory*. Crude ad hominem attacks have attempted to discredit it, as a result of the tragic events which put an end to his career (but not his writing) and which seem to have been the result of the intermittent mental illness to which he was subject. Meanwhile, his life-long membership in the French Communist Party has led many to discount his positions as mere party-line propaganda and even worse, as Stalinism. This is a point of view which systematically overlooks his principled struggles within that party and against its Stalinist orthodoxies. Finally, the rigors of his style have alienated many readers; and this is no mere matter of taste, but, as I shall show later on, a difficulty inherent in his mode of philosophizing. Nonetheless, it seems possible that today we are in a position to return to Althusser's work (which has been augmented by a series of posthumous publications) in a new way, and make a new assessment of it.

The present collection includes some of Althusser's most stimulating and provocative essays, which touch on the variety of themes with which his work is associated: epistemology, the materialist interpretation of Marx's development, social formation and the state, ideology, Lacanian psychoanalysis and art, on each of which he had distinctive things to say. Do these various "interventions" really make up a philosophical system of some kind? The essay on "Lenin

and Philosophy" would seem to deny it. Basing himself on Marx's famous but enigmatic remark in *The German Ideology*—"morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology... have no history, no development"—Althusser argues against a conception of philosophy as an autonomous realm of systems that evolve in time, and rather as an intervention into theory, and in his own case, as the intervention of class struggle and partisanship into theory. It is a formulation which suggests that Althusser's texts are always polemical and situation-specific; they always address a historical and political context in which he seeks to clarify the stakes, and to reveal any given conceptual debate as a struggle between idealist tendencies of all kinds and Marxian materialism. The peculiar harshness and even occasionally hectoring tone of his writing reflects this omnipresent polemic stance; he corrects our vaguer preconceptions at every turn and implacably specifies and differentiates the crucial nuances (often by way of the omnipresent italicized word, the heightened and significant intonation). This means that every idea in these pages appears only as the idea of someone, as the ideological projection of that idea from an identifiable (political) position: and that Althusser will never be able to give us what he considers to be a correct version of that idea without first discrediting its ideological competitors and revealing them to be ideological in the first place.

Is this complex of interventions and polemic positions then simply to be identified as a form of Marxism? As with Lacan in psychoanalysis, Althusser considered his work to mark a return to some purer spirit of Marxism, a spirit he associated with Leninism and which he considered to have been distorted and displaced, first by the socialism of the Second International, and then by Stalinism, as well as by the various existential and humanist Marxisms (Sartre, Kolakowski, the Yugoslavian Praxis school) influential in his own period. These "deviations," fully as much as the idealisms of bourgeois philosophy which in any case unwittingly tainted them, are the principal targets of his war on all fronts to restore Marxism–Leninism to its original class-based antagonistic stance. In particular, he fought to secure a radical de-Stalinization of the Communist Party (we are in the Khrushchev era) not in any liberal (humanist) direction, but for a genuinely left and revolutionary politics. The evolution of these parties since Eurocommunism and above all since the disintegration of the Soviet Union makes this attempt even more meaningful than it was at the time.

But has not "Althusserianism" been termed a "structural Marxism"? And is not Althusser to be numbered (as he has so often been) among the great or founding figures of structuralism as such, along with Claude Lévi-Strauss,

Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (these last two indeed personally associated with Althusser over a considerable period)? And if so, what would that imply for the nature of the Marxism he himself represented as a more authentic and original variety?

The answer lies in the nature of Marxism itself, and I will take the liberty of rephrasing what I take to have been Althusser's position in a rather different language (which he would no doubt have rigorously disputed). Marxism is not a philosophy, I would argue (so far in agreement with Althusser): it is, like psychoanalysis and unlike any other contemporary mode of thought, what I will call a unity-of-theory-and-practice. This means that it has concepts, but that those concepts are also forms of practice, so that one cannot simply debate them in a disinterested philosophical way without the uncomfortable intervention of practical positions and commitments. But it also means that the various philosophical currents of the time have always been able to seize on those concepts and to transform them into so many distinct and seemingly autonomous philosophies: thus we have had a positivistic Marxism (Engels), a Kantian Marxism (the Second International), a Hegelian Marxism (Lukacs), a pragmatist Marxism (Sidney Hook), and so on down to the various phenomenological, existentialist, religious, yes even poststructuralist or postmodern, Marxisms of the post–War period. Each of these "philosophies" has in my opinion something to teach us, and illuminates a new aspect of that original unity-of-theory-and-practice which is Marxism as such; but the latter is always distinct from all of them.

So there would be nothing particularly surprising about the appearance of some properly structuralist Marxism (taken as just such a "philosophy") except that we must register the fact that Althusser fought unremittingly against that characterization of his own work. For one thing, his is not a language-based philosophy; it conceives of "structure" (a word he shows some reluctance to use), not as a set of binary oppositions, but rather as distinct levels, related to each other but each one semi-autonomous and having its own specific logic. Indeed, I would myself be willing to call Althusser a structural Marxist, but on one key condition: that it be clearly understood in advance that for him there exists only *one* structure, namely the mode of production as such. His essay on "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in this collection, demonstrates the way in which this view leads him constantly to differentiate what he calls levels of effectivity; to differentiate state power from the various instances that reinforce it (in the law, the family, the educational apparatus, and so forth); and later on, in the striking "Letter on Art," to differentiate art from all of these—

all the while insisting on that “ultimately determining instance” of the mode of production which unites all of them in difference, and makes it important and indeed urgent to grasp the various levels as semi-autonomous ones, and not as completely independent of each other and autonomous as such.

But Althusser’s was not only a war against those “humanist” Marxisms destined to lead fatally to Social Democracy; or against the various bourgeois structuralisms themselves. It was also and very specifically a struggle against the Hegelianization of Marx and the various traditions which insisted on describing the latter’s dialectic in terms easily assimilable to Hegel’s idealist one. After Lukács and *History and Class Consciousness*, indeed, and after Alexandre Kojève’s famous lectures on Hegel in France in the 1930s, the prestige and influence of Hegel has never ceased to increase, even among Marxists in the West, who saw the return to the original Hegelian dialectic as a defense against and a correction of the cut-and-dried orthodox dialectical materialism of the Stalinist East. Althusser, however, considered the hegemonic Stalinist philosophy as being very precisely Hegelian (whatever the taboos on the latter’s name in the Soviet Union), and sought to cleanse the Marxist tradition of any remnants of that “flirtation” with the Hegelian dialectic, to which Marx himself confessed in the original Preface to *Capital* Volume One. This explains Althusser’s rather startling proposal that neophytes begin reading *Capital* Volume One only with Part II, thereby omitting what is probably its most famous chapter: on the “theological intricacies” of the commodity and its “fetishism.” But this operation demands that we reexamine the positions of Lenin himself, whose most notorious philosophical and truly vulgar materialist statement—*Materialism and Empirio-criticism*—Althusser here ingeniously seeks to recuperate and to reinvent. What is embarrassing for materialists in Lenin’s own development is of course the intense and enthusiastic engagement with Hegel’s *Logic* which the founder of Marxism–Leninism undertook in his Swiss exile in the first years of World War I. The extensive notes Lenin made on Hegel opened the door, indeed, for later commentators (most notably Raya Dunevskaya and Tony Smith) to claim that the entire plan of the uncompleted five volumes of *Capital* is organized around the dialectical principles Marx himself derived from his own study of the *Logic* in the years immediately preceding the definitive composition of Volume One. Many scandalous observations are to be found in Lenin’s notes on the subject, most notably his “aphorism”: “It is impossible completely to understand Marx’s *Capital*, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel’s *Logic*. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!”

It is a remark, and an authority, which threatens to bring Althusser’s own anti-Hegelian project to a grinding halt. The reader will be able to judge whether Althusser’s bold confrontation with this dilemma is successful; but will certainly admire the agile footwork with which he stages his argument; and can perhaps at least endorse his remarkable conclusion (as I do), namely that: “a century and a half later no one has understood Hegel because it is impossible to understand Hegel without having thoroughly studied and understood *Capital*!”

In fact this unexpected reversal gives us the key to Althusser’s view of history as a “process without a subject” (and in a later formulation, without a telos). The process turns out to be a materialist dialectic of history, a dialectic freed from all Hegelian idealism: in other works, the conception will be elaborated in a more properly “structuralist” language, as a movement of conjunctures—revolutionary moments or openings—which are complexly articulated and structurally “overdetermined.” The term is derived from Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* and is intended to displace the familiar old economic determinisms of the Marxist tradition by a notion of the multiple causations of events, which are themselves grasped as complex interactions of precisely those multiple social levels we mentioned earlier. It is a startlingly original contribution, which could not but strongly influence later historiography, both political and cultural, even though the famous “ultimately determining instance” of the economic remains a “bone stuck in the throat” of even the more sympathetic bourgeois readers.

Even more controversial has been Althusser’s contribution to what he would refuse to call epistemology, and which is only partially reflected in the present collection. The lesson Althusser sought to teach in this area is familiar from the other disciplines, most notably from sociological and literary texts, namely that conceptual statements are not about the world (do not in this sense have “reference”), but concern other texts and other conceptual statements. The essay on the figurative painter Cremonini may give us an unexpected and more fruitful way of approaching this otherwise paradoxical philosophical position:

His whole strength as a figurative painter lies in the fact that he does not ‘paint’ ‘objects’.... nor ‘places’.... nor ‘times’ or ‘moments’.... Cremonini ‘paints’ the *relations* which bind the objects, places, and times. Cremonini is a *painter of abstraction*. Not an abstract painter.... but a painter of the real *abstract*.... real relations (as relations they are necessarily *abstract*) between ‘men’ and their ‘things’, or rather, to give the term its stronger sense, between ‘things’ and their ‘men.’ (230)

Thus the categories and the concepts through which we think the real are not themselves the same as immediate reality (the concept of sugar, as Althusser likes to quote Spinoza, does not taste sweet); and they operate by way of breaks with each other, and of the kinds of interventions we have described in Althusser's own work. Indeed, the great scientific revolutions themselves emerge, not as discoveries about the real, but as "epistemological breaks" (Gaston Bachelard's influential term) with their predecessors. And this is as true of the two great earlier continents of knowledge—mathematics and physics—as of the third new continent of history discovered by Marx. Whence the specifically Althusserian issue of Marx's own epistemological break with his idealist predecessors and indeed the question of where that break is to be located biographically and chronologically: thus, not the least scandalous moment in Althusser's work lies in the consignment of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*—a whole new departure for a different tradition of modern or Western Marxism—to the idealism of a young Marx *before* the break. Althusser's position here—in my view quite defensible—is that the early Marx is essentially anthropological and still seeks to produce a concept of human nature or the human essence; while the Marx of *Capital* has created a form that can utterly do without such purely philosophical and ideological presuppositions.

We cannot here deal any further with the complexities of Althusserian epistemology (of which it only remains to say that its most striking and for many unacceptable feature is the absence from it of any theory of reference). On the other hand what is very centrally represented in the present collection is the even more famous and influential Althusserian theory of ideology. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" pioneers a position later on adopted by Pierre Bourdieu and others that what we normally think of as ideological positions—thoughts, opinions, world-views, with all their political implications and consequences—never exist only in the mind or in individual experience and consciousness; they are always supported and reinforced, indeed reproduced, by social institutions and apparatuses, whether those are state based, like the army or the judicial instance, or seemingly as private as the family and the school, the art museum and the institutions of media, the church and the small-claims court. Ideology is institutional first and foremost and only later on to be considered a matter of consciousness.

It should be noted that this proposal also constitutes an intervention into the Marxist tradition as well. To be sure, an older Marxism also spoke of social "reproduction" as well as the relationship of base and superstructure that gov-

erns the connections between capitalism and its legal and cultural "instances." This notion of base and superstructure (which only appears once in Marx's own writing, and in a very secondary place indeed) has been an easy target for all modern critics of Marxism, who rightly denounce its mechanical nature and its oversimplification and lack of mediations. My own view is that all these criticisms are justified if the scheme of base and superstructure comes as an explanation and a solution. If on the contrary it stands as the starting point and the problem to be worked out it remains indispensable. Althusser endorses it as well, but characterizes it as merely "descriptive," as a kind of first moment in which there first appears a contradiction to be resolved.

When one combines the base-and-superstructure formula with the problem of social reproduction, everything changes. The former is now set in motion as it were, and a whole new account of social temporality is required which it is the function of the influential Althusserian conception of the Ideological State Apparatus (as distinguished from the repressive apparatuses of the State) to supply.

Paradoxically, however, it is not only this first part of the essay which has had an impact; its second part, "On Ideology," has been if anything even more influential insofar as it offered a whole new theory of ideology indebted to Lacanian psychoanalysis. The essay on "Freud and Lacan" puts the case for Lacan's originality, in a way no doubt unsatisfactory for the Lacanians themselves, but extraordinarily suggestive for Marxists hitherto hostile to psychoanalysis in general and ignorant of Lacan in particular. In psychoanalysis Althusser saw another anti-humanism (psychoanalysis is not a psychology or an anthropology) and also another model of a 'process without a subject' (for Lacan the conscious subject, the ego or the self, is a secondary phenomenon and the space of error and misrecognition). His essay explains the fundamental innovation of Lacan as the separation of human experience into three incommensurable dimensions: the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary, where the Symbolic designates the impersonal and collective realm of language and its various social positions, and the Imaginary that of individual or binary human relations, the so-called mirror stage, and the realm of the ego.

It is then these concepts that Althusser will deploy for his own theory of ideology, prefacing it with two arresting provisos: first, that ideology has no history, in other words it is a function inseparable from human life as such, and second (and as a consequence), that there will always be ideology, in whatever future and more perfect society one may imagine. This means that Althusser has discarded the traditional form of the opposition between science and ide-

ology. Science and scientific revolutions and discoveries take place on the epistemological level we have tried to characterize above; while ideology is a function of everyday life and the choices and paths of the individual navigating it. With this in mind, we can begin to appreciate the richness and originality of his famous formulation: "Ideology is a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence."

The Lacanian overtones of the formula alert us to the way in which ideology positions the individual self (the Imaginary) in its relationship to the complex and indeed unrepresentable totality of collective and institutional realities all around it. Its language seems to conflate the Lacanian Real with the Symbolic Order as such; but this only underscores the fact that, with the exception of those rare and frightening moments when the Real breaks through, we normally apprehend reality only by way of the mediation of the Symbolic Order. The formula does not exclude some scientific approach to the understanding of those "conditions of existence," but only specifies that, however "scientifically" we may be able to grasp those conditions, we must still and always invent a relationship of our individual and biographical self to that conception; and that relationship is bound in one way or another to be one of commitment, whether to the status quo or to a struggle against it. Ideology is thus, to use a Heideggerian expression, our Being-in-the-World.

The theory of ideology is completed by an account of that mechanism whereby the relationship is achieved, and which Althusser terms "interpellation" or in other words the way in which the social order speaks to us as individuals and as it were calls us by name. It can best be understood as the system of roles and social positions contained in the impersonal and collective Symbolic Order: the latter furnishes us the options available in our social and historical moment. We can simply adopt one of these, or we can refuse them all in revolt; or finally we can attempt to invent new ones, for which our society has not yet provided. The constraints of interpellation are simply the possibilities of our own historical situation, the hand we have been dealt by history, the terms with which we must work.

A complex debate has raged around Althusser's theory of ideology since it was first proposed, and has revealed its complexities as well as its internal problems. Still, it offers us one of the most stimulating "solutions" to the dilemma of the incommensurability of individual and collective yet proposed in recent philosophy. Had this been the only conceptual innovation proposed by Louis Althusser in a varied and wide-ranging *oeuvre*, his name would be secure in the history of modern philosophy.

# Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon

*Interview conducted by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi*

1

**C**an you tell us a little about your personal history? What brought you to Marxist philosophy?

In 1948, when I was 30, I became a teacher of philosophy and joined the PCE. Philosophy was an interest; I was trying to make it my profession. Politics was a passion; I was trying to become a Communist militant.

My interest in philosophy was aroused by materialism and its critical function: for *scientific* knowledge, against all the mystifications of *ideological* 'knowledge'. Against the merely moral denunciation of myths and lies, for their rational and rigorous criticism. My passion for politics was inspired by the revolutionary instinct, intelligence, courage and heroism of the working class in its struggle for socialism. The War and the long years of captivity had brought me into living contact with workers and peasants, and acquainted me with Communist militants.

It was politics which decided everything. Not politics in general: Marxist-Leninist politics.

First I had to find them and understand them. That is always extremely difficult for an intellectual. It was just as difficult in the fifties and sixties, for reasons with which you are familiar: the consequences of the 'cult', the Twentieth Congress, then the crisis of the international Communist Movement. Above all, it was not easy to resist the spread of contemporary 'humanist' ideology, and bourgeois ideology's other assaults on Marxism.

Once I had a better understanding of Marxist-Leninist politics, I began to have a passion for philosophy *too*, for at last I began to understand the great thesis of Marx, Lenin and Gramsci: that philosophy is fundamentally *political*.

Everything that I have written, at first alone, later in collaboration with younger comrades and friends, revolves, despite the 'abstraction' of our essays, around these very concrete questions.

## 2

*Can you be more precise: why is it generally so difficult to be a Communist in philosophy?*

To be a Communist in philosophy is to become a partisan and artisan of Marxist-Leninist philosophy: of dialectical materialism.

It is not easy to become a Marxist-Leninist philosopher. Like every 'intellectual', a philosophy teacher is a petty bourgeois. When he opens his mouth, it is petty-bourgeois ideology that speaks: its resources and ruses are infinite. You know what Lenin says about 'intellectuals'. Individually certain of them may (politically) be declared *revolutionaries*, and courageous ones. But as a mass, they remain 'incorrigibly' petty-bourgeois in ideology. Gorky himself was, for Lenin, who admired his talents, a *petty-bourgeois* revolutionary. To become 'ideologists of the working class' (Lenin), 'organic intellectuals' of the proletariat (Gramsci), intellectuals have to carry out a radical revolution in their ideas: a long, painful and difficult re-education. An endless external and *internal* struggle.

Proletarians have a 'class instinct' which helps them on the way to proletarian 'class positions'. Intellectuals, on the contrary, have a petty-bourgeois class instinct which fiercely resists this transition.

A proletarian *class position* is more than a mere proletarian 'class instinct'. It is the consciousness and practice which conform with the *objective* reality of the proletarian class struggle. Class instinct is subjective and spontaneous. Class position is objective and rational. To arrive at proletarian class positions, the class instinct of proletarians only needs to be *educated*; the class instinct of the petty bourgeoisie, and hence of intellectuals, has, on the contrary, to be *revolutionized*. This education and this revolution are, in the last analysis, determined by proletarian class struggle conducted on the basis of the principles of Marxist-Leninist *theory*.

As the *Communist Manifesto* says, knowledge of this *theory* can help *certify* intellectuals to go over to working-class positions.

Marxist-Leninist theory includes a *science* (historical materialism) and a *philosophy* (dialectical materialism).

Marxist-Leninist philosophy is therefore one of the two *theoretical* weapons indispensable to the class struggle of the proletariat. Communist

militants must assimilate and use the principles of the theory: science and philosophy. The proletarian revolution needs militants who are both scientists (historical materialism) and philosophers (dialectical materialism) to assist in the defence and development of theory.

The formation of these philosophers runs up against two great difficulties.

A first—*political*—difficulty. A professional philosopher who joins the Party remains, ideologically, a petty bourgeois. He must revolutionize his thought in order to occupy a proletarian class position in philosophy.

This political difficulty is '*determinant*' in the last instance'.

A second—*theoretical*—difficulty. We know in what direction and with what principles we must work in order to define this class position in *philosophy*. But we must develop Marxist philosophy: it is theoretically and politically urgent to do so. Now, this work is vast and difficult. For in Marxist theory, philosophy has lagged behind the science of history.

Today, in our countries, this is the '*dominant*' difficulty.

## 3

*You therefore distinguish between a science and a philosophy in Marxist theory? As you know, this distinction is often contested today.*

I know. But this 'contestation' is an old story.

To be *extremely* schematic, it may be said that, in the history of the Marxist movement, the suppression of this distinction has expressed either a rightist or a leftist deviation. The rightist deviation suppresses philosophy: only science is left (positivism). The leftist deviation suppresses science: only philosophy is left (subjectivism). There are 'exceptions' to this (cases of 'inversion'), but they 'confirm' the rule. The great leaders of the Marxist Workers' Movement from Marx and Engels to today have always said: these deviations are the result of the influence and domination of bourgeois ideology over Marxism. For their part, they always defended the distinction (science, philosophy), not only for theoretical, but also for vital political reasons. Think of Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* or '*Left-Wing*' *Communism*. His reasons are blindingly obvious.

## 4

*How do you justify this distinction between science and philosophy in Marxist theory?*

I shall answer you by formulating a number of provisional and schematic theses.

1. The fusion of Marxist theory and the Workers' Movement is the most important event in the whole history of the class struggle, i.e. in practically the whole of human history (first effects: the socialist revolutions).

2. Marxist theory (science and philosophy) represents an unprecedented revolution in the history of human knowledge.

3. Marx founded a new science: the science of history. Let me use an image. The sciences we are familiar with have been installed in a number of great 'continents'. Before Marx, two such continents had been opened up to scientific knowledge: the continent of Mathematics and the continent of Physics. The first by the Greeks (Thales), the second by Galileo. Marx opened up a third continent to scientific knowledge: the continent of History.

4. The opening up of this new continent has induced a revolution in philosophy. That is a law: philosophy is always linked to the sciences.

Philosophy was born (with Plato) at the opening up of the continent of Mathematics. It was transformed (with Descartes) by the opening up of the continent of Physics. Today it is being revolutionized by the opening up of the continent of History by Marx. This revolution is called dialectical materialism.

Transformations of philosophy are always rebounds from great scientific discoveries. Hence *in essentials*, they arise *after the event*. That is why philosophy has lagged behind science in Marxist theory. There are other reasons which we all know about. But at present this is the dominant one.

5. As a mass, only proletarian militants have recognized the revolutionary scope of Marx's scientific discovery. Their political practice has been transformed by it.

And here we come to the greatest *theoretical* scandal in contemporary history.

As a mass, the intellectuals, on the contrary, even those whose 'professional' concern it is (specialists in the human sciences, philosophers), have not really recognized, or have refused to recognize, the unprecedented scope of Marx's scientific discovery, which they have condemned and despised, and which they distort when they do discuss it.

*With a few exceptions*, they are still 'dabbling' in political economy, sociology, ethnology, 'anthropology', 'social psychology', etc., etc., even today, *one hundred years after Capital*, just as some *Aristotelian* physicists were still 'dabbling' in physics, *fifty years after Galileo*. Their 'theories' are ideological anachronisms, rejuvenated with a large dose of intellectual subtleties and ultra-modern mathematical techniques.

But this theoretical scandal is not a scandal at all. It is an effect of the ideological class struggle: for it is bourgeois ideology, bourgeois 'culture' which is in power, which exercises 'hegemony.' As a mass, the intellectuals, including many Communist and Marxist intellectuals, are, *with exceptions*, dominated in their theories by bourgeois ideology. *With exceptions*, the same thing happens in the 'human' sciences.

6. The same scandalous situation in philosophy. Who has understood the astounding philosophical revolution induced by Marx's discovery? Only proletarian militants and leaders. As a mass, on the contrary, professional philosophers have not even suspected it. When they mention Marx it is always, with extremely rare exceptions, to attack him, to condemn him, to 'absorb' him, to exploit him or to *revise* him.

Those, like Engels and Lenin, who have defended dialectical materialism, are treated as philosophically insignificant. The real scandal is that certain Marxist philosophers have succumbed to the same infection, in the name of 'anti-dogmatism'. But here, too, the reason is the same: the effect of the ideological class struggle. For it is bourgeois ideology, bourgeois 'culture', which is in power.

7. The crucial tasks of the Communist movement *in theory*:

- to recognize and know the revolutionary theoretical scope of Marxist-Leninist science and philosophy;
- to struggle against the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois world outlook which always threatens Marxist theory, and which deeply impregnates it today. The general form of this world outlook: Economism (today 'technocracy') and its 'spiritual complement' Ethical Idealism (today 'Humanism'). Economism and Ethical Idealism have constituted the basic opposition in the bourgeois world outlook since the origins of the bourgeoisie. The current philosophical form of this world outlook: neopositivism and its 'spiritual complement', existentialist-phenomenological subjectivism. The variant peculiar to the Human Sciences: the ideology called 'structuralist';
- to conquer for science the majority of the Human Sciences, above all, the Social Sciences, which, with exceptions, have occupied as imposters the continent of History, the continent whose keys Marx has given us;
- to develop the new science and philosophy with all the necessary rigour and daring, linking them to the requirements and inventions of the practice of revolutionary class struggle.

*In theory*, the decisive link at present: Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

## 5

*You have said two apparently contradictory or different things: 1. philosophy is basically political; 2. philosophy is linked to the sciences. How do you conceive this double relationship?*

Here again I shall give my answer in the form of schematic and provisional theses.

1. The class positions in confrontation in the class struggle are 'represented' in the domain of practical ideologies (religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic ideologies) by *world outlooks* of antagonistic tendencies: in the last instance idealist (bourgeois) and materialist (proletarian). Everyone had a world outlook spontaneously.

2. World outlooks are *represented* in the domain of *theory* (science + the 'theoretical' ideologies which surround science and scientists) by *philosophy*. Philosophy represents the class struggle in theory. That is why philosophy is a struggle (*Kampf*, said Kant), and basically a *political* struggle: a class struggle. Everyone is not a philosopher spontaneously, but everyone may become one.

3. Philosophy exists as soon as the theoretical *domain* exists: as soon as a *science* (in the strict sense) exists. Without sciences, no philosophy, only world outlooks. The *stake* in the battle and the battlefield must be distinguished. The ultimate stake of philosophical struggle is the struggle *for hegemony* between the two great tendencies in world outlook (materialist and idealist). The *main* battlefield in this struggle is scientific knowledge: for it or against it. The number-one philosophical battle therefore takes place on the frontier between the scientific and the ideological. There the idealist philosophies which exploit the sciences struggle against the materialist philosophies which serve the sciences. The philosophical struggle is a sector of the class struggle between world outlooks. In the past, materialism has always been *dominated* by idealism.

4. The science founded by Marx has changed the whole situation in the theoretical domain. It is a *new* science: the science of history. Therefore, for the first time ever, it has enabled us to know the world outlooks which philosophy represents in theory; it enables us to know philosophy. It provides the means to transform the world outlooks (revolutionary class struggle conducted according to the principles of Marxist theory). Philosophy is therefore doubly revolutionized. Mechanistic materialism, 'idealistic in history,' becomes dialectical materialism. The balance of forces is reversed: now materialism can dominate idealism in philosophy, and, if the political con-

ditions are realized, it can carry the class struggle for hegemony between world outlooks.

Marxist-Leninist philosophy, or dialectical materialism, represents the proletarian class struggle *in theory*. In the union of Marxist theory and the Workers' Movement (the *ultimate* reality of the union of theory and practice) philosophy ceases, as Marx said, to 'interpret the world'. It becomes a weapon with which 'to change it': *revolution*.

## 6

*Are these the reasons which have made you say that it is essential to read Capital today?*

Yes. It is essential to read and study *Capital*.

- in order really to understand, in all its scope and all its scientific and philosophical consequences, what proletarian militants have long understood in practice: the revolutionary character of Marxist theory.
- in order to defend that theory against all the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois interpretations, i.e. revisions, which seriously threaten it today: in the first place the opposition Economism/Humanism.
- in order to develop Marxist theory and produce the scientific concepts indispensable to the analysis of the class struggle today, in our countries and elsewhere.

It is essential to read and study *Capital*. I should add, it is necessary, essential to read and study Lenin, and all the great texts, old and new, to which has been consigned the experience of the class struggle of the international Workers' Movement. It is essential to study the practical works of the Revolutionary Workers' Movement in their reality, their problems and their contradictions: their past and, above all, their *present* history.

In our countries there are immense resources for the revolutionary class struggle today. But they must be sought where they are: in the exploited masses. They will not be 'discovered' without close contact with the masses, and without the weapons of Marxist-Leninist theory. The bourgeois ideological notions of 'industrial society', 'neo-capitalism', 'new working class', 'affluent society', 'alienation' and *tutti quanti* are anti-scientific and anti-Marxist: built to fight revolutionaries.

I should therefore add one further remark: the most important of all.

In order really to understand what one 'reads' and studies in these theoretical, political and historical works, one must directly experience oneself the two

realities that determine them through and through: the reality of theoretical practice (science, philosophy) in its concrete life; the reality of the *practice of revolutionary class struggle* in its concrete life, in close contact with the masses. For if theory enables us to understand the laws of history, it is not intellectuals, nor even theoreticians, it is the *masses* who make history. It is essential to learn with theory—but at the same time and crucially, it is essential to learn with the masses.

## 7

*You attach a great deal of importance to rigour, including a rigorous vocabulary. Why is that?*

A single word sums up the *master* function of philosophical practice: 'to draw a dividing line' between the true ideas and false ideas. Lenin's words.

But the same word sums up one of the essential operations in the direction of the practice of class struggle: 'to draw a dividing line' between the antagonistic classes. Between our class friends and our class enemies.

*It is the same word.* A theoretical dividing line between true ideas and false ideas. A political dividing line between the people (the proletariat and its allies) and the people's enemies.

Philosophy represents the people's class struggle in theory. In return it helps the people to distinguish in *theory* and in all *ideas* (political, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) between true ideas and false ideas. In principle, true ideas always serve the people; false ideas always serve the enemies of the people.

Why does philosophy fight over words? The realities of the class struggle are 'represented' by 'ideas', which are 'represented' by words. In scientific and philosophical reasoning, the words (concepts, categories) are 'instruments' of knowledge. But in political, ideological and philosophical struggle, the words are also weapons, explosives or tranquillizers and poisons. Occasionally, the whole class struggle may be summed up in the struggle for one word against another word. Certain words struggle amongst themselves as enemies. Other words are the site of an *ambiguity*: the stake in a decisive but undecided battle.

*For example:* Communists struggle for the suppression of *classes* and for a communist society, where, one day, all men will be free and brothers. However, the whole classical Marxist tradition has refused to say that Marxism is a *Humanism*. Why? Because *practically*, i.e. in *the facts*, the word Humanism is exploited by an ideology which uses it to fight, i.e. to kill, another, true, word, and one vital to the proletariat: the *class struggle*.

*For example:* revolutionaries know that, in *the last instance*, everything depends not on techniques, weapons, etc., but on militants, on their class-consciousness, their devotion and their courage. However, the whole Marxist tradition has refused to say that it is '*man*' who makes history. Why? Because practically, i.e. in *the facts*, this expression is exploited by bourgeois ideology which uses it to fight, i.e. to kill another, true, expression, one vital for the proletariat: *it is the masses who make history*.

At the same time, philosophy, even in the lengthy works where it is most abstract and difficult, fights over words: against lying words, against ambiguous words; for correct words. It fights over 'shades of opinion'.

Lenin said: 'Only short-sighted people can consider factional disputes and a strict differentiation between shades of opinion inopportune or superfluous. The fate of Russian Social-Democracy for very many years to come may depend on the strengthening of one or the other "shade"' (*What is to be Done?*).

The philosophical fight over words is a part of the political fight. Marxist-Leninist philosophy can only complete its abstract, rigorous and systematic theoretical work on condition that it fights both about very 'scholarly' words (concept, theory, dialectic, alienation, etc.) and about very simple words (man, masses, people, class struggle).

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