



## “Ascending” Theory to Reality: Materialist Dialectic and Revolutionary Practice

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**ABSTRACT:** Starting with Feuerbach, materialism in philosophy shifts its focus from pure material interactions to the human essence in order to explain phenomena. This signifies a radical break from tradition. Feuerbach’s approach, which explains the basis of all phenomena, especially religion, as the “human essence”, significantly influenced the materialist approaches that came after him, including Marx and Engels. For Marx, however, Feuerbach’s approach loses its material basis, as it ignores the revolutionary essence of practical human activity, although it is the most reconcilable approach among existing philosophies. On the other hand, the materialist dialectic developed by Marx, together with Engels, shows the very material and objective essence of phenomena arising from human activity. This method is based on revolutionary practice, revealing the material and real basis of thought and the transformative power of human activity, rather than the “relation of thought and reality” mis-formulation. This method, moreover, sees the theoretical not in a plane of abstractions isolated from reality, but in the thought that emerges in human action, again turning to it and transforming it. In other words, this method “ascends” theory into reality by seeing it as immanent to human activity, not in a supersensible realm. The present study aims to demonstrate the revolutionary practical essence of the materialist dialectical method.

**KEYWORDS:** Marxian, materialism, dialectic, thought, activity, practice.

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### Preliminary Points

Throughout the history of philosophy, a profound conflict has persisted between two fundamental perspectives: idealism and materialism.<sup>1</sup> Idealism, with its transcendental and/or innatist assumptions, explains existence through spiritual forces and processes. Materialism, contrarily, prioritizes matter and material reality, emerging through scientific and technical advancements. Engels states that the history of thought is essentially a chronicle of the struggles between these two camps, and most philosophical ideas can be traced back to one of these poles (Engels 2010b, 366). The first forms of materialism, later called atomism, appear in the works of ancient philosophers such as Leucippus (fl. 5th c. BCE) and Democritus (c. 460–370 BCE). Accordingly, the universe is composed of indivisible, invisible atoms whose changes in “size” and “shape” constitute the nature of all things (Guthrie 1969, 393). Epicurus (341–270 BCE) later expands on this idea by adding “weight” to the properties of atoms and proposing a notion of spontaneous deviation in their motion. This deviation, according to Epicurus, suggests an inherent self-sufficiency within atoms, a concept Karl Marx finds particularly significant as it liberates atomism from strict determinism (Marx 2010c, 46).<sup>2,3</sup> Lucretius (c. 99–55 BCE) further develops these ideas in his work *De Rerum Natura*, asserting that nothing can come from nothing and everything is composed of atoms, with even the most solid-seeming objects containing space and motion within them (Lange

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1. The opposition between idealism and materialism often carries residues of the older mind–body (or soul–body) dualism. In this framework, however, following Ilyenkov, “the ideal” is not an immaterial substance or a private mental entity. Ideals are objective in the sense of being socially objectified forms: stabilized, norm-governed patterns of human activity that are realized through and in material carriers—signs, artifacts, institutions, and practices—and reproduced historically in collective life. Although such forms can be internalized as individual thought, their determinacy is socio-historical and practical rather than “spiritual” in a metaphysical sense, and it cannot be reduced to neural events alone.
  2. Epicure’s approach is often discussed in the history of philosophy with what he took from Democritus. In terms of the philosophy of “atoms and the void,” there is a fundamental identity in their approaches; however, Marx argues in his doctoral dissertation that they have two separate philosophies of nature, which produce completely different results. For related discussion see: Marx’s doctoral dissertation titled “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature” (Marx 2010c).
  3. According to Marx, Lucretius is therefore right when he says that the “deviation” expressed by Epicurus broke the “bonds of fate” [fati foederal]; and “it can be said of the atom that the declination is that something in its breast that can fight back and resist.” (Marx 2010c, 49).

1877, 132–135). In the 17th century, materialism re-emerges with renewed vigor, driven by scientific and technical advancements. Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655), revives ancient atomism within the empiricist framework of the New Age (Lange 1877, 254). With his religious beliefs, Gassendi adopts Epicurus’s concept of atoms and integrated it into scientific discourse, arguing that the initial motions of atoms are of divine origin (Lange 1877, 265). Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) further advances materialist thought by viewing all aspects of nature, including human behavior, through the lens of matter and cause-effect relationships (Hobbes 1651/1998, 71–81). Hobbes’s approach suggests that even religious concepts can be understood mechanically, emphasizing a materialist perspective (Hobbes 1651/1998, 261). The Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century marks a significant era for materialism. Philosophers like La Mettrie (1709–1751) and Diderot (1713–1784) play pivotal roles in shaping modern materialist thought. La Mettrie, in his work *Man a Machine*, depicts humans as complex machines (La Mettrie 1747/1996, 26), with bodily reactions analogous to mechanical movements and thoughts as parts of the brain (La Mettrie 1747/1996, 31). Diderot takes a slightly different approach, proposing that sentience is a characteristic inherent to matter itself (Diderot 1830/1966, 189), evolving from insentient to sentient states through physical interactions (Diderot 1830/1966, 190). In this period, there are significant contributions to materialism from other Enlightenment thinkers like Locke (1632–1704), Hume (1711–1776), and Rousseau (1712–1778),<sup>4</sup> who emphasize empirical observation and rationality.

Despite its progress, materialism faces challenges, particularly in explaining the unique ways humans interact with nature and society. For much of its history, materialism has depicted humans as mechanically determined beings, subject to physical laws governing matter. However, this perspective begins to shift with the ideas of Feuerbach in the 19th century. Feuerbach marks a radical departure from traditional materialism by focusing on human essence and social interactions, rather than purely material interactions. This shift highlights the limitations of viewing humans solely as matter-determined beings and emphasizes the importance of considering human nature and society. However, even

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4. In this section, the basic theses of the empiricist philosophies in question, the assumptions of the innatist idealist philosophies that stood against them, or the position of Kantian transcendentalism could be discussed and evaluated in relation to the developments of the period. However, such a discussion was not entered into, as it would expand the scope of the article too much.

Feuerbach's effort in materialism, as shown in the following section, remains quite naive compared to the method of materialism presented by Marx and Engels, i.e., the materialist dialectical method. Crucially, contemporary understandings of materialism often remain confined to these initial perspectives, reproducing similar theoretical problems. Addressing these persistent limitations requires a re-examination of the materialist dialectical method, specifically to demonstrate that it functions not merely as an epistemological tool, but as a framework where logical, theoretical, and practical-critical activities are unified. This intervention is necessary because existing Marxist philosophy often remains fragmented: it either confines dialectics to a formal epistemological method of "reflection" —detached from the subject's activity— or reduces praxis to external political activism devoid of its internal theoretical necessity. This paper corrects this limitation by establishing that the materialist dialectical method is a unified framework where logic, theory, and practical-critical activity constitute a single, immanent movement. Unlike purely epistemological readings, it argues that theory is not a passive mirror but a practical tool that "ascends" to reality; and unlike purely activist readings, it demonstrates that political practice is the necessary realization of this theoretical-logical movement within social relations. Consequently, the analysis aims to establish that within this dialectic, the theoretical is inherently practical, and the practical domain is simultaneously political.

### **Feuerbach's (Metaphysical) Moment in Materialism**

The 19th-century German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach was the one who transcended the traditional mechanical understanding of materialism and reinterpreted it in a human-centered way for the first time. When he first published his work, *The Essence of Christianity* [EOC], in 1841, Hegel's philosophy was being discussed in Germany. Hegel's method, which states that "everything that is rational is real, and everything that is real is rational," liberated the mind stuck in its shell in Kant's philosophy and removed the limits of the "absolute." While Hegel's idealist followers interpreted Hegel's thought in question as "reality is only in the rational," his materialist followers interpreted it as "reality must be transformed in order to become rational." These debates were later described as a split inside the Hegelian school into a Right, a Centre, and a Left (often called the "Young" or "Left" Hegelians). Strauss articulates this Right/Centre/Left vocabulary in his *Streitschriften*, where he explicitly sets out the three Hegelian positions (Strauss 1837/1980, 95; 120–121; 126). For Strauss, the key issue was

theological: whether (and how far) Hegel's idea of the unity of divine and human nature could "contain" the Gospel story as history. He argues that there are three answers: that Hegel's idea supports (i) the whole Gospel narrative, (ii) only part of it, or (iii) none of it; and he labels these, respectively, as the Right, the Centre, and the Left (McLellan 1969, 4–5). He also stresses that the boundaries were not sharp—for example, a "centre" position existed, and later political alignments did not always match earlier religious ones (McLellan 1969, 5–6). In this conventional mapping, Feuerbach is placed on the Left because he pushed the critique of Christianity beyond attempts to reconcile Hegel with orthodox doctrine and toward an anthropological account of religion; as McLellan notes, "By the end of 1843 the influence of Feuerbach was supreme among all those Young Hegelians who did not attach themselves to Bruno Bauer" (McLellan 1969, 104–105). When Feuerbach's EOC was published, the book profoundly influenced a group of revolutionary thinkers, including David Strauss, Bruno Bauer, Arnold Ruge, and later Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and was considered a pioneering work among Left Hegelians (Engels 2010b, 362–364). The work was translated into many languages while Feuerbach was still alive and brought Feuerbach great fame in Europe. While the impact of the book continues to increase due to the new breath Feuerbach brought to materialism against idealist thoughts, his other important work, *Principles of Philosophy of the Future* [PPF], which is a complementary work of EOC, was first published in 1843.

Feuerbach, who was interested in theology in the early years of his life, later turned to philosophy. While he was initially under the influence of Hegel's philosophy, he formed his own philosophical line over time. Engels describes his break from Hegelian philosophy and his turn towards materialism as the development of a Hegelian towards materialism: "Feuerbach's evolution is that of a Hegelian—a never quite orthodox Hegelian, it is true—into a materialism" (2010b, 369). Feuerbach himself explains this journey of transformation: "God was my first thought, reason the second, and man the third and the last." (2012a, 292). Indeed, EOC is his fundamental work in which he places human beings at the basis of philosophy and establishes a materialism within this framework.

The materialism that Feuerbach puts forward in the EOC derives its dynamism from the effort to lift the metaphysical veil over religious phenomena. In the EOC, which generally includes Feuerbach's criticism of religion, Feuerbach first examines human essence in general, then the

essence of religion in general; then, it deals with *the real anthropological essence* and *unreal theological essence of religion*. The main purpose of the work is to reveal that the basis of all phenomena is the human essence, starting from the phenomenon of religion.

According to Feuerbach, the phenomenon of religion arises from the fact that humans are essentially different from animals (1841/1881, 1). While animals do not have any religion, human beings do. So, what is the cause of this essential difference? According to Feuerbach (1841/1881, 1), this difference is “consciousness” in its most general sense. To clarify this process, one must consider that consciousness involves not only the physical and neural (thinking) realization of bodily impressions, but also the power of sensory discrimination, where external objects are perceived and evaluated. Nevertheless, it is not possible to say that this basic sensory consciousness—which might manifest as a simple physical reaction—does not exist in animals. The transition to a specifically human, “socialized” consciousness requires language as its core infrastructure. As a necessary precondition, the naming and comparing of different sensory effects demand a linguistic framework to enable communication and socialization. This linguistic mediation stands as a necessary precondition of true consciousness, transforming raw impressions into shared social reality.

On the other hand, only human has an essence that makes their own species and existence their own object, which means that they can make other essences their own object. There is no such consciousness in animals (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 1). According to Feuerbach, for this reason, unlike animals, humans have a “twofold” life, one internal and the other external: “The inner life of man is the life which has relation to his species, to his general, as distinguished from his individual, nature” (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 2). While animals communicate among each other—for instance, through alarm calls—the animal exists in nature only as itself. Consequently, unlike the human being, the animal lacks a distinction between an inner and outer life. Human, on the other hand, exists both as himself and as “I and You.” These aspects that make humans different from animals are both the basis and the object of religion. Religion is the consciousness of eternity in humans (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 2). Thinking about eternity means thinking about and approving the infinity of human’s ability to think. Just as religion expresses the consciousness of eternity in human, the absolute essence of human expresses the divine essence (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 9).

Furthermore, according to Feuerbach, since human's object is nothing other than their own objective essence, "Such as are a man's thoughts and dispositions, such is his God; so much worth as a man has, so much and no more has his God" (1841/1881, 12). With this approach, Feuerbach equates their god with human, and human with their god: "Whatever is God to a man, that is his heart and soul; and conversely, God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man—religion the solemn unveiling of a man's hidden treasures, the revelation of his intimate thoughts, the open confession of his love-secrets." (1841/1881, 12–13). According to him, religion is man's first and mediate self-consciousness. The emergence of religion in both human history and the individual's own history and its coming before philosophy is due to the fact that human transfers this essence outside themselves without seeing it in themselves. This means that a person turns their own essence into their own object. Therefore, for Feuerbach, the history of religions is the history of human's failure to comprehend their own essence by objectifying it. Every development in religion means that people understand themselves more closely.

Feuerbach, who reveals the essence of man and religion in general within this framework, tries to show the "real," i.e. "anthropological essence" of religion in the first part of the book. He first says that human and God are two separate essences, that human being is finite and has a set of deficiencies, and God is infinite and has perfections, and that they are opposite essences. This is what is attributed to God and man in religions. However, according to him, God is first the emergence of human's own essence as an essence opposed to themselves (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 35). So how does this divine essence appear as a real essence separate from the human? Feuerbach sees the source of this to be the understanding (1841/1881, 36). Because the understanding has no desires, passions and therefore weaknesses, and the features attributed to God are the features of the understanding. Besides, God, as the morally complete essence, is nothing other than "the realized idea, the fulfilled law of morality, the moral nature of man posited as the absolute being" (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 46) and therefore the "intellectual essence," the human essence. On the other hand, this morally competent self-concept is a design that tells people what they should be and forces them to act, putting them in tension with themselves. This design creates a feeling of worthlessness and the torment of sinfulness in people. Getting rid of this is only possible by "becoming aware that love is the highest, absolute power and truth, and regarding the Divine Being not only as a law,

as a moral being, as a being of the understanding, but also as a loving, tender, even subjective human being” (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 47). The consciousness of love is the reconciliation of human with their own essence, which appears before them as an alienated essence. In the first part of the book, Feuerbach tries to show the human-centered emergence of various beliefs and acceptances from the history of religion in general and Christianity in particular, in an attempt to prove that the divine essence is the human essence, starting from these concepts.

In the second part of the book, Feuerbach tries to show the unreal theological essence of religion. Accordingly, religion is a phenomenon that binds human happiness and every emotion that opposes it. The person who believes is happy, the person who does not believe is cursed: “Blessed is he that believeth, cursed is he that believeth not.” (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 186). According to Feuerbach, religion appeals not to reason but to the world of emotions. The essence from which stems “all good, but especially such as takes possession of man apart from his volition, such as does not correspond with any resolution or purpose, such as transcends the limits of the practical consciousness” (1841/1881, 187), namely God, belongs to the emotional world, not to the rational one, making any doubt about it a problem of conscience. So, the main indicator of the unreal theological essence of God is that it attaches itself not to reason but to emotion. The devil, Satan, standing in front of it is the negative side, the evil side of the human essence. God and the devil are separated and qualitatively opposing parts of the same essence. Therefore, in the history of religion, not believing in the devil has been considered as atheism as not believing in God (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 188). Feuerbach discusses and demonstrates the “unreal” essence of religious concepts and elements in religion in general and Christianity in particular. This part of the book discusses the contradictions in the existence of God, the revelation of God, the essence of God, the speculative doctrine of God, the trinity and consecration rituals in the Christian faith, and between love and faith, and explains that the content and object of religion is completely human, the secret of theology is anthropology, and the divine essence is the human essence (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 270).

In EOC, Feuerbach puts forward the idea that human attributes their basic qualities to God, that all these qualities are actually human, and that God emerges from human essence in every sense. In this way, the metaphysical dust cloud has dispersed for the facts and concepts of religion and God. Indeed, God is no longer anything other than human.

The sacred, which becomes visible in God, is actually the sanctification of humans' own qualities. In other words, religion and the world of God, as the domain of the sacred, are the domain of essential qualities that are detached from human essence and become sacred.

The *Principles* (PpF) addresses questions concerned with the history of modern philosophy (§ 1–18), the criticism of Hegelian philosophy (19–30) and the principles of new philosophy (31–65) (Feuerbach 1843/2012c). With PPF, Feuerbach aims to complete the project in EOC of showing that the divine essence is the human essence and that the secret of theology is anthropology. Here, Feuerbach treats modern philosophy as speculative philosophy or as a philosophical form of theology. Accordingly, speculative philosophy is the rational adoption and analysis of God; this philosophy is “true, consistent, rational theology” (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 178 §4–5). Speculative philosophy transforms God, which is the object of human in theology, into the human subject and turns it into a “thinking self” (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 180–181 §7). On the other hand, since the most competent form of the “new” philosophy is Hegel’s philosophy, Feuerbach’s criticism is also linked to Hegel’s philosophy (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 200 §19). Hegel starts his method from thought, i.e. consciousness, he connects his idealism to the concept of the absolute (Geist), and his system is completed in this absolute. According to Feuerbach, Hegel rationalizes theology while absolutizing thought. As a matter of fact, while Hegel consubstantiates thought and existence, he infers existence from thought.

On the other hand, the “new” philosophy, which started with Feuerbach, goes beyond previous philosophies and sees the human essence in religion and God and puts nature at its center. By transforming theology, it “makes anthropology, together with physiology, the universal science” (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 243 §54). As for thought, the new philosophy takes thought neither as a divine consciousness nor as an absolute essence; thought is merely the thought of reality. In other words, Feuerbach argues that “The laws of reality are also the laws of thinking” (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 235 §45). At this point, it is important to note that for Feuerbach, these “laws” are not subjective, human-made dictates imposed upon an otherwise lawless nature. Instead, he asserts that because the human mind is an integral part of nature, the objective structures and “pertinent dictations” of reality are precisely what constitute the content and rules of true thinking. Feuerbach’s analysis maintains that the objective necessity of the object itself dictates the logic of the mind, and any law of thought that does not find its basis in

the sensible object lacks truth. Moreover, what distinguishes human from animals is not just thinking, but their entire essence. Thinking is the necessary result of this essence (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 241–242 §53). Feuerbach also bases the new philosophy on the “truth of love”. According to him, “The old philosophy maintained that that which could not be thought of also did not exist; the new philosophy maintains that that which is not loved or cannot be loved does not exist” (Feuerbach 1843/2012c, 227 §35). As a result, according to Feuerbach, the new philosophy is “the complete and absolute dissolution of theology into anthropology, a dissolution in which all contradictions have been overcome” (1843/2012c, 241 §52).

Feuerbach’s materialism radically differs from the previous ones. Accordingly, human beings, who are seen as the result of the natural forms and movements of atoms or matter in traditional materialism, become the essence of existence within objective nature for the first time. In this view, the basis of all phenomena is the human essence, and this essence has taken on different appearances throughout history. The main task is to see and reveal the human essence in all phenomena. The basis of everything is nature, and humans also emerge in nature. However, this does not mean that human beings exist solely according to atomic movements or functions like a machine. Human beings are essentially separate from everything else in nature. They are the only beings who can turn their own essence into their own object. The human essence separates from itself, appears as other essences, and returns to itself as an essence opposed to itself (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 33–34). In Feuerbach, the emergence of all phenomena, especially religion, is based on this.

Feuerbach’s materialism is a revolutionary moment compared to the “vulgar” mechanical materialism of the previous century. Although Feuerbach started from matter, he shifted his attention from matter and focused on humans in order to explain the phenomena. This is the first striking approach in which human determination is underlined. So much so that this approach turns Feuerbach into a hero among revolutionary materialists. This aspect is visible in Marx and Engels’ observations:

Then came Feuerbach’s *Wesen des Christenthums*. With one blow it pulverized the contradiction, by plainly placing materialism on the throne again. Nature exists independently of all philosophy. It is the foundation upon which we human beings, ourselves products of nature, have grown up. Noth-

ing exists outside nature and man, and the higher beings our religious fantasies have created are only the fantastic reflection of our own essence. The spell was broken; the “system” was exploded and cast aside, and the contradiction, shown to exist only in our imagination, was dissolved—One must have experienced the liberating effect of this book for oneself to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was universal: we were all Feuerbachians for a moment. (Engels 2010b, 364)

At the time of the prevalence of Hegelian philosophy, Feuerbach was first in radically criticizing it, shattering its supposedly unbreakable shells and initiating the transformation of materialism. Marx and Engels also accept this revolutionary essence of Feuerbach’s philosophy. This is because he showed the way to make the subject of Hegel’s philosophy into a predicate and the predicate into a subject, thus starting from humans instead of starting from thought. In Hegel’s idealism, “Thought” or the “Absolute Spirit” was treated as the primary, active *subject*—the force that created and directed reality. In this framework, the material human being was merely a *predicate*, a secondary manifestation or result of that thought. Feuerbach flipped this structure: he argued that the concrete, living human is the true, independent *subject*, while “thought” is merely a *predicate*—an attribute or a product produced by humans. Marx acknowledged this breakthrough, saying, “Feuerbach is the only one who has a serious, critical attitude to the Hegelian dialectic and who has made genuine discoveries in this field. He is in fact the true conqueror of the old philosophy” (Marx 2010d, 328).

However, despite all these innovations, Feuerbach’s philosophy should be understood as the necessary historical threshold that allowed materialism to reclaim its ground, even if it could not by itself complete its journey towards the most perfect and scientific form of materialism. Marx and Engels agree that Feuerbach’s system provided the indispensable foundation for their own departure, yet remained incomplete as it inevitably leads back to idealism when slides into a metaphysical ground. This slide occurs not because of a simple failure of thought, but because, although Feuerbach places “man” at the center, he treats the human essence as an abstract, static, and internal “species” quality rather than the result of social and historical relations. By overlooking *praxis*—the revolutionary, practical-critical activity through which people change their circumstances—he views the world as something to be merely observed (contemplated) rather than transformed. Consequently, his materialism remains “intuitive” or metaphysical because it

deals with an idealized version of humanity isolated from the actual historical and political flow of society.

Importantly, despite Marx's generally radical critical attitude and the radical difference between his approach and Feuerbach's, his criticism of Feuerbach is not an "attack" despite his sometimes-harsh language. As Bloch puts, "The departure from Feuerbach took place respectfully and above all as a correction [...]" (1954/1996, 251). Indeed, from Marx's point of view, Feuerbach has a special place in current philosophy. In his letter to Arnold Ruge on March 18, 1843, Marx wrote, "Feuerbach's aphorisms seem to me incorrect only in one respect, that he refers too much to nature and too little to politics. That, however, is the only alliance by which present-day philosophy can become truth" (2010e, 400). Marx finds the foundation on which Feuerbach's philosophy is based problematic and develops his criticism accordingly. After his letter to Ruge, Marx aphoristically puts forward the fundamental problems of Feuerbach's system (and philosophy in general) in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, which he wrote in 1845, and in *The German Ideology*, which he co-authored with Engels<sup>5</sup> in 1845–46. *Theses on Feuerbach* have a special place both in the joint works of Marx and Engels and in Marx's personal works, with their aphoristic structure and giving the most concise form of the method that Marx puts forward together with Engels. For the first time, in the *Theses*, there is a direct and radical criticism of Feuerbach and of materialism in general:

The chief defect of all previous materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that things [Gegenstand], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of the object, or of contemplation, but not as human sensitive activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence it happened that the active side, in contradistinction to materialism, was set forth by idealism—but only abstractly, since, of course, idealism does not know real, sensitive activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensitive objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity. In *Das Wesen*

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5. *Historical note:* The MEGA<sup>2</sup> editorial introduction to the *German Ideology* materials (I/5) indicates that the surviving manuscripts (1845–1847) were first conceived for publication as a self-edited quarterly journal (*Vierteljahrsschrift*) rather than as a conventional book. It further records that this quarterly project was initially planned under the editorship of Marx, Engels, and Moses Heß, and that after the journal plan failed, Marx and Engels considered book-form alternatives (first a two-volume, then possibly a one-volume version, ultimately without contributions by other authors) (Marx and Engels 2017, 726; 731). The same introduction also documents plans to include texts by other authors (especially for the projected second volume of the *Vierteljahrsschrift*), including Georg Weerth and Wilhelm Weitling among others (Marx and Engels 2017, 727; 771).

des Christentums, he therefore regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and defined only in its dirty-Jewish form of appearance. Hence he does not grasp the meaning of “revolutionary,” of practical-critical, activity. (Marx 2010g, 6)

This single paragraph identifies the chief defect of hitherto materialism, including Feuerbach’s, in treating reality as a mere object or intuition, independently of practice. Unlike materialism, for the first time in Hegel’s idealism, reality is taken as practical activity, even though in the form of abstract thinking only. As for Feuerbach, unlike Hegel, he wants sensory objects separate from intellectual objects, but he does not understand the importance of “revolutionary and practical-critical” activity. The disregard of “praxis” throughout the history of traditional materialism and even in Feuerbach’s materialism means, reproducing the traditional the traditional problem of how differentiated realities, one sensible and the other supersensible, relate to each other. Because, no matter how material it is built on, ultimately the human essence clings to the traditional formulation of “generalization” and “abstraction” in order to reach “consciousness,” one of its essential qualities. Thus, the material basis becomes mysterious and “detaches itself from itself and establishes itself as an independent realm in the clouds” (2010g, 7). Marx draws attention to this in the fourth thesis (Ibid.) when he states that Feuerbach starts from the fact of the duality of the world, one “religiously conceived” and the other real. According to Marx (Ibid.), Feuerbach only placed the religious world on a material basis and left aside the actual work that needed to be done. Engels, similarly, states, “Feuerbach broke through the system and simply discarded it” (2010b, 365). Since Feuerbach did not explain how his material basis detached from itself to settle “on the clouds like an autonomous kingdom”—in other words, how this “human essence” transformed into a religious essence through internal contradictions—he left these contradictions unresolved and failed to revolutionize them in practice (Marx 2010g, 7). In other words, Feuerbach’s limiting the sensible world to simple intuition or perceptions was a crucial first step; however, by starting from the abstract concept of “human” instead of “real historical human” (Marx and Engels 2010a, 39), it remained a form of “intuitive” materialism that awaited its completion in seeing the importance of practical-revolutionary human activity.

On the other hand, human essence is the expression of social human being. While human exists in society through their practical activity, they reconstruct themselves and the relationships in which they exist.

However, from a Feuerbachian perspective, the abstract human individual, “isolated” from the historical flow (Marx 2010g, 8), stands in the middle with their (generic) human essence instead of practice. They have a religion because of their essential qualities, they create a God essence, and they know that at best these essences are opposite essences alienated from their own essence. While Feuerbach presupposes that the “abstract human individual” in question has a general essence (in terms of species), they see (in an idealistic manner) the “reconciliation” of this essence with opposing essences that are disconnected from it and alienated from it, only in “love,” which is the supreme power. The basic principle in relationships with others is love. Everything else follows from this principle. In other words, the human essence that Feuerbach aims to show in the essence of phenomena throughout his philosophical thought system eventually comes to be connected to the concept of love. Therefore, on the one hand, Feuerbach advises to turn to the concrete and reality, on the other hand, he builds, in Engels’ words, the “religion of love” (2010b, 377) and turns to “humanism” based on a morality of partnership. Feuerbach, who begins his analysis with a materialist tone based on nature, adopts an idealist attitude when it comes to humans. That is why Engels said, “He [Feuerbach] can never completely cease being an idealist. In the field of nature, he is materialist; but in the human sphere he is an idealist” (Engels 2010a, 480).

From the perspective of Marx and Engels, Feuerbach overcomes crude/vulgar traditional materialisms by realizing that the human being is a “sensible object.” However, he does not regard humans as “sensory activities” within their given social relations, but instead idealizes them with the concept of a “human being” who has only senses and only establishes relationships of love and friendship with other “humans” (Marx and Engels 2010, 40–41). This leaves his materialism as a form of “intuitive” *metaphysical* materialism. With the criticisms of Marx and Engels, Feuerbach’s statement “Backwards I fully agree with the materialists, but not forwards” (Grün 1874 quoted by Engels 2010b, 369),<sup>6</sup> which he actually meant by mechanical materialism, comes true ironically: In the final analysis, he is not with a revolutionary materialism.

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6. This sentence quoted by Engels (2010b) from K. Grün, Ludwig Feuerbach in seinem Briefwechsel und Nachlaß sowie in seiner Philosophischen Charakterentwicklung, Vol. II, Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1874, p. 308.

### Marxian Materialism and Revolutionary Practice

The materialist dialectical method introduced by Marx and Engels and the practical-critical revolutionary aspect inherent in it constitute the most sophisticated form of both materialism and dialectics as a whole.

It has already been mentioned how important Marx found Feuerbach, especially after EOC. However, in his letter dated 24 January 1865 to Schweitzer, editor of *Der Social-Demokrat* newspaper, Marx does not hesitate to describe Feuerbach as philosophically “poor” when compared to Hegel, despite all his radicalism (2010f, 26). The reason for this is the masterful use of dialectics in Hegel’s philosophy, despite all its idealist hard shell. In his Afterword to the Second German Edition of *Capital-I*, Marx openly declares himself “the pupil of that mighty thinker” against those who treated him as a “dead dog” behind Hegel’s back in Germany at the time (2010b, 19). Because, according to Marx, “The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner” (2010b, 19). In this context, it is necessary to mention a few important points regarding the dialectical methods of Hegel and Marx. To navigate this dense philosophical issue, it is helpful to first identify the internal mechanics of Hegel’s method.

First, Hegel shows that the knowledge of existence emerges in the dialectical movement of Spirit in his philosophy, which he puts forward in its most basic form in his works *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*, starting from consciousness and passing through various moments and reaching the absolute subject. In Hegel’s method, the passage of “consciousness, which is the immediate existence of Spirit” (Hegel 1807/1977, 21 §36) from one moment to another indicates a continuous movement in the form of resolving one contradiction and moving on to another. The key point here is that for Hegel, reality is not static but a dynamic process driven by internal contradictions. This movement is negation, the negation of negation, and its own movement, which continues in the form of a new negation on another plane and emerges from the spiritual substance itself. Essentially, Hegel argues that consciousness moves forward by constantly encountering and overcoming the internal contradiction between its own subjective knowing and the objective reality it faces. Moments of objectivity in consciousness, one of which is *knowing* and the other of which is *negative to knowing*, constitute a totality with an internal contradiction because they appear as forms of consciousness. This is also the non-identity of “I” and “non-I”

(spiritual substance) in consciousness. This non-identity is the principle that enables the movement of consciousness as negation. This movement, which seems to take place outside of consciousness, is actually a movement directed by consciousness itself. In other words, this is the movement of consciousness itself (Hegel 1807/1977, 21 §36–37). What matters for Marx in this complex spiritual journey is Hegel’s greatest merit: his conception of reality not as a collection of static objects, but as a continuous *becoming*, *change*, and *process*. According to Hegel, the driving force of this development is “contradiction.” Marx appropriates this dynamic method; however, he maintains that “With him it [dialectics] is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell” (2010b, 19). In other words, Marx positions his dialectical method not only as different from Hegel’s, but also as its opposite because he insists that thought is a ‘translated’ form of material reality, rather than an independent subject called “the Idea” (Marx 2010b, 19).

To clarify the transition from Hegel to Marx, we must see how they differ regarding “mediation.” In Hegel’s dialectics, the resolution of the apparent contradiction between the subject and external reality, which emerges as a negation from consciousness, takes place through the “concept.” The concept emerges when one of the moments that “seem to be separated” in consciousness as the subject and external reality is the mode of existence of the other (1807/1977, 21 §§36–37). In this way, the concept overcomes the contradiction on this plane and carries the moments that first separated (appeared to be separated) from an immediate unity to a mediate unity plane. However, this plane is another plane of contradiction and this movement continues constantly. In this view, concept, subject, reality and everything else emerge from this dialectical movement. While this revolutionary essence remains central to Hegel, Marx takes this ‘upside down’ method, puts it on its logical feet, and starts from the material basis. What Marx rejects is not the movement itself, but the way Hegel deduces the history of nature and society from pure thought. However, what he does is not, as Feuerbach does, to recognize the material basis and then let it slip away. For in Feuerbach’s analysis, in the end, the two isolated essences remain, one the human essence and the other nature. His “general human” stands on the natural basis and relates to society through a reconciliatory bond of “love,” which Feuerbach explicitly presents as the “principle of reconciliation” between the universal and the individual, the divine and the human

(Feuerbach 1841/1881, 48). This eliminates the dialectical and materialist essence of his method. In Marx's critique, the problem is that Feuerbach does not grasp mediation as a practical, transformative relation: "sensuousness" remains framed as object or contemplation rather than "sensuous human activity, practice" (Marx 2010g, 3). Feuerbach cannot find the mediating movement of the relationship of human essence to society and nature. Or at best he takes it as "religion," which he describes as an indirect self-relation: "religion is man's earliest and also indirect form of self-knowledge," because human nature is first encountered as if outside itself (Feuerbach 1841/1881, 13). In Hegel, however, albeit idealistically, the contradiction is resolved in the Idea. Since in Hegel, humans relate to nature and society through concepts arising from the movement of thought. This also explains the relationship between thought and reality. In Hegel, although both of them originate from "Idea," the mediating moment in the relationship between thought and reality is "concept." The subject transforms nature, history and itself through its concepts. Therefore, when Marx compares Feuerbach with Hegel, he does not hesitate to see Feuerbach as philosophically "poor," who imagines humans as passive subjects who do not participate in the formation of history.

Hegel's dialectics, which deduces the history of nature and society from thought, promises that all movement will be completed in The Absolute Spirit and all contradictions will be resolved. Marx investigates the material roots of Spirit itself by questioning why, if all contradictions are resolved in Spirit, social relations are constantly produced and reproduced in the form of a class society. Marx takes the "acting agent" as a fundamental Notion as early as his doctoral dissertation where he contrasts Democritus' and Epicurus' atomic theories; in the former's atoms are subject to a predetermined uniform falling motion; in the latter's they deviate from the straight line and hence acquire agency and become subjects of activity. As a result, Marx distances himself fundamentally from both Hegel's idealism and Feuerbach's materialism of the 'contemplative subject.' Together with Engels, Marx demonstrates that establishing the "new philosophy" Feuerbach referred to is only possible through the 'materialization' of dialectics, which best reveals the laws of thought. Materialist dialectics takes the acting subject as the sole transformative power of all history and nature.

In the face of Hegelian idealism, Marx acknowledges the significance of Feuerbach starting his analysis from religious phenomena, yet he criticizes his materialism for remaining bound within this phenomenal

limit. Feuerbach's analysis remained at the phenomenal level because he limited the human essence to an abstract and silent "species" quality inherent in the individual's nature, rather than conceiving it as the ensemble of historical and social relations. By disregarding the practical human activity, or *praxis*, which produces social relations, he failed to grasp the dynamic social essence lying behind the object of contemplation. In contrast to Feuerbach, Marx's method, while starting from phenomena, does not bind itself to the phenomenal; rather, it aims at grasping the essence, namely the social relations, of which the particular phenomenon under study is merely a form of existence. It is the establishment of this dialectical link between phenomenon and essence that ensures the methodological unity of Marx's system. It is precisely for this reason that, in order to reveal the essence of the capitalist mode of production, which is a complex web of social relations, Marx selects the "commodity" as the starting point of his analysis: "the smallest cellular unit which carries the entire social characteristics of the system in its genetic codes"<sup>7</sup> and constitutes the most concrete *form of appearance* of these relations within capitalist society.

When analyzing the commodity, Marx thinks of it as a contradictory whole that has a dual existence: use value and exchange value. The useful aspect of the commodity corresponds to its use value. Exchange value, on the other hand, appears "at first sight, presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort, a relation constantly changing with time and place." (Marx 2010b, 46). Therefore, the conditions that determine it appear to express a random process. But Marx shows that this is not the real story.

When talking about value, Marx states in its simplest form that "the value of each commodity is determined by the quantity of labour expended on and materialised in it, by the working time necessary, under given social conditions, for its production" (2010b, 196–197). Therefore, value is the social substance crystallized in each commodity (Marx 2010b, 48).<sup>8</sup> Value is the expression of the average social labor time required to produce a commodity, and every commodity enters the exchange market as the carrier of value. According to Marx, "Social labour

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7. This statement is an excerpt from a statement used by Siyaveş Azeri in his graduate course titled "Marx and the Marxian Method," which he gave at Mardin Artuklu University in 2015 and which I followed.

8. In Marx's own words: "[...] When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are—Values." (Marx 2010b, 48).

time exists in these commodities in a latent state, so to speak, and becomes evident only in the course of their exchange” (2010a, 286). This emphasizes that value emerges in the sphere of production but is realized only in the sphere of exchange. However, while the production of use value is a necessary material condition (for nothing can have value without being useful) the fundamental historical prerequisite for the production of value is *the commodification of labor power*. It is this specific condition that transforms the labor process into a process of *value creation* (Wertbildung). As Marx stated, “Just as commodities are, at the same time, use values and values, so the process of producing them must be a labour process, and at the same time, a process of creating value” (2010b, 196). The labor process, in this context, is an activity that comprises labor itself, the instruments of labor, and the object of labor.

Labor, as an abstraction, expresses the relationship that humans establish with nature to maintain their lives. In this abstraction, the human being, as an opposing force of nature within nature, incorporates the material beings of nature into their own existence through labor in order to survive. Their labor expresses a purposive and tool-mediated process of activity. Humans transform both external nature and their own nature through this tool-mediated activity. This purposive and tool-mediated human activity turns anything in nature into an object of labor the very moment it is directed towards it. The subsequent process involves the continuous transformation of that object and of the human being itself as the acting subject. At each moment of activity, the object turns into a labor product that has passed through labor processes and whose nature has been altered. It is the activity itself that changes and transforms the human being as the acting subject as much as it does nature. This is an abstraction that demonstrates the centrality of human activity, that is, of revolutionary practice.

The main point for Marx is that the human being has never been a merely natural being; therefore, all labor processes occur within specific social relations and forms. Indeed, regardless of the social format, any object appears before a human being not merely as ‘natural’, but as a product of a certain labor. As acting subjects, humans encounter one another within relations of production. In *Capital*, Marx demonstrates most competently that all these processes now take place specifically within capitalist relations of production. Within these relations, as a result of the separation of the labor process from the conditions of labor, labor power assumes a specific character: it produces commodities and itself takes the form of a commodity. The owner of labor power “freely”

sells the use value of their labor power, which has taken the form of a commodity, to the capitalist, whom they encounter as an “equal” in the market. The capitalist acquires the right to use this commodity and to appropriate every product it produces for a certain period of time. In the relations of production established upon this specific commodity, which produces as it is consumed, the entire movement operates in favor of the capitalist. This process, which includes the production of value and surplus value as a continuous cycle, ensures the exploitation of labor and the continuity of mechanisms of value production, and therefore of capital. Law, religion, the state, the economy, and all other phenomena re-emerge in specific ways as different manifestations of this process.

Marx’s analysis elucidates the history of social humanity by breaking the spell of the Hegelian Spirit and revealing its essence on the basis of material and concrete human activity. In this way, Marx demonstrates that the fundamental reality of the human being resides neither in nature nor in some supernatural realm, but in social relations themselves. Therefore, the roots of all phenomena related to social life must be sought here, not in the abstract constructs of thought or pure nature. Meanwhile, it is essential to note that “pure thought” and “pure nature” are themselves human notions—conceptual categories we create to interpret a world from which we cannot be truly detached. Consequently, the origins of thought, which Hegel views as the source of reality, must be traced back to material processes themselves. This signifies that consciousness is not an independent power that creates the world, but is instead the “ideal” expression of the real life-process and social activity of humans. By situating the genesis of thought within these material conditions, Marx provides the basis for resolving the traditional tension between thinking and being. Much like the traditional philosophical problem regarding the dualism of thought and reality—and the question of how a relationship between them is even possible—the debate concerning the reality or unreality of thought “isolated from practice” remains, in Marx’s view, a purely “scholastic” question (Marx 2010g, 3). However, according to Marx, “All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice” (Marx and Engels 2010a, 5). Thus, thought derives its reality solely from practice. Indeed, in Marx’s method, thinking is not a mental production composed of “abstract” concepts in the traditional sense of “mental distillation” (Ilyenkov 1982), but a practical activity and a real process in which the

“concrete is reproduced.” In other words, thinking is a continuous movement that proceeds reciprocally from the social to the individual and back again. Concepts emerge as “tools of mental activity” (Azeri 2013, 1095–1123) within this movement. Accordingly, conceptual systems are not planes of abstraction isolated from reality; on the contrary, they are tools of action that return to human activity and transform it through concepts. For this reason, theory “isolated” from practice is nothing but a meaningless aggregate of abstractions. Therefore, theories are not mental formulations rising *above* reality, but practical tools that “rise to reality” within human activity itself. Isolating theory from practice and elevating it to an “autonomous kingdom above the clouds” is to see the world upside down. This approach reflects the bourgeois perspective, as it mirrors the structural division between mental and manual labor inherent in class society, where theoretical contemplation is detached from the material production of life. This is, therefore, not a merely epistemological problem, as it might seem, but a deeply political one.

Marx’s theory of value serves as a prime demonstration of this methodological unity between theoretical abstraction and concrete reality. It presents the most perfect example of how the theoretical is elevated to the level of the real. While value theory appears as a systematic set of formulations involving abstract concepts, it does not remain in the realm of ideas. Instead, it functions as a theoretical-practical unity that exposes the essential social relations and the historically specific forms of human social activity of the capitalist mode of production. This unity captures a system that is as opportunistic as it is contradictory; despite its immanent crises, capitalism demonstrates a historical resilience that allows it to adapt and persist even through catastrophic social destruction or massive population losses. Crucially, these relations and forms of activity are not understood as mechanical or deterministic rules; rather, they reflect the contradictory dynamics through which the material life-process is produced and reproduced. By grasping the “value” form, Marx does not merely define a concept; he reveals how the concrete life processes of real people are regulated, how labor is exploited behind the appearance of equal exchange, and how social relations assume the form of relations between things. Thus, the theory of value proves its reality by demystifying the actual functioning of capitalist society and by providing the tools to transform it.

The necessary consequence of Marx’s materialist dialectical method is that all logical and theoretical tools of action provided by this method

conceive of the human being ‘in social activity’ simultaneously as a political subject. Participating in social relations is, in essence, no different from participating in political relations. Therefore, even the most seemingly natural actions of the social individual occur within the totality of social relations, in which political action is inherent. Actions as mundane as eating lunch to satisfy hunger or taking a bus to cross the city possess direct or indirect political determinations, just as much as the struggle of a female worker demanding equal pay for equal work. This is because each of these actions presupposes a web of relations involving capitalist production, in which labor power is exchanged as a commodity, alongside processes of value production, the capital-labor contradiction, and the monetary economy. Therefore, the social human is equally a political subject. As Marx demonstrates, human beings, as political subjects within existing production relations, are also determined by class in terms of how they participate in these relations and their position within them. In this polar opposition between the capitalist/bourgeoisie and the working class/proletariat, Marx argues that the only class capable of standing against the capitalist class is the proletariat (Marx and Engels 2010b, 494). Therefore, the “emancipation” of humanity is only possible with the revolutionary practical activity of the proletariat. The development of capitalism has eliminated all other classes and made the existence of only these two classes possible. Because the condition of existence of capital is that the means of production are subject to the laws of private property and concentrated in the hands of the capitalist, and the owner of labor power can only confront the capitalist by “freely” selling the labor power that has become a commodity. This unique relationship dissolved all social structures in the past, abolished all classes, and created this polar opposite class structure. However, defining this polarization merely as a sociological stratification or limiting it to the economic sphere would be a misinterpretation of Marx’s concept of class. As Azeri (2015, 439–460) argues, class in the Marxian sense is not a static identity but a dynamic social relation of production that structures the totality of human life. Therefore, the opposing but necessary unity of these two classes in capitalism shows, on the one hand, the contradictory nature of capital and, on the other hand, the possibility of the abolition of these relations. This possibility is nothing other than the practical revolutionary action of the proletariat.

It is crucial to note that the dominance of capital over labor does not manifest itself solely in the immediate production process; it shapes

every aspect of social existence. Consequently, various forms of inequality, discrimination, and oppression—whether based on gender, race, or ethnicity—should not be viewed as phenomena independent of, or external to, class antagonism. On the contrary, these are the specific forms of appearance of the fundamental contradiction between capital and labor within the totality of social relations (Azeri 2015, 439–460). Since capital, as a “Subject,” subjugates all human relations to the logic of value production (Postone 1993, 75–77), every struggle against the specific manifestations of this dehumanization is inherently linked to the class struggle. Thus, the proletariat is not merely one interest group among many, but the universal class whose emancipation necessitates the abolition of all forms of oppression rooted in the self-expansion of value (Hekmat 1994, Introduction section). Therefore, social movements addressing these specific inequalities are actualized within the dynamics of class antagonism, and their ultimate resolution lies in the overturning of the capitalist mode of production that constantly produces and reproduces these disparities. As emphasized in the *Manifesto*,

The essential condition for the existence, and for the sway of the bourgeois class, is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labour. Wage-labour rests exclusively on competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. (Marx and Engels 2010b, 496)

Notwithstanding, all thought and analysis so far, including Feuerbach’s radical anti-religious ‘new’ philosophy, have either failed to see or ignored the practical nature of the real socio-historical human and the specific character it takes on under capitalism. That is why “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; whereas the point is to change it” (Marx 2010g, 8). Philosophy, in the Marxian sense, should be realized to this end. Moreover, philosophy and therefore thought must be materialist—not in the sense of reducing ideas to mere matter, but in the sense that it grasps the material world not as a static object of contemplation, but as the product of sensuous human activity and social practice. It must be dialectical, showing the concrete social-human essence of phenomena. Dialectics is nothing but “the real logic of real thinking” (Ilyenkov 2007, 20).

The materialist dialectical method is the continuous dialectical relationship of logic, theory, and practical-critical activity itself. This method emerges from the real activity of the real person, is mediated through the logical and conceptual, and transforms this activity itself by returning to the concrete socio-historical activity of the real person. Because in materialist dialectics, the theoretical is inherently practical; and the practical is simultaneously political (and/or vice versa). Its essential revolutionary dynamic necessitates constant transformation.

### **Conclusion**

As a philosophical methodological approach, materialism, until Feuerbach, tries to explain nature and equally human phenomena in terms of material substance and its properties. For the first time, with Feuerbach, the focus was on the human essence instead of the view of traditional materialism based solely on material interactions. Representing a radical break from previous materialisms, Feuerbach's philosophy posits the human essence as the basis of all phenomena, beginning with religion. With this analysis, Feuerbach profoundly influenced later materialist approaches, including that of Marx and Engels. While Marx acknowledged Feuerbach's approach as the most reconcilable among existing philosophies, he criticized it for "emphasizing nature too much while giving little space to politics." Consequently, while establishing the human essence as a material reality, Feuerbach's materialism stops short of securing its specific material basis because it overlooks the transformative essence of practical human activity, a limitation that Marx addresses by moving beyond a form of substance materialism reminiscent of French materialism.

In contrast, the materialist dialectic developed by Marx and Engels demonstrates that the objectivity of social phenomena is constituted not by fixed substances, but by historically specific forms of human social activity. This method grounds revolutionary practice by revealing the transformative power of this activity and exposes the real foundations of thought, which can only emerge within this praxis. Therefore, this method does not derive human reality from autonomous thought; nor does it reduce thought to a mere physiological reflex of the body. Rather, it grasps the forms of thought as the necessary ideal moments of the concrete, social, and historical totality of human practice. Moreover, this method "ascends" the theoretical to the level of reality by conceiving it as immanent in human activity, rather than residing on a plane of abstractions isolated from reality. In other words, the theoretical emerges from human activity and transforms it by returning to it. Revolutionary

practical-critical activity constitutes the very essence of materialist dialectics. According to this method, the theoretical is inherently practical, while the practical is simultaneously political. The human being is a *zoon politikon* who alters and transforms both their own nature and the world through social practical activity. Indeed, the human being possesses the sole transformative power of history and society: revolutionary practical-critical activity. The core novelty of this work resides in its articulation of the materialist dialectical method as the essential unity of logic, theory, and practice. It corrects the “scholastic” separation of thought from reality by showing that the “abstract” conceptual system is a practical tool for the reproduction of the ‘concrete’ life-process. This account of praxis differs from epistemological interpretations by situating thought within the sensuous activity of the social subject rather than in a detached realm of ideas. Furthermore, it moves beyond purely activist readings by establishing that revolutionary practice is the necessary, logical expression of the social-human essence within its historical conditions. This power, however, is not a metaphysical abstraction; it is fundamentally rooted in the biological grounding of the human organism as a sensuous nature-being. As humans transform external nature through tool-mediated activity, they simultaneously transform their own internal nature—their physiological structures and cognitive-psychic capacities. Consequently, the comprehension of this revolutionary activity must encompass its transformative potential within the subject’s biological and psychic totality. This requires addressing how the alienation inherent in the capitalist mode of production manifests not only as social oppression but as a profound fragmentation of the subject’s mental life. Within this materialist framework, psychiatric disorders and psychic distress are understood as the “un-real” appearance of a distorted life-process, where the subject’s own “conceptual cognitive organs” are alienated and turned against their own integrity. Thus, revolutionary praxis is not merely a social reorganization; it is the reclamation of the subject’s biological and psychic agency from the dehumanizing rationality of value production.

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## Biography

**Fatih Müldür** is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at Boğaziçi University. At Mardin Artuklu University, he became associated with *Thesis Twelve: Mardin Value-Form Circle* (2014), initiated by Siyaveş Azeri, and participated in Azeri’s working groups on Hegel, Marx, and Contemporary Russian Thought. He presented papers in France at the University of Reims’ Interdisciplinary Research Center on Language and Thought (CIRLEP) conferences Res per nomen 6, 7, and 8 (2017; 2019; 2022). His work has appeared in international journals and edited volumes. His article “The Grammar of the ‘Abstract’, the Language of the ‘Universal’: A Vygotskian–Ilyenkorian Methodological Criticism of Chomsky’s Linguistic Theory” was published in *Socialism and Democracy* (June 2023), offering a Vygotskian–Ilyenkorian critique of the central “universal” and “abstract” categories in Chomsky’s philosophy. He also published a study on Chomsky’s nativist approach in *Kaygı* (2016). Further contributions include “A Marxian–Ilyenkorian Criticism of Saussure’s use of the ‘Concrete’ and the ‘Abstract’” (2018), “Sign and the Dynamic Construction of Meaning: A Marxian–Vygotskian Critique” (2020), and “An Overview on the Relationship between Ontogenesis of Syntactic Structures and Polysemy through the Example of Turkish Language” (2023), published as chapters in international collections. Müldür’s current project, “Extended Cognition: From Clark and Chalmers to Vygotsky on the Role of Activity in Construction of Knowledge,” aims to make a distinctly Vygotskian epistemological intervention into contemporary philosophy of mind. Focusing on the internalism/externalism axis, it reopens the question of how the boundaries and sources of mind and knowledge are theorized, and argues for the centrality of activity in the construction and stabilization of knowledge.