winter 2024 volume 3 | issue 1 | 77–110

marxism & sciences

A JOURNAL OF NATURE, CULTURE, HUMAN AND SOCIETY

id#: *m&s.*2403.03104 ARTICLE

Evald Ilyenkov and Marek Siemek on Turning Marxism into a Science

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ABSTRACT: The paper discusses the problem of the rupture between theory and practice in relation to the idea of the identity of dialectics, logic and theory of knowledge. Evald Ilyenkov and Marek Siemek show that the tepid attitude of marxist theorists towards philosophy, which is based on individual quotations of Marx and Engels rather than on a deep theoretical reflection on their cognitive foundations, has led to the elimination of important epistemological issues from Marxism and a general retreat of understanding of knowledge to a pre-Kantian level, where practice is understood as something only external to theory. This entails distortions in goal-setting and the choice of means in the context of mass movements associated with the emancipation of labour. Lenin warns of these difficulties associated with a lack of high philosophical culture in his "philosophical testament." In an attempt to fulfil this task, Siemek and Ilyenkov undertake a serious reversal of scientific consciousness to the problematics contained in the works of the German idealists. Both Siemek and Ilyenkov point out that the marxist theory of knowledge has yet to be created, that in the texts of the classics it is given only in a fragmentary form, in some individual aphoristic remarks, and that in order not to "reduce dialectics to the sum of examples" (Lenin), we must rediscover the works of the German idealists, read them in the most profound way in the context of contemporary problems and challenges, carry out their independent materialist revision, and ground our minds in a future practice which can be nothing other than the practice of the future. A practice that today manifests itself in the practice of knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Ilyenkov, Siemek, *dialectics*, Hegel, Marx, theory of knowledge, science, ideal.

Morozov, Maxim. 2024. "Evald Ilyenkov and Marek Siemek on Turning Marxism into a Science." *Marxism & Sciences* 3(1): 77–110. https://doi.org/10.56063/MS.2403.03104

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• e-mail: maxdiscovery22[at]gmail.com
• DOI: 10.56063/MS.2403.03104
• *Received:* 30.10.2023; *Revised:* 14.01.2024; *Accepted:* 28.01.2024.
• *Available online*: 24.03.2024

On Formal Causes and Material Reasons

Turning to "round numbers" always carries a certain problematic nature. Why do we only on a person's birthday strive to show him/her that we remember him/her, to say kind words, to show indifference? Commemorative dates of various events, including anniversaries of birth and death of great thinkers, artists, historical figures, year after year raise the same question: is it necessary to have a formal occasion to address the memory, their legacy? To what extent is the Pythagorean "mysticism of numbers" "to blame" for this, and is there room for a reasonable form of reason here? Is it only the coincidence of zeros and ones that makes us turn to dialogue with the outstanding "heroes of the spirit," as Hegel called them?

Just recently we celebrated the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx, and just a little later, one after another, the anniversaries of the scientists whose works served, as Lenin claimed, as "the source and constituent part" of the Marxist doctrine: Georg Hegel, Charles Fourier and David Ricardo were born a quarter of a millennium ago. As we continue to scrutinise the series of formal coincidences, we can see that this year in general has been rich in dates related to political economy: Ricardo passed away on 11 September 1823, and another famous predecessor of Marx, Adam Smith, was born a hundred years and three months before that. Anyone who did not yawn at literature lessons on reading Pushkin's immortal "novel in verse" will remember from whom young Eugene Onegin learnt to "judge how the state grows rich;" it was these lines that F. Engels quoted with pleasure to his guests, demonstrating his knowledge of the Russian language.

The coming year brings two huge occasions for philosophy, and I wish that they would not remain merely formal. I would like to see thought break through the floods of glorification and empty talk about Immanuel Kant in honor of his tercentenary. So that attention to the largest and brightest Soviet philosopher, Evald Vasylievich Ilyenkov, who would have turned one hundred years old, would not turn into a distant and polite courtesy. How can one not recall the famous words of Gotthold Lessing? "Who would not praise a Klopstock? But will everybody read him? No. We would like to be exalted less, but read more diligently!"

But if this wish is not to remain empty, it is necessary to identify the need to comprehend the influence that the works of Ilyenkov and Kant have on the possibility of overcoming the present—very sad—state of affairs, both in reality and in science, which reflects this reality in its

pure forms. This influence forces us to recall Hegel's famous thought about the sensible identity of opposites, which reason assumes only in isolation: everyone knows that form is not the same as content. If we think a little deeper, it is easy to understand that the formal reason points to a certain content, which is ideally represented in this reason, and which is generated by a certain problematic nature of the subject under study. In other words, the contradiction of form and content reflects the contradiction of the thing itself, which, being unified, is objectively bifurcated into phenomenon and essence. This duality is expressed on the surface as a distinction between the occasion, which does not always oblige serious reflection, and the actual, substantial motive for addressing the "round number," and in fact—to that layer of objective reality, which is reflected in the works of the scientist whose anniversary we are preparing to celebrate. Such an "archaeology of knowledge" is, of course, far from being of historical interest only: the problems grasped by the thinkers in their writings, the contradictions they expressed in their theoretical definitions, have not been resolved at all to this day. And when we re-open the pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason* or *Dialectical Logic* today, we look there, first of all, for ourselves: we try to find answers to the "cursed questions" of modernity; we try to understand in what society we now live, where we are, where and how we should go; we try to figure out how exactly to open doors with the "key to the anatomy of an ape" and to measure our minds against the best historical samples, measuring these samples with the "answer from the end of the textbook." All this is the universal process of the development of truth—the determination of the subject by its ideal form, essence, notion, and, at the same time, of the notion by its subject. Like any mutual transformation of the ideal and the real, this process in the field of thinking, which wants to be actual (that is, standing on *this* side, according to Marx), requires from this thinking the ability to control its every step, requires a rigorous view from dialectical thought. And first of all, it is worth addressing the fundamental problem of the beginning—however difficult this may be.

The mind that is not alien to classical thought knows Hegel's position that every movement is a forward movement towards its beginning. It is not difficult to realise that the problem of the beginning is identical with the problem of the end. Evald Ilyenkov would have been a hundred years old next year. This subjunctive mood, however, is appropriate when talking about those who have passed away recently and unexpectedly. Here we compare the time that was given to a person with our

measures. We unconsciously hold on to certain assumptions with our subjectivity, we reason like "one hardly lives to be a hundred years old, the subjunctive mood is hardly appropriate here." But how is the truth of our measures verified? So is the validity of the notion that the time of life is "given" by someone else, like a sausage by weight that is sold in a retail shop. We can't do without God and Mother Nature, and we start calculating whether we have "lived long enough," "hurried" or, on the contrary, "overstayed."

E.V. Ilyenkov, who understood perfectly well that truth is a relation to the Self, timed himself. "There is no point in living after fifty-five years,"—quotes his words A.V. Suvorov (Suvorov 2004, 13). And so, in the year of his centenary, we will be forced to recall also the 45th anniversary of his tragic passing. These outwardly formal things are necessary to unfold the inseparable from their own form content of the "accursed questions" to the resolution of which Ilyenkov devoted his whole life. Is there a meaning to life—after fifty-five or at all? What is *meaning* and why does a person put his or her life into finding it? Living to eat is understandable, but how do you understand the opposite? And, most importantly, what is to live for? Is the life of the spirit a tragedy? Is the life of the spirit only a tragedy? What is tragedy and how does it relate to the universal aesthetic ability of man? What is the role of universal human abilities in the universal process of truth, in the life of the Universe?

We can talk about the resolution of these questions from two fundamentally different positions. Here it is the same as with the history of philosophy: there are diligent doxographers like Diogenes of Laertes, and there are historical philosophers like Aristotle and Hegel. These latter create their own history of philosophy, but they create it with thought, and only therefore their creation is a reflection of actual history at its nodal points, an epoch grasped by this thought. "To be in an epoch does not mean to be present in the relevant time, it means to participate in the movement of its central principle—not only to be able to see and understand it,"—states G.V. Lobastov (Lobastov 2004, 4). Vadim Mezhuev writes about the same in his memoirs:

> With his life and work, Ilyenkov, as it were, marks the end of Marxism in Russia. The end, but not death. Marxism is really of no use to Russia today—it sets the wrong goals for itself and solves the wrong problems. Speculation on the basis of Marxism, hiding its real essence, can still be observed today, but they have nothing to do with what Ilyenkov sought and valued in Marxism. Someday this search, if Russia is to survive, will undoubtedly be continued under new conditions and circumstances, albeit in a modified form.

> Sooner or later, people will still have to think about the cultural and human consequences of the civilisation to which they now aspire. And then they will return to what Ilyenkov has done in philosophy, not only to honour his name with kind words, but also to solve with him, at last, the problems that he posed. (Mezhuev 2004, 284)

Many years have passed since then, and these words have finally been spoken in time. If together with Evald Ilyenkov we can solve the problems posed not by him, of course, but by the objective historical process, then we will be able to answer the questions about the meaning of everything. And this answer will be more meaningful than Adams' "42." This answer must include the knowledge of the most solid, stable thing in the universe—and this is not the material world at all. The most consistent materialists agree with this: it is hardly necessary to quote here once again Engels' quote about the extinguishing sun and the rebirth of the human spirit, "the highest creation of matter." This is Hegel's answer in an absentee dispute with Ecclesiastes: *creativity* is the essence and meaning of being, the idea is a totality that creates its own laws. Therefore, the correctness of the position "all is vanity and languor of the spirit, and nothing is new under the sun" is only relative, conditional, external. Ilyenkov refers to Ecclesiastes in a letter to his student and friend, A.V. Suvorov, and his *Cosmology of Spirit* is apparently an illustration of this biblical book, as Yuri Putschaev claims (Putschaev 2017). But it only seems so. After all, it was not in vain that he proposed to "light up the stars" in it. For he understood that "if they are lit, it means that someone needs it," as V. Mayakovsky wrote.

To understand means to act in accordance with this principle: to be actively involved in the movement of social relations, in the substance of which the knot of Evald Ilyenkov's personality was tied. But what does it mean to be involved in this principle today? What are the conditions for the possibility of such an active movement? What do we *need* to do—to *do* what is necessary?

The current state of the world must be recognised as the most dangerous in at least the last 30 years. The questions "what to do and where to start?" are ghosting around the movement of those who advocate the overcoming of private property, taking a variety of forms, both their own and transformed and borrowed. But the fact that these questions are central today is beyond the comprehension of those who have not quite freed themselves from illusions about the importance of their activity, or even its existence; activity that is at least somewhat successful in

terms of the effectiveness of the movement towards human emancipation. A mode of thought based on the postulates of empiricism feels rather than realises the need to answer them, and therefore offers intuitive and relatively simple in its radicality answers to these questions: self-deluding activism in the form of rallies, walking through squares with a red flag on one's shoulder, which are covered by supposedly noble goals of agitation and protest; the "politicisation of the masses," including through the creation of content, without inculcating the ability to think theoretically; the struggle for more favourable conditions for the sale of one's labour force—these are only a negligible number of examples of such illusory practices. "We have to do something before things get really bad!" shouts the proponent of "practice' in contrast to the "theorists" who again and again call for the reading of seemingly outdated books from the nineteenth century. Reading these books allows us to realise that things have become very bad already. This, however, does not invalidate the measure of truth contained in "practicioner"'s words—it is absolutely necessary to do something. But what exactly?

What is to Be Done: On the Internal Relationship of Theory and Practice

We think that both in the question of the choice of the path and in the question of the choice of means (these are the two questions posed by Lenin in his famous article on the problem of the beginning) and the forms of practical activity, there are many points to be clarified through the study of modern capitalism, through discussions, through mutual criticism. The problem, however, lies at a deeper level than is generally thought of today: fragmentation as the main characteristic of the current situation makes it impossible to make an informed choice of both ways and means. This means that a productive discussion cannot take place at all under conditions of fragmentation, when the main criterion for the truth of certain views is popularity on the Internet, and the activities of popularisers-propagandists, according to an objective regularity (regardless of the subjective mood of this or that representative) are shifted towards commodity forms or are completely subordinated to them. In the language of the theory of intersubjectivity, to which the Polish philosopher Marek Siemek drew the theorists' attention, the impossibility of solving the issue of the Other's presence in a way other than fighting (and establishing mutual indifference as a result of such a fight, which under certain conditions degenerates into "battles" in comments on the Internet), the impossibility of "pro-vocation," of voicing

an opinion and elevating it to an objective one as a result of a dialogue between peer and peer, is caused by the absence of a single semantic space of possible polemics and polemicists (Siemek 1998). From such a formulation, however, one can wrongly conclude that the issue here is "unspecified terms," and if you specify them better, the whole problem disappears.[1] *Sancta simplicitas*! After all, meaning is an objective characteristic, which is a by-product of human practical activity taken from the side of its universal forms. The point here is not a dispute about words at all, but the fact that there is no unified field of practical-subject activity common to a certain aggregate of individuals, which can only turn this aggregate into a collective. A derivative of this activity is the space for discussing and solving theoretical and organisational issues that grow out of this activity, are inextricably linked to this activity, and "push" this activity "beyond the boundaries of itself." The forms of collectivity existing in the "gravitational field" of this activity are the forms rising from the abstract (the least developed organisationally, and therefore common to all initially dispersed collectives) to the concrete as the unity of diversity—the integral movement. It is not difficult to understand that this desired activity to achieve the result cannot be carried out in a direction different from the real collectivisation.

In the absence of such activity, fragmentation, which manifests itself in a variety of forms, including within what is to become a movement in the future, is also clearly visible on all foreseeable scales. Fragmentation is today noted as the main problem of world communism, the main cause of its miserable state—and this statement can hardly be called non-obvious. Little has changed since Lenin wrote these words:

> Our movement suffers in the first place, ideologically, as well as in practical and organisational respects, from its state of fragmentation, from the almost complete immersion of the overwhelming majority of Social-Democrats in local work, which narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities, and their skill in the maintenance of secrecy and their preparedness. It is precisely in this state of fragmentation that one must look for the deepest roots of the instability and the waverings noted above. (Lenin 1961, 19)

It is perhaps unnecessary to give illustrative examples: the epistemological position, which relies on the direct discernment of truth and

1. Of course, we should not conclude from this that "clarification of terms" within the framework of conceptual tool development is absolutely useless. It is about the futility of solving problems only and exclusively by means of "clarification of terms." Such an approach, among others, is strongly rejected by Lenin in *Materialism and Empiriocritcism*, as well as in his other works.

takes obviousness as a criterion, is not the cutting edge of the science of thinking today. Any large number of examples has no proof power in principle, because the infinite variety of facts allows us to give a counterexample in each case. If we move from phenomena to essence (from examples to the real cause of the problem), we must remember the alphabetical truths that capitalism has existed for centuries as a world phenomenon, it has world domination; consequently, its transformation into its opposite—social revolution—cannot but be of a world character. This means, Marx emphasises, that "the proletariat can exist, therefore, only in a world-historical sense, just as communism—its act—is generally only possible as a 'world-historical' existence." But the world-historical existence of the proletariat is not at all reduced to its presence in the forms of existence: it is far from sufficient to cite recent statistics and point to the rapidly growing number of wage labourers all over the world. Once the mere existence of wage-workers has been established, the task of organised resistance to the world market arises, and this is impossible without the formation of theoretical preconditions for joint action *on a world scale*. For the class struggle, as Lenin makes abundantly clear, does not become class struggle in the forms of the clash between "the workers of a separate factory, a separate craft" and their master; these are only the faint rudiments of the class struggle:

> When the workers of a single factory or of a single branch of industry engage in struggle against their employer or employers, is this class struggle? No, this is only a weak embryo of it. The struggle of the workers becomes a class struggle only when all the foremost representatives of the entire working class of the whole country are conscious of themselves as a single working class and launch a struggle that is directed, not against individual employers, but against the entire class of capitalists and against the government that supports that class. Only when the individual worker realises that he is a member of the entire working class, only when he recognises the fact that his petty day-to-day struggle against individual employers and individual government officials is a struggle against the entire bourgeoisie and the entire government, does his struggle become a class struggle. (Lenin 1964, 217)

The preconditions for organised opposition to the world market, however, do not exist not only on a world scale: they do not exist within many countries, including Russia and its immediate neighbours. A close look at the world state of scientific Marxist thought reveals the fragmentation of the nodes of theoretical communism, which are fixed in their separateness without establishing a connection (i.e. productive

communication, as a result of which differences are sharpened to contradiction), let alone reaching the point of identity of opposites and reaching a new ground. It may seem that we are overdramatising the existing picture, that theoretical work is "really" going on, that communication and polemics between the participants in such knots exist, etc. However, this appearance is created by the participants of these nodes of theoretical communism themselves. The number of conferences, polemical and theoretical articles, praise and "recognition" on the part of the adherents of this particular theoretical tradition *have absolutely no significance* for the movement towards communisation *if they are excluded from the field of intersubjective interaction at the world level* according to the logic of the whole and, consequently, are created without and without taking this very logic into account because of their actual ignorance of it. But perhaps there is no fragmentation at least within these "habitats" of communist theorists entrenched deep behind enemy lines? Alas! The splits and divisions of editorial boards, the clarification of relations between yesterday's like-minded people and the labelling of "idealists" and "revisionists" instead of resolving contradictions are an empirical given. Lenin wrote in 1901–1902 about the existence of positions on which, as if all Social-Democrats were in agreement: "It turns out, however, that it is only in words that "all" are agreed on the need to develop political consciousness, *in all its aspects*." (Lenin 1961, 427) In 1904, in *One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward*, he develops this idea on different material, that although there are "points on which agreement has been reached" in general, a split seems to occur when one moves to a discussion of means and particulars. It is extremely important to note here that both in 1902 and 1904 these disagreements and fragmentation are overcome on the basis of a common practical activity, which is the foundation, the basis for the emergence of disagreements, but it is also the means of overcoming them. The present movement in this case develops visually and dialectically (for the intelligent eye): "the bifurcation of the one, the cognition of its contradictory parts" and the bringing of opposites to identity ensures a continuous transformation, i.e. movement through contradiction. It is also worth noting the situation in 1907–1908, when, despite theoretical divergences, the practical work of the supporters of Lenin's line was built in co-operation with the Mahists, and not least of all it was the extreme confusion of their practical-theoretical interaction that brought to life the famous book with notes on one reactionary philosophy, at the same time bewildering

its author's closest supporters (as well as many of his non-closest followers). What is different about today's situation? *The fact that there is no foundation, no movement and no contradiction*. There are simply "different" (i.e. indifferent to each other) nodes, groups, communities, figures, views, positions, etc., there is their mutual repulsion (necessary for the retention of the subjective moment of subjectivity), and so there is no real movement, but its transformed ersatz—wandering in the dark without a theoretical-cognitive "lantern," which is fuelled solely by the "energy" of practical activity itself.

The clever approach to the resolution of contradictions, which is indicated by the dialectical tradition, coming in its development to Marx, Lenin, and Ilyenkov, consists in a principled, theoretically rigorous solution to the problem of the beginning, mentioned above. It is necessary to find the essential contradiction leading the object (*Gegenstand*) of activity in its own development, or, as Ilyenkov puts it, the "germ cell" from which the object unfolds. Hegel saw in this point the key difference between systematic and empirical science. The note to § 379 of the *Encyclopaedia* states:

> Whereas in the empirical sciences the material is taken from outside as given by experience, ordered according to a general rule already firmly established, and brought into external connection, speculative thinking, on the contrary, must reveal each of its subjects and its development with its inherent absolute necessity. This happens in such a way that each private notion is deduced from the self-generating and realising universal notion, or logical idea. (Hegel 1971, 17)

Lenin called it a "link in the chain" that must be pulled to pull the whole chain. Such a link in the contemporary situation turns out to be the problem of the mind, of cognition, of the notion as an "understanding of the essence of the matter." It is no accident that one of the latest books by Gennady Lobastov, a student of Ilyenkov and chairman of the *Dialectics and Culture* Russian Philosophical Society (which organises and conducts the annual international conference *Ilyenkov Readings*), bears the title *Mind as a fulcrum*: just give me a fulcrum, smiles the author of *Capital*, following Archimedes. With one correction: neither Archimedes nor Marx can "give" this fulcrum. Like everything human, to be truly subjective, it must be *created* by the activity of man himself.

The demand for the theoretical justification of practice, empirically recorded today, which puts the discussion of the theory and practice of the world liberation movement on the agenda, cannot but be heartening: the broad appeal to Marx's legacy that is taking place today and the

attempts to "root" its results in the theoretical tradition should be commended. Here, however, it must be made clear that the main theme in any reflection must be the theory of the movement itself, the "logic of the Case," to use Marx's words, namely, materialist dialectics as a theory of development. This does not mean that any study of the causes of a phenomenon must be *subordinated* to logical categories. This requirement is only the "result, sum, conclusion" of the critical study of Hegelian dialectics undertaken by Marx and Lenin. The latter, in summarising his study, writes of two conceptions of movement, and only the second of these—the dialectical—does not leave the very source of movement, its cause, in the shadows out of consideration (Lenin 1976). To find the real cause of a phenomenon in the thing itself (this is the principle of materialism of the research position) means to comprehend the reflexion of this thing, its "turning-inward-to-self," to its own driving contradiction. Only in such a case, when the theoretical image of the thing turns out not to be external to it, can theory become a moment of practical action. Understanding his own movement as conjugated with the movement of reality itself, a person can freely build the trajectory of his movement in it: the theorist becomes a practitioner when theory "spills over the edge of itself" into actual life. It is this position of Lenin, driven by the above considerations, that Ilyenkov portrays and discusses in his last book written (Ilyenkov 1982).

Not many people today, however, realise that it is precisely in the present state of affairs that this "logic of the case" can only be understood from the "Case of Logic" and that there is therefore no contradiction between them. We are in a situation of far greater catastrophe than Lenin was in 1914, and it was this catastrophe that forced him to study Hegel's Logic and other works by eminent philosophers. Lenin realised that practical action, in order to be successful, requires a theoretical reflection on its own conditions of implementation. Lenin searches the pages of the classics for the logic of the transformation of opposites—i.e. dialectics—and it is the critical assimilation of its best examples that enables him to make his way "from Hegel's *Logic* to the Finland station," as M. Löwy puts it (Löwy 1973, 137) (which is in itself a highly colorful transformation of opposites: from impoverished political émigré to leader of a successful revolution). This example shows, without any stretch, how *theoretical thought becomes the germ of practical action*. Therefore, there can be no opposition between *communities of research* and *practical action*, which must *also* exist outside and apart from these communities, as it sometimes claimed. Lenin's great contribution is that

the epistemological line determines the political line, or, in other words (as Georg Lukács would later elaborate in his works), *truth is the most formidable weapon of the proletariat*. This understanding of theory makes the opposition between "purely philosophical questions" and "questions of politics" unproductive. This indeterminacy of the subject of action, which becomes evident from such oppositions, reveals the external relation between theory and practice, that is, it shows that theory and practice are related to each other only externally-mechanically, not in their very essence, not internally. Lenin, following Marx, draws the only possible correct conclusion from the materialist "overturning" of Hegel: the cause of theory, the cause of logic and "pure philosophy," can be pursued on its own "unpure" ground, exclusively in the sphere of the transformation of the world. That's why Ilyenkov saw his main task in justifying Marxism as a theoretical science—otherwise there would be trouble that would go far beyond the universities and research institutes.

System of Dialectics Against Vulgarization

First of all, this concerns the most important question of developing a system of materialist dialectics—a question that E.V. Ilyenkov considered the main task not only for himself personally, but also for Marxist philosophers in general:

> The task, bequeathed to us by Lenin, of creating a Logic (with a capital 'L'), i.e. of a systematically developed exposition of dialectics understood as the logic and theory of knowledge of modern materialism, has become particularly acute today … but since the task of a systematic exposition of dialectical logic can only be solved by collective efforts, we must at least determine the most general principles of joint work. (Ilyenkov 1977, 3)

Of course, Ilyenkov does not forget at the same time that "the creation of a Logic understood as a system of categories, of course, constitutes only one stage" (Ilyenkov 1977, 261) and that cognition is only a subordinate moment of the process of social object-transformative activity—the practice of transformation of the world and oneself by human. However, being aimed at solving concrete problems of concrete sciences, "in order for dialectics to be an equal collaborator in concrete scientific knowledge, it must first develop the system of its own specific philosophical notions, from the angle of which it could display the strength of critical distinction in relation to actually given thought and consciously practised methods" (Ilyenkov 1977, 261). That this task is very difficult

was shown by the result achieved by Marxist philosophy both during Ilyenkov's lifetime and beyond; or, more correctly, by the absence of such a result. Moreover, the very idea of creating a system of dialectics can arouse denial and anger in an otherwise committed Marxist, which does not turn into bargaining and acceptance, although it can sometimes cause depression; all the more so when it is contradicted by formulations that contradict the classics. In one of his early works Ilyenkov states the following:

> The classics of Marxism, as is known, have only fragmentary individual remarks on this subject, which—precisely because they are not systematically unfolded—are interpreted in a crooked way, turned into links of some other system of perceptions. Truth cannot be learnt except in the form of a system of representations of a systematically unfolded understanding. (Ilyenkov 2021, 170)

Anyone who has read at least a textbook of diamat knows the "class-correct" position (which usually refers to F. Engels' statements on this issue): philosophy, if it is still "alive" (let's forgive it for this oversight), has not been engaged in the creation of *systems* since Hegel. These reactionary tendencies were overcome in the "one true doctrine," which took from Hegel's dialectic a revolutionary *method* contrary to the *system*, and so on, and so on. On the other hand, Lenin's sharp reply to the Narodniks concerning "scraps of Marx's philosophy," that they did not see the forest for the trees, and that Marx expounds his "philosophy" (in Lenin's later writings such contemptuous inverted commas would become noticeably fewer) in *each* of his works, is well known. On the surface, it looks as if Ilyenkov is committing an irredeemable sin: arguing with the classics of Marxism, which, of course, entails appropriate sanctions. The tragedy of this great Soviet thinker's life was that he tried to show the fallacy of a view, which, because of its empiricism, stays on the surface and does not want to go deeper into the heart of the matter. "Dialectics takes revenge for neglect of it," as Engels rightly remarked (Engels 1986, 205); mastering dialectics as a way of thinking is the only way to clarify this "inconsistency with the classics" and overcome the religious attitude of consciousness to the subject, to prevent "interpretation in a crooked way" and to ensure an adequate "distribution of the idea" of this or that author.

To what neglect of this task can lead, Mikhail Lifshitz perfectly shows in his article "Nemesis," polemising in absentia both with the representatives of so-called "Western Marxism" and with the Maoists:

> No, all great ideas—precisely because they are so great and capture a lot of people—have been subject to distortions … Now world history with all its content teaches us wisdom and educates us in the spirit of its great moral law—the law of freedom as conscious control over external forces and our own actions, the law of circular bail and communist unity and comradeship. That is why it seems to me that overcoming the danger of the vulgarisation of Marxism is the number one question in the struggle against bourgeois ideology. One may ask: is revisionism less dangerous? By a strange misunderstanding, revisionism is somehow not accustomed to be regarded as a vulgarisation of Marxism; it is considered something more harmless and forgivable—from excessive zeal, or something like that. In fact, the history of socialism shows that this is one and the same thing. Both left-wing and right-wing revisionism stem from the same social source. It often starts out very "left-wing" and ends with an apologia of Genghis Khan and a demand for borders to the Black Sea. In speaking of the danger of vulgarising Marxism, I am referring both to an imaginary loyalty to dogma and to attempts to correct our doctrine by supplementing it with elements borrowed from any source—from Western existentialism or from Chinese Confucianism. (Lifshitz 2012, 514)

However, it is even more vividly and empirically-reliable in our life today, when the hour of reckoning with dialectics has arrived. The problems that we have here are therefore inevitably linked with the external relation between theory and practice and with the notion of science. These problems are universal. This can be argued on the basis of Marx's established position on "self-disconnected reality" and the separation of the meaning of labour from its process: the alienation of man from his own essence. This theme is developed in detail in Marx's early texts, and therefore there is no need to dwell on it again. From this point of view, the whole historical movement of mankind turns on the task of removing this disconnection, which at a certain stage of development turns into a problem that can be sensually and reliably stated; this problem caused by the contradictions of the dominant mode of production. This problem was perfectly expressed by Rosa Luxemburg: socialism or barbarism? (Luxembourg 2009) Today, the prospect of "barbarism" must be strengthened and replaced by the prospect of "self-destruction:" these are the realities of the current social situation. Thus, the question of mankind's mastery of the scientific mode of production of its life (i.e. the construction of socialism) turns out to be the key to its self-preservation, at least. But for this purpose, it is necessary to know *what practice is, how it gives rise to theory, and how this theory acquires the form of science adequate to itself* (or becomes, as Marx says, "reason in a reasonable form"). Hence it is not surprising, that these issues are becoming central

not only in the work of Evald Ilyenkov, but also of a whole pleiad of his theoretical comrades from other countries, including his Polish colleague Marek Siemek, who spoke very highly of Ilyenkov and helped popularise his work in Poland and Germany. Their "comradeship" here is not at all a verbal expression of mutual respect; words are not the most important thing to pay attention to here. They are comrades *objectively*, insofar as they solve the same problem from the same methodological positions (just like in "International Workers' Association" the last word translates into Russian as "comradeship"). Their theoretical legacy reveals a surprising kinship and mutually complements each other in the context of comprehending the "cursed questions of modernity."

A few words, however, should be said about the relation of Ilyenkov's and Siemek's views and their *difference*, for such an assessment of them as "theoretical comrades" may rightly raise questions and doubts.

A certain divergence between Ilyenkov's and Siemek's views on philosophy, on Marxism, on politics, can certainly be found. But where is this difference not to be found? "The law of difference" which logic offers us and which Hegel discusses at length in the *Doctrine of Reflexion* rightly asserts that no two things can even be found to be the same: difference is an absolute determination peculiar to both leaves on a tree (remember Leibniz, who overwhelmed the ladies of the court) and Marxist theorists. The other question is whether this difference is *essential*, i.e. belongs to the very *essence* of the subject. And here we cannot judge Ilyenkov's and Siemek's views in passing, but must take them concretely, in development as "the unity of the manifold." But it is impossible to do this in the format of this article: after all, the article is devoted to the *practical* problem of turning Marxism into a science (and we are interested in Ilyenkov and Siemek exactly in this respect), and not at all to a comparative characterisation of their views. I hope this somewhat clarifies and apologises to the author.

It is worth saying, however, that a cursory glance at Siemek's work can reveal this (apparently) essential difference: in the 1990s he departed from Marxist views, criticised the main points of Marxism, turned to transcendentalism, and created his own original social theory, based on the ideas of intersubjectivity that he drew from Fichte and Hegel. This common perception associates the reader who becomes acquainted with Siemek's work with the typical path of the "former Soviet intellectual," often unprincipled, who for opportunistic reasons, lacking an epistemological position, promotes what is paid for, what is profitable

at the moment, and whose trajectory therefore moves away from Marxism with the collapse of the socialist camp.

With all the contradictory views of Siemek in this period (which his students call "opportunistic" and strongly criticise), we have no reason to state that he was such an unprincipled opportunist in general. And no one is immune from misconceptions in theoretical research, which resonates with the personal attitudes of the theorist. Moreover, Siemek always retained a very warm attitude not only to Marx[2] but also even to Lenin,[3] which, in the conditions of a fiercely anti-Soviet Poland, already does honour to the "socialist Lessing of Poland" (as his followers nicknamed Siemek).

As for the difference, even Ilyenkov wittily remarked, speaking of the universal:

> Two absolutely identical individuals each of whom possesses the same set of knowledge, habits, proclivities, etc., would find themselves absolutely uninteresting to, and needless of, each other. It would be simply solitude multiplied by two. One wit, as he explained to his young friend the ABC of dialectical logic, advised him to ask himself the question: what is it in his bride that attracts the young man; wherein lie the ties of their 'commonness?' (Ilyenkov 1975)

But this may also sound "too abstract and theoretical." Well, then, let us look at the problem from a different angle. Louis Althusser, who came to Moscow in 1974 to attend the Hegelian Congress, gave Ilyenkov his books "as a token of theoretical brotherhood," as he himself wrote on their covers (these books are still in Ilyenkov's library). This alone shows that a "theoretical comradeship" does not necessarily require complete coincidence of views: as is well known, Ilyenkov did not agree with Althusser on theoretical issues (above all, he argues with him on the problem of the logical and the historical, as well as on the question of dialectics and Marx's relation to Hegel); their political positions and sympathies were also different. It is known from the words of his students that Ilyenkov considered the idealist Neoplatonist Alexey Losev to be more of a "comrade" than whatever "convinced materialist" relying on the "modern achievements" of cybernetics or neurophysiology (like

2. One of the most recent interviews is on Marx and relates to the return to Marxist positions that Siemek made in the early 2000s ("Teraz napiszę o... Marksie"–rozmowa z profesorem Markiem Janem Siemkiem." This is an excerpt from (Bajer 2005, 184-201).
3. His article on Lenin (Siemek 2007, 10), where he expressed cautious sympathy for the "leader of the world proletariat," caused a great resonance and a wide theoretical discussion in the journals.

David Dubrovsky) who looked for the ideal in the brain or genes. And why go far for examples? Lenin explicitly makes it clear that "intelligent idealism" is closer to Marx's position than vulgar, crude materialism.

So, let us now consider the main problems that come to the attention of our philosophers in more detail.

"Materialist Epistemology" and the Menace of Scientism

Marek Siemek in his article "Cognition as Practice" notes that a cool attitude towards serious philosophy is characteristic of almost all major Marxist theorists. This is especially true of German idealism. The attitude to the ideas of German thinkers in Marxism, even among theorists of Plekhanov's level, is based primarily on individual quotations from Marx and Engels, rather than on a deep theoretical reflection of cognitive foundations:

> The fact that Marx never formulated *explicite* the epistemological premises and implications of his critique of political economy and the theory of historical materialism, made one look for the Marxist conception of cognition rather in a few aphoristically extreme formulations, which—as above all the 2nd, 6th and 11th theses on Feuerbach—can be read in the sense of a complete dissolution of the whole theory, of all cognition and thinking in a comprehensive and all-explaining mythical 'practice.' Later, almost the entire Marxist tradition followed in this direction: the slogan 'philosophy of practice' was most often used here to explain its own avoidance of any serious epistemological problematic." (Siemek 1988, 14)

This has led to the elimination of important epistemological issues from Marxism and a general degradation of the understanding of cognition (and hence practice) to the level of John Locke, where practice is understood as something only external to theory:

> This approach—which also often appears under the enigmatic name of 'materialist epistemology'—has little in common with Marxism, much less with a decent theory of knowledge. For 'cognition' itself is understood here entirely in the spirit of the psychophysiological 'theory of cognition' of the Enlightenment: namely, as a contemplative relation of reflection arising between individual consciousness and its external object, and manifesting itself in the immediate instrumental-manipulative practice of current experience. Needless to say, within such a conception of 'cognition', any assurances about the 'dialectical' nature of this reflection, and especially about the 'social character' of this practice which verifies it, are purely verbal servility to the mere letter of Marx's historical materialism and his real understanding of practice, a mere illusionary being masking the fundamental mental

> incompatibility of this whole conception of cognition with Marx's genuine theory. The very 'reflection' as a basic theoretical-cognitive category—no matter how much it is enriched by the results of modern physiology, psychology, or neurophysiology—presupposes the contemplative, directly epistemic, and thus impractical character of cognition at its core. 'Cognition' in this formulation remains something completely external and indifferent to 'practice' in its post-Kantian and especially Marxist understanding as a central philosophical category." (Siemek 1988, 15)

"Prolegomena to a Future Epistemology" (the subtitle of the article mentioned above) was written by Siemek to point out the problems faced by Marxism's theory of knowledge without attention to the achievements of German classical philosophy, which does not attempt to conceptualise it as a conclusion from previous intellectual history. The main of these problems is the retreat to the pre-Kantian level, in which consciousness is always separated from its object, and therefore occupies a contemplative position in relation to it. From this fact grows "the chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism"—and in the conditions of a largely superficial attitude to the works of Kant and Fichte (Hegel, thanks to the famous Lenin's aphorism about the "Science of Logic," was "luckier" immeasurably) it is reproduced on a new basis, under oaths of "fidelity to the dialectical method of Marx." Transcendentalism, not empiricism, is the forerunner of Marx's materialism, and the line from Kant to Hegel is the process of the formation of the *materialist dialectic* as such—this is Siemek's main message, which determines his interest in the idea of transcendentalism in Fichte and Kant (Siemek 1977).

Siemek speaks of "materialist epistemology" in inverted commas for this very reason: it turns out to be primitive and defenceless not so much against idealism as against the problems and contradictions that arise in reality itself (first of all, in social, practical-political reality). These contradictions cannot be adequately comprehended because of the lack of a high philosophical culture. The "crooked interpretation" of Marx's and Engels' texts adopted in official[4] Marxist philosophy was followed

4. Of course, this name itself is a deep problem if we take the history of Soviet philosophy seriously, taking it together with the key events, which are the discussions between Deborinists and Mechanists (as well as both of these trends with Lukács and Korsh), the struggle of the thirties between the group formed around "The Literary Critic" (Lifshitz, Lukács, Platonov) and "vulgar sociology," the struggle with "gnoseologists" (this is related to the Ilyenkov-Korovikov theses and their dramatic fate). Although this is not about the vicissitudes of the Soviet history of philosophy, but about what it basically turned into (including its consolidation in textbooks, hence, in the minds of the general public) in the early thirties. This can be called DiaMat as presented by Mitin, Konstantinov, Suslov etc.

naturally by the slogan: "Philosophy overboard!," which appeared already in the first issues of the main soviet philosophical journal "Under the Banner of Marxism" and probably provoked Lenin to write his famous article on militant materialism, which is considered to be his philosophical testament (Lenin 1972). It is precisely this danger of a superficial understanding of Marx's mode of thought that Lenin warns against. Both Marek Siemek and Evald Ilyenkov, in their efforts to fulfil this task, achieve serious theoretical and organisational results for their theoretical nation. They make a serious turn of theoretical consciousness towards the problematics contained in the works of Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. The main task is very precisely formulated by M. Siemek: "The point is not only to develop and deepen our '*understanding of practice*' (as Marx says in the Theses), but also, and even above all, to see clearly the *practice of understanding* and to incorporate it consistently into the content of the philosophical notion of practice." (Siemek 1988, 23) This problematic is closely connected, on the one hand, with the *notion of science* and, on the other hand, with the *notion of truth as a system of thought*. It is not difficult to show that these are one and the same question, which finds its solution in the Lenin's idea of the *identity* (and not just unity or coincidence) *of dialectics, logic, and theory of cognition*: as we know, "it is not necessary to have three words, not just three different sciences."

Friedrich Engels' position that "since Marxism became a science, it is required to be treated as a science" is often repeated. However, the notion of science itself is highly problematic: Evald Ilyenkov in his article "Philosophy and Scientificity" (Ilyenkov 2018) and Marek Siemek in his article "Science and Scientificity as Ideological Categories of Philosophy" (Siemek 1989) reveal this problematic nature. They show that without reference to the long path of the formation of science as a pure form of notion, which finds its highest development precisely in German idealism, it is impossible to separate real science from the ideological layers and distortions that are expressed in scientism, positivism and the so-called "philosophy of life." By the way, as Siemek notes, even Engels, Kautsky and Plekhanov were not free from scientism:

> We should add that already in the nineteenth century it [scientism] was also completely and without much change adopted by the philosophical self-consciousness of the nascent Marxism, on the basis of which it already had its classical exponents in the person of Engels, and then especially Kautsky and Plekhanov, and at the same time very effectively and for a long time overshadowed the completely different original thought intentions of Marx himself. (Siemek 1989, 20)

Let us emphasise—this means that in their desire to overcome ideological forms they do not go beyond these forms by appealing to the authority of science. Moreover, in some key issues they contradict some of Karl Marx's epistemological tendencies. In the article "'Science' and 'scientificity' as ideological categories of philosophy," Siemek defines the question of the scientificity of philosophy as a symptom "betraying the absence of the right questions and indicating the theoretical impossibility of asking them," which is evidence of "its theoretical impotence in the face of the phenomenon of science" (Siemek 1989, 15). The scientistic understanding of science appears to be embedded in the very core of Marxism, Siemek argues, and a serious critical reflection on its cognitive foundations and results is required in order to go beyond the current theory of "science" and "scientificity," which even within a doctrine that claims to remove ideology, continue to function as *ideological* forms:

> The oblivion of Marx's epistemological intentions and this return to a pre-Marxist (and pre-Kantian) 'theory of knowledge' was further facilitated, and at the same time aggravated, by additional circumstances. The most important of these was the ideological pressure from the triumphant scientism and positivism in the second half of the 19th century, which had long perpetuated the myth of the identity of *cognition and science* in both philosophy and popular consciousness. For the Marxists this myth had, from the point of view of interest to us, grave consequences, since it indirectly provided them with an excellent justification for their own rejection of essential philosophical and epistemological questions. On the one hand, by declaring Marx's theoretical work purely 'scientific,' they could feel free from any critical reflection of its cognitive foundations and results that would go beyond the generally accepted theory of 'science' and the methodology of its 'scientificity' (directly continuing the old 'theoretical-cognitive' approach to the philosophical problems of knowledge). (Siemek 1988, 17)

On the other hand, the reference to the "scientificity of Marx's views" without a critical examination of the notion of "science" means "the complete absorption of the old 'theoretical-cognitive' problems by the scientific-positivist self-consciousness of modern science, its theory and methodology," and by this "smuggling" of positivism the Marxist theorists "cut off the path to the truly Marxist, i.e. dialectical-historical understanding of science itself as a peculiar, historically and culturally conditioned type of cognitive behaviour of socialised man" (Siemek 1988, 17).

This problem can be understood as the opposition between Marx's "true" views and the "distortion of his ideas" by his followers: Engels and

others. Even though the author doesn't stick to it, such a reading is certainly possible (for example, Allan Megill's book is devoted precisely to the divergence of views of the founding friends of "practical materialism" (Megill 2002)), and it is the one to which Siemek himself seems to be inclined, at least in the so-called "opportunist period" of the 1990s. This interpretation naturally gives rise to counter-criticism, which has every reason to defend the identity of the views of Marx and Engels. The root of the problem, however, is much deeper. It lies in the fact that the *tendency towards scientism is rooted in Marx's views themselves*; it can clearly be established in his early texts. Let us consider this thesis in some detail.

Marx as a (mis)Reader of Hegel

Thus, "materialist epistemology" makes a retreat to the reasoning-experiential form of cognition, which has as its premise the rupture of consciousness and object; a rupture which was overcome with great difficulty and not without mistakes by the Königsberg thinker. Milan Sobotka (Sobotka 1964) and the already mentioned Siemek investigated in detail the overcoming of this rupture and the legitimate consequences of the revealed tendency in their main works. In carrying out this work, of course, they were guided by the guiding idea of Marx, who was able to see behind the misty veils of Hegel's *Phenomenology* the real-objective historical process of man's generation of himself through his labour. Both Sobotka and Siemek convince us that the dialectic that is becoming in German idealism is from the very beginning a *materialist* dialectic. Moreover, from this perspective there can be no idealist dialectics at all. For the very question which Engels later labelled with good reason as basic to the science of thinking, in Hegel's formulation is quite different from its popular interpretations in diamat:

> We thus have really two Ideas, the subjective Idea as knowledge, and then the substantial and concrete Idea; and the development and perfection of this principle and its coming to the consciousness of Thought, is the subject treated by modern Philosophy. Thus the determinations are in it more concrete than with the ancients. This opposition in which the two sides culminate, grasped in its widest significance, is the opposition between Thought and Being, individuality and substance, so that in the subject himself his freedom stands once more within the bounds of necessity; it is the opposition between subject and object, and between Nature and Mind, in so far as this last as finite stands in opposition to Nature. (Hegel 2009, 112)

Here sensuality is not opposed to consciousness at all: in a serious theoretical formulation, such a question would remain unanswered at all, and this is absolutely clear to Hegel. The basic question of philosophy for him turns out to be the question of *freedom*, of the removal of the external relation between the particular and the universal, between the thing and its idea, between the individual and the substance, between subject and object. The latter is explicitly formulated by him already in *The System of Morality*, and in *Jena's Real Philosophy* he finds the point of their identification—and where? In the category of *labour*, of *object activity*, of *practice*. Turning to Hegel's legacy from this position, which is so unusual for fans of the labels "panlogism," "preformism" and other ideas that have no real relation to the author of the *Science of Logic*, one can discern in it a whole "philosophy of labour." The real problem, which Hegel, who, unlike his famous philosopher contemporaries, was perfectly familiar with the political economy of his time, was trying ("sometimes even striving and puffs," as Lenin would say) to solve, is the problem of resolving the contradiction between abstract and concrete labour, and not at all the composition of another "world scheme." Hegel's dialectic is not ontology, but a complete system of categorical definitions of activity, ascending from the immediate indeterminacy of pure being, from its nothingness, from absolute *dependence* to the complete, total *freedom* of the realising notion, which, like any other logical definition, is precisely the identity of thinking and being, the point of their absolute coincidence. The point, which is a form of activity, because as Hegel himself understood, and as Evald Ilyenkov later explained perfectly well, it is in the process of activity that the desired identification takes place. Ilyenkov's friend and senior comrade, Pavel Kopnin, once joked about the many years of research at the Department of Dialectical Materialism, as a result of which it was established that matter is primary, but this joke also contains a bitter irony: there have been too few such studies, and the question has not yet been resolved. Because the basic question of philosophy is not at all the choice of a foundation in which to believe ("being is primary!"), but the intense (self-)justification of substance, which ultimately comes down to the question of the genesis of thinking, of "the self-division of the one and the cognition of its contradictory parts," of the establishment of thinking in being and of the becoming of freedom. But it is not difficult to see that this is what Hegel is preoccupied with.

And this is far from a stretch, as Igor Barsukov shows in his remarkable book (Barsukov 2011), which allows us to rethink the most important question of Hegel's system and method. However, it should be recognised that such a view—the result of modern research—was not available, for certain historical reasons, neither to the classics of Marxism, nor to Feuerbach, who inspired them in their early period. Materialist criticism holds that Hegel stands on his head; however, this famous thesis was also realised by Hegel himself, who writes in the *Phenomenology* about the "unknown caused attempt of natural consciousness to resemble a head." However, it is not so unknown: it is clear from the same *Preface* that it is precisely the rupture between consciousness and object, which reveals science as an "otherworldly distance" for consciousness, that is the cause of the idealist overturning. But it is precisely this rupture that Hegel fights against! Moreover, it is the unsatisfactory solution of this problem on the basis of the phenomenological foundation that makes Hegel radically reconsider the whole plan of the system of sciences, the first part of which was originally conceived as *Phenomenology*, which is reflected in its original title. The gap between subject and object, between consciousness and its subject assumed for this foundation cannot be removed even in the form of absolute knowledge; this makes Hegel look for another foundation, where the very gap between subject and object would be justified by the logic of the bifurcation of unified being—and Hegel finds this *principle*, this absolute beginning in the *Logic*.

The influence that Feuerbach had on the founders of Marxism (and not only on them alone—in Russia his passionate follower was the outstanding Russian thinker and scientist Nikolay Chernyshevsky, who in turn had a profound influence on Lenin) is widely known. Here we also do not want to belittle or deny the depth of this influence: it is a question of "not thinking abstractly," not seeing only "bad" or "good," but seeing the entire concreteness (=contradictoriness) of the existing picture. And it is so—very contradictory, and a detailed unfolding of this picture is a topic for a separate large work. For the time being, I would like only to outline the problematic nature of the figure of Feuerbach, with the obligatory reference to the truly revolutionary role that the works of this thinker played in the formation of Marx's views.

Marx believes that "Feuerbach has in principle overthrown the old dialectic and philosophy" (Marx 1959, 63). But if we keep in mind the above-mentioned actual problematics, which Hegel dealt with, then it is

worth recognising that the criticism presented in the "Principles of Philosophy of the Future" almost all misses the target. Feuerbach does not stand on the heights of the achievements of German idealism, he ignores them, and the principle of the immediate givenness of the material world in feeling, which he expressed, is nothing but a relapse into empiricism, in spite of his own reservations and hesitations on the question of the essence of human.[5] As Gennady Lobastov states, "in the representing consciousness the universal meaning appears under different names, which—alas—always turn out to be *pseudonyms*" (Lobastov 2012, 100). But Feuerbach, contrasting sensual authenticity, the object world and thought, the ideal, does not reach the *notion*, seeing behind the Idea only a *pseudonym* of the Christian God; his consciousness remains representational—this is evident from the way he treats the category of "abstract," and the fact that he does not distinguish the concept from the term. This is why Feuerbach treats Hegel's philosophy as a "disguised theology" and the Idea as something different from things themselves. This interpretation gives birth to an inadequate criticism that does not overcome Hegel's position. This interpretation is rightly denied by Ilyenkov, who fought for a genuine understanding of Hegel's philosophy. It is regrettable to recognise that these Feuerbachian positions were borrowed almost without any criticism by the early Marx and are vividly seen in the works of the *Paris Manuscripts* period.

Marx formulates his claim against Hegel most radically in this way:

> This implies that self-conscious man, insofar as he has recognised and superseded the spiritual world (or his world's spiritual, general mode of being) as self-alienation, nevertheless again confirms it in this alienated shape and passes it off as his true mode of being—re-establishes it, and pretends to be *at home in his other-being as such*. Thus, for instance, after superseding religion, after recognising religion to be a product of self-alienation he yet finds confirmation of himself in *religion as religion*. Here is the root of Hegel's *false*

5. Contrary to the widespread opinion based on an inaccurate reading of Marx's "Theses," Feuerbach does not think of essence as "an abstraction inherent in each single individual:" for this it is enough to read at least the magnificent ending of the "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," which even now impresses with the power of humanism and makes it clear why Marx and Engels, by their own admission, immediately became followers of Feuerbach. Consequently, Marx's thesis about the real essence of man as the totality of all social relations is not a criticism but a development of Feuerbach's position. It is worth noting, however, that in this work Feuerbach still sometimes lapses into the viewpoint of essence as an abstraction: apparently, this is also a manifestation of an epistemological position that is not entirely stable and which is ultimately based on empiricism

> positivism, or of his merely *apparent* criticism: this is what Feuerbach designated as the positing, negating and re-establishing of religion or theology—but it has to be expressed in more general terms. Thus reason is at home in unreason as unreason. The man who has recognised that he is leading an alienated life in law, politics, etc., is leading his true human life in this alienated life as such. Self-affirmation, self-confirmation *in contradiction* with itself—in contradiction both with the knowledge of and with the essential being of the object—is thus true *knowledge* and *life*. There can therefore no longer be any question about an act of accommodation on Hegel's part *vis-à-vis* religion, the state, etc., since this lie is the lie of his principle. (Marx 1959, 81)

This conclusion is based on the premise that there is no distinction between the thinking of the finite spirit and universal thinking, as Hegel understands it. Idea and thinking are everywhere conceived by Feuerbach and, following him, by early Marx, as belonging only to human consciousness. Here the limitation of both thinking and being, which is not at all peculiar to Hegel, is assumed: in this criticism, the Idea is detached from things and begins to appear under a pseudonym, the consequence of which is the criticism of philosophy as theology, where the Idea supposedly exists before nature and somehow generates it out of itself; there is the assumption, negation, and restoration of religion. There is actually none of this in the Hegelian *principle*. Although "false positivism" can indeed be seen in Hegel's philosophy of religion, as well as in other special areas of the system of sciences, Feuerbach makes the logical mistake of substituting the *universal* for the *particular*: from the criticism of religion he tries to criticise the logical principle as well. There is a "dialectical reversal in method:" Feuerbach, criticising Hegel for abstraction, is himself hostage to abstraction, assuming a gap between the subjective and the objective without grounding it in the logic of being. Marx does the same when he treats Logic as "the money of the spirit:" he proceeds from the political economy concept of alienation, trying to overcome the *universal* principle by criticising the *particular* sphere. But the alienation of man from his own essence in capitalist society and the alienation of the Idea in Hegel's system are not the same thing! Not to mention the identification of two kinds of alienation, *Vergegenständlichung* and *Entfremdung*, which is allowed by early Marx (although Marx has reason to do so, as Ilyenkov shows in "Hegel and Alienation" (Ilyenkov 1991a). Hegel and the later Marx strictly distinguish them from each other, as well as from other aspects of alienation: *Entäusserung* as process of making things external, *Verselbständigung* as empowerment, *Versachlichung* as transformation into a thing (not

objectification!), transformation of form. Hence arises the error that the logical category is treated by Marx as a "speculative or *mental value* of man and nature—its essence which has grown totally indifferent to all real determinateness, and hence unreal—is *alienated thinking,* and therefore thinking which abstracts from nature and from real man: *abstract* thinking" (Marx 1959, 84). It is not difficult to see that Hegel understands the logical category in a different way: as "the universal, which has absorbed all the richness of the particular and the singular," far from being indifferent to reality, not abstracting itself from the diversity of definitions, but revealing the true unity of this diversity, making it "for-self," an absolute relation to itself—and only insofar!—Hegel everywhere consistently fights against transcendence, dualism, and emphasises that thought, concept, *idea is the universal form of the thing itself unfolded in its own determinations*. This is Hegel's principle—the concrete *identity of thinking and being*, which is expressed in the categories of *totality*.

The initial approach to Logic through political economy rather than to political economy through Logic plays a cruel trick on Marx: he treats dialectics as the result of the self-alienation of human thinking, as a product of bourgeois society, divided at its foundation. And it must be admitted that it is here—in the uncritical at first stage perception of Feuerbach—that the *tendency towards positivism in Marxism itself* is rooted: not as a result of a perversion of Marxism at all, but as a *historical stage in the formation of Marx's own views*. Quotations from his early works, if they are considered in isolation from the further development of his views, from the movement towards Hegel, are used by apologists of empiricism as proof that Marx "threw away the philosophical junk, the old rubbish, the dark Hegelianism," etc. and replaced it with a "purely scientific position" which is thought of in the modern manner of "philosophy and methodology of science," i.e. as going back to the analytical way of thinking of Democritus above, and replaced it with a "purely scientific position," which is thought in the modern manner of "philosophy and methodology of science," i.e. as going back to the analytical way of thinking of Democritus, above which positivism hardly rises in the way of thought. A variation of this anti-Hegelian interpretation of Marx as an epicurean who, unlike Hegel, appreciated the role of *clinamen*, absolute chance, spontaneity—hence the whole (post)Althusserian line in Marxist thought. But the attempt to contrast Marx as a materialist with the German idealists, resting on the foundations of natural scientific methodology, inevitably slips into reading Marx in

the spirit of positivism. Even the most serious thinkers of this line, thoroughly commenting on the idea of the "ensemble of social relations," come to conclusions that are paradoxical for the spirit of Marx's teaching: humanism is a capitalist ideology, the human being and the individual should be banished from science and replaced by the concept of "structure" or, for example, "assemblage" in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari. This degradation of philosophical culture seems to them even a step forward in theory. However, the idea that development takes place also through forms of degradation is not new. Here again we can pay attention to the amazing dialectic of revolutionary and reactionary, examples of which history is full of: Plato's "reactionary" line becomes today a prescription against sliding into empiricism, and Democritus-Epicurus' "revolutionary" line justifies thoughtlessness.

Another striking example of an inadequate interpretation of Hegel is Marx's commentary on § 262 of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, which reads as follows:

> The actual Idea is mind, which, sundering itself into the two ideal spheres of its concept, family and civil society, enters upon its *finite* phase, but it does so only in order to rise above its ideality and become explicit as *infinite* actual mind. It is therefore to these ideal spheres that the actual Idea assigns the material of this its finite actuality, viz., human beings as a *mass*, in such a way that the function assigned to any given individual is visibly *mediated* by circumstances, his caprice and his personal choice of his station in life. (Hegel 1952, 219)

Without mentioning some logical errors and strains in Marx's interpretation of this fragment, we should pay attention to the main epistemological defect: the *ideal* here is interpreted by him as "necessary, belonging to the essence of the state," and the idea—as an independently existing and acting subject, which makes it impossible to understand this Hegelian paragraph. On the contrary, for Hegel, as mentioned above, the *Idea* does not exist separately from things, it is not a subject outside and apart from reality. In the *Logic*, speaking of the absolute Idea, Hegel gives it a definition of the "totality of its own moments," or *absolute method as the form of movement* of manifold content. It is precisely this point that Lenin writes enthusiastically about Hegel's "materialism" in his *Philosophical Notebooks*. The *ideal*, as Hegel explains also in the *Logic*, is first of all "the way in which the finite exists in the truly infinite," i.e. the imaginary, the non-self-independent, only a *moment* of the real, which is the true infinite—this crucial definition has escaped the discussion of the problem of the ideal even from Ilyenkov,

whose level of understanding and contribution to the development of this problem is almost unrivalled to this day. Here is no place to unfold the dialectic of the real and the ideal, which is developed by Hegel in the *Doctrine of Being*, but it is worth noting that his absolute idealism consists only in the fact that the ideal—arising, transitory, moving—is absolute, that only the whole totality, substance as the Whole, is real. But it is real only because it is absolutely mobile (*ideal*), or, in other words: development is the mode of being of this totality, which Hegel calls *Idea* (in which only this development itself—i.e. *self-development*—is absolute). With this understanding of the ideal, this Hegelian position differs little from Marx's position, which he opposes to Hegel as materialist. Marx would later reproduce some provisions from Hegel's doctrine of law (which includes consideration of ethics and morality, the state and war) almost verbatim.

But to stop at this conclusion would be a great mistake: Marx's formation as a thinker at the point in question is by no means complete. It is not possible here to show the tense dialectic of revolutionary and reactionary, which is characteristic of the nature of the influence of Feuerbach's views on Marx's position, but it can be said that Marx, under the influence of the events of the "Spring of Nations" and, most importantly, in the process of working on "Capital" as an applied logic, is forced to change his attitude to Hegel, first of all, methodologically[6]. In a letter to Engels of 11 January 1868, he admits that "gentlemen in Germany (with the exception of reactionary theologians) believe that Hegel's dialectic is a 'dead dog.' On Feuerbach's conscience is a great sin in this respect" (Marx 1975, 115). There is no doubt that in such "settling accounts with his philosophical conscience," Marx attributes this sin to himself. This is the result of a kind of "epistemological rupture"—though not in the form in which it appeared to Althusser, if we can call the contradictory movement of the theorist's formation a rupture at all. It is not an exaggeration to say that in the most accurate distribution of Hegel's thought we should see the reason for the rise of Marx, Engels and their famous Russian follower (the hereditary nobleman) as theorists, as well as one of their main merits for theoretical thought in general. Formulating it somewhat aphoristically, we can say that the classics of Marxism "ingeniously guessed the dialectics of reality in the dialectics of notions" of Hegel.

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[6] This is particularly evident in the relation to the category of "abstract:" the Marx of The Holy Family laughs at "speculative philosophy, which called the abstract concrete and the concrete abstract," while the later Marx aligns himself with Hegel on this issue

Once Again on the Notion of "Science" and Where to Find It

Back to Ilyenkov. It is in the question of scientificity that he sees the root of the divergence between a truly Marxist position and the views of A. Schaff (this famous article represents another link between Polish and Russian theoretical thought).[7] Schaff declares with crystal honesty the identity of "scientificity" with its neopositivist interpretation; the idea that the former may not be reducible to the latter does not even cross his mind. Trying such a "model" on the views of Marx and Engels, he naturally discovers much that does not fit into this Procrustean bed. Without wisecracking, he declares this "irrational" remnant to be "utopianism," demanding that it be preserved only as an otherworldly ideal, a value, like those with which modern axiology is concerned—i.e. in the neo-Kantian manner. In doing so, Schaff is generally correct in setting the task of "purging Marxism of the illusions of its own scientificity." But what a solution! It can be seen that the directly opposite results of Ilyenkov and Schaff follow directly from their epistemological foundations.

The absence of attempts to comprehend science in a truly Marxist way, i.e. as a "peculiar, historically and culturally conditioned type of cognitive behaviour of socialised man" leads to uncritical borrowing of the existing (anti-dialectical) theory of "science" and "scientificity," which, under certain conditions, puts an end to attempts to break through the circle of transformed, false forms of consciousness. The rare "official" Marxist goes beyond the scientist understanding of "science" and "scientism," which function as forms of *ideological* (in Marx's sense). The distinction between the main paradigms of philosophy of science that Siemek undertakes (scientism, positivism and "philosophy of life") turns out to be a very successful logical perspective for a productive comprehension of "symptoms," as the Polish thinker himself calls them, which are presented in the question of the philosophical content of science and are the result of the inability of philosophy to find out something essential about itself. But it is difficult to agree with Siemek when he declares the concept of science developed by classical philosophy to be *pre-scientific*, having only historical significance (Siemek 1989, 16). It is here that we come across the origins of the division between so-called "creative Marxism" (or "ordinary Marxism," as Mikhail Lifshitz called it), which continues Lenin's line, and dogmatic-positivist diamat,

7. See Ilyenkov 1991b.

which is a departure from Marx's ideas. An appeal to the works of German thinkers who explicitly and rigorously investigate the question of how philosophy can become a science and develop the notion of science as a *generic* notion is required here by necessity. Without mentioning the fundamentally important development of the concept of science in Plato and Aristotle, Bacon and Locke, Descartes and Spinoza, it should be emphasised that the development of the problems of the subject and method of philosophy as a pure (absolute) form of science is in the focus of attention of the representatives of German idealism and constitutes the essential content of this stage in the development of the historical form of philosophy. It is safe to say that the "Copernican revolution" in the question of scientificity made at this nodal point did not become the content of the thinking ability of even many specialist philosophers, not to mention a wide range of scientists in general. The idea and development of science as a theoretical system made by Fichte is still only in the initial stage of comprehension beyond the templates that mystify his personality and heritage (one of the successful attempts can be called the book by Anton Ivanenko (Ivanenko 2012)). Evald Ilyenkov, revealing the question of scientificity, far from in vain proposes to orientate on the polemic of Schelling and Hegel concerning the leading mode of consciousness. This polemic in the removed form is contained in the evolution of the formations of spirit to absolute knowledge, which is shown in the *Phenomenology*. This, as well as the explicated own form of the absolute, presented in the *Science of Logic*, can give the future researcher (regardless of subject specialisation, and even—let us say more acutely—in spite of it) the main thing—the necessary conditions for the formation of universal thinking ability, which Ilyenkov saw as the main goal of any education.

But why is the problem of understanding science closed to the problem of educating the mind? This turn of thought is by no means arbitrary. Because all theoretical problems not only arise from the sociohistorical practice of mankind, but also "find their rational resolution in this practice and in the understanding of this practice," as Marx notes. Because, following Hegel, he rightly declares understanding *valid* only when it successfully manifests itself in the transformation of the world, and not only in explaining it. Because any knowledge reveals itself in existence only as removed in the theoretical ability of its possessor, the scientist, who actively transforms the real forms of reality by means of its ideal forms. On tomorrow's scientist—today's student—depends whether science will become a direct productive force, whether the sham

of the dispute between "physicists and lyricists" will be shown in practice, whether "scientific rationality" will cease to conflict with "axiology." In practice, and only in practice, lies the real semantic center of gravity of all the discussions that arise about and around philosophy, science and their correlation.

This is why it is hasty to declare the legacy of classical philosophy a stage passed. The gap between the natural sciences and the humanities (philosophy, in particular), which became apparent in the twentieth century, was decided in neopositivism, in French epistemology, and in the Soviet diamat to be bridged by introducing philosophers to the "advanced achievements" of the natural sciences. On the contrary, we are convinced that only a deep mastery of the classical philosophical heritage by a wide range of people, for whom thinking is not necessarily a profession, can qualitatively overcome this gap. "A school should teach to think!"—we say after Ilyenkov. Otherwise, in the historical perspective, humanity has no chance to survive.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

In their works, Ilyenkov and Siemek reveal the meaning of the conceptual breakthrough that was made by German classical philosophy. It consists in the removal of the gap between cognition and practice. Or, in other words, in understanding cognition as a special kind of practice itself, which is connected with a faithful reflection of reality and adequate goal-setting. But for this to happen, the theory itself, as Lenin noted, must include "the whole practice of mankind, everything that man needs." Both Siemek and Ilyenkov point out that the Marxist theory of cognition has yet to be created as a system. In the texts of the classics it is given only in a fragmentary form, in the form of some individual aphoristic remarks. In order not to "reduce dialectics to the sum of examples" (as Lenin says), we must rediscover the works of the German idealists, read them in the most profound way in the context of contemporary problems and challenges, carry out an independent materialist revision of them, and ground with our own minds a future practice that can be nothing but the practice of the future. This Practice with a capital letter manifests itself today in the practice of cognition and requires a clear confrontation with positivist attempts to push through their idea of science and scientificity, to make it the supreme measure of all rationality. This is all the more important because these attempts today continue to cover themselves with the name of Marxism, both in

theory and in politics. On the basis of classical theoretical thought, today's theorists who want to consider themselves Marxists are required to uncover the contradictions of the formation of Marx's views, which undergo a non-linear process of liberation from empiricism and represent the transformation of Hegel's dialectic into the scientist's own theoretical ability. In this rather broad problem field of questions about system, truth, method, science as applied logic and as highest form of spirit ability, about the theory of reflection and creativity lies today the main center of gravity, where the efforts of truly theoretical thought are required. Only such thought is able to justify its beginnings, to take a critical look at its premises, and to remove them through engaging them in the theoretical-practical process of truth. And the process of truth, as it was already clear to Hegel, is not only a one-sided correspondence of a notion to an object (or vice versa). Truth must manifest itself in being itself; or, as Marx argues, not only explain the world, but transform it.

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