



SHAPEJOURNAL

MARXISM: SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

MAX EASTMAN'S "MARXISM: SCIENCE OR PHILOSOPHY" FROM 1935
THE REAL PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE? / NOTES ON EASTMAN'S ORIGINAL PAPER

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Design Mick Schofield

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Margrethe Mather & Edward Weston - Max Eastman at Water's Edge (1921)

Marxism: Science & Philosophy

Issue 48 / February 2017

- 4. The Real Philosophical Stance:
Or is Marxism Science or Philosophy?
- 8. Marxism: Science or Philosophy
by Max Eastman (1935)
- 20. Notes on Max Eastman's
Marxism: Science or Philosophy?

The Real Philosophical Stance

Or
is
Marxism
Science
or
Philosophy?



Welcome to the 48th Issue of the SHAPE Journal.

This new edition closely examines and evaluates an essay by Max Eastman from 1935 entitled *Marxism: Science or Philosophy?*

On reading the article by Eastman, though I gained something from his many analyses, I also found abundant evidence for a position of my own, which differs significantly from all that Eastman concludes, while at the same time discerning from Eastman, his conclusion that the evident sins of the Stalinist Bureaucracy in the USSR (remember he was writing in 1935) were, to some extent at least down to the “forcible imposition” within the Soviet Union’s Schools of a version of Marx’s Philosophy.

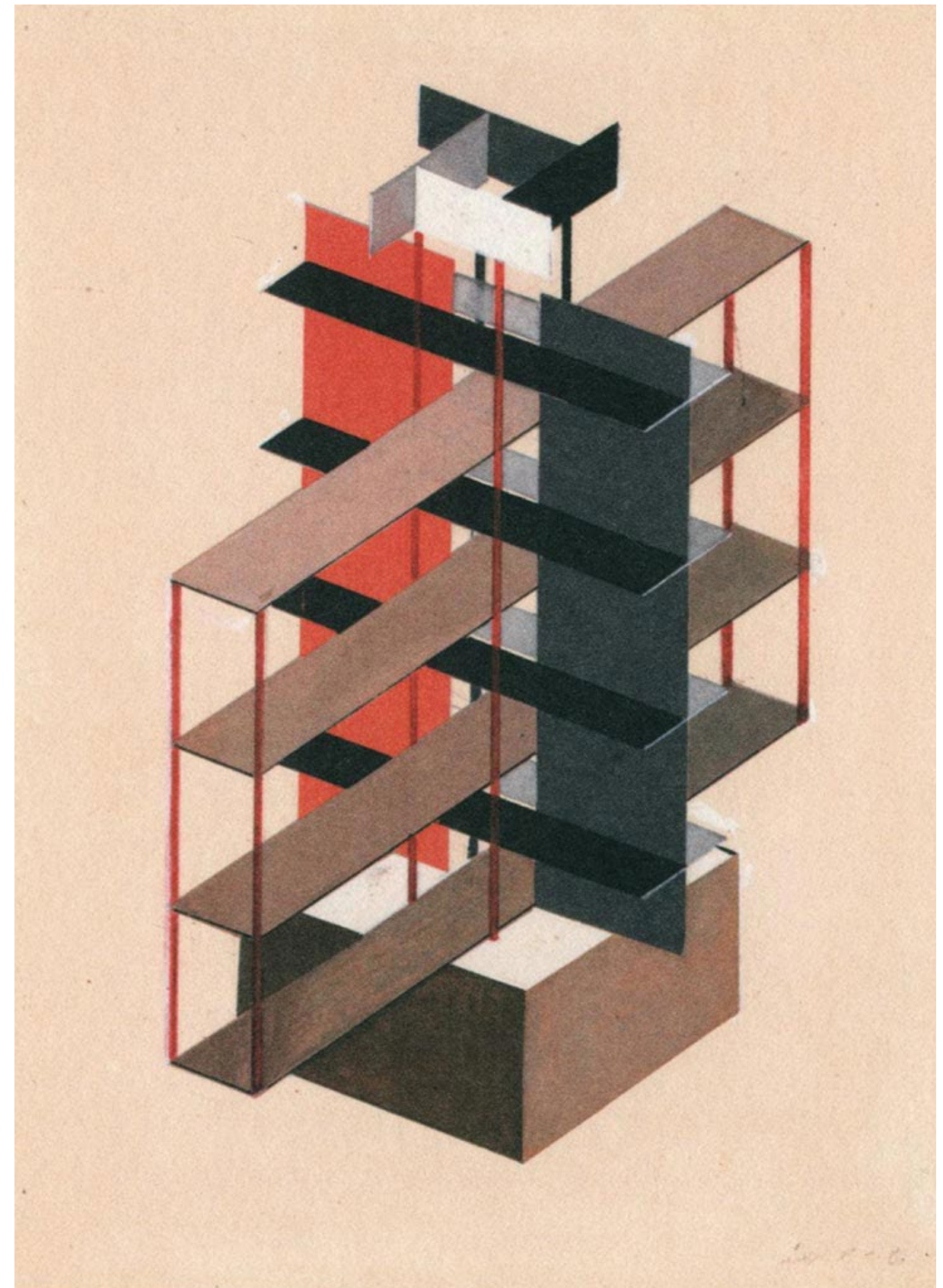
Eastman had an anti-Marxist standpoint!

What differs with my own work in also addressing both Science and Philosophy, is that I am not only a physicist - and a committed Philosopher in that area, but also a computer programmer - perhaps representing the epitome of the technological approach, and, finally, also for some 60 years a Marxist activist and a intended philosopher there too...

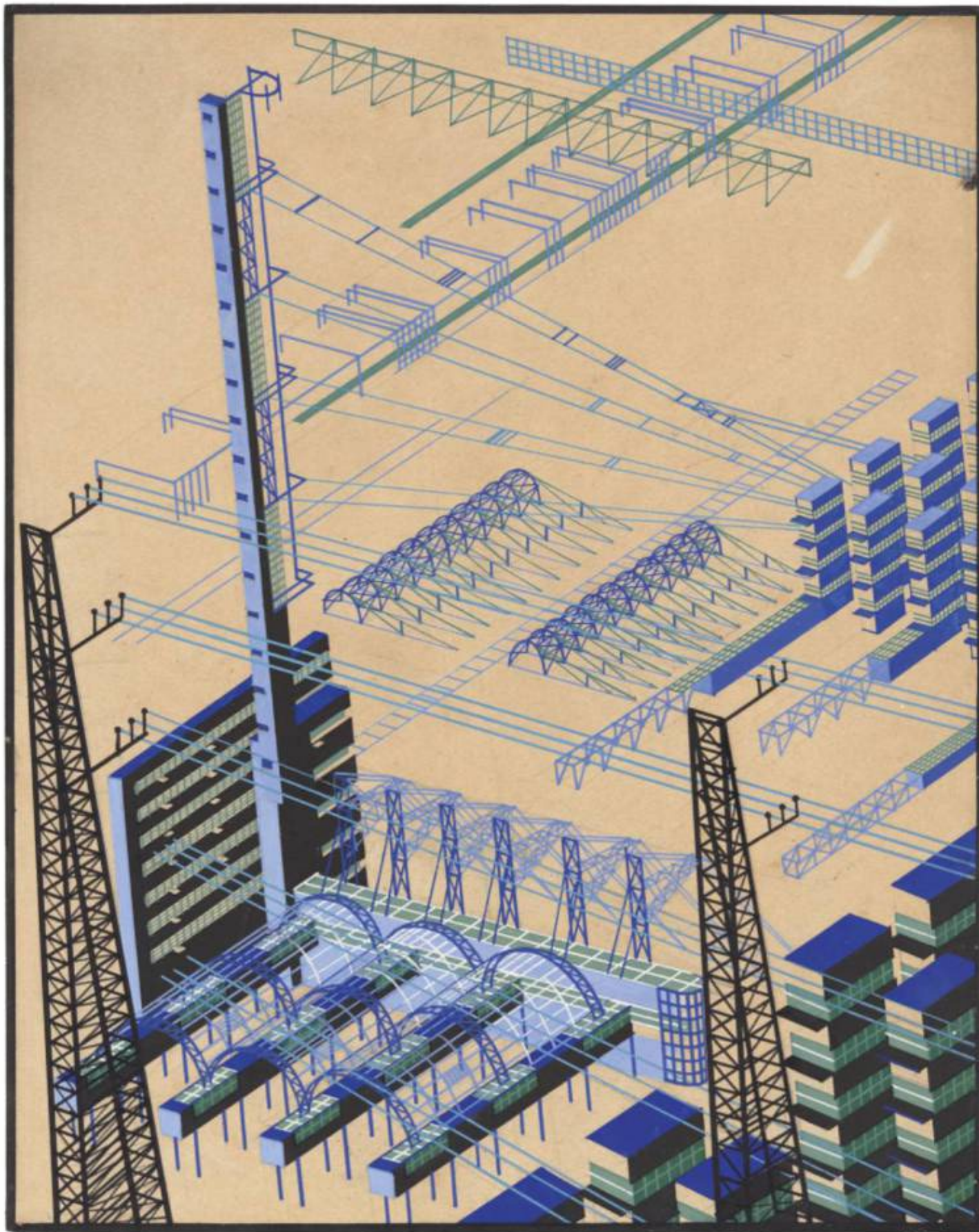
Indeed, it was in 25 years of cross-discipline research with colleagues in a very wide range of areas of study, that I finally understood what Marx’s philosophical method properly involved, and began to use it, with increasing success, in criticising the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory in Sub Atomic Physics.

My final characterisation of the consensus, though un-admitted, Philosophy of Science was that it was the bastardised amalgam of an illegitimate union of Pragmatism, Idealism and Materialism with a pluralist rather than a holist stance, and in consequence, have begun to unpick the major dichotomies and consequent impasses in that field and even begin to resolve some of them.

So, if Eastman is counterpoising Science as the only materialist stance against(?) Philosophy, which is, he insists, “always anthropocentric”, and in this he also includes Marxism, then he is profoundly mistaken.



Gustav Kluttsis, 1923



Yakov Chernikov, Composition on a theme of an industrial area with buildings and metal constructions, 1924-33

Without being a serious, and doubly-qualified scientist, for all my adult life, and having taken until 10 years ago, and definitely-and-necessarily within my own scientific researches, realised the key to a consistent, holist and materialist stance in Marxism, I would never have achieved what I have in Physics, general Philosophy, and in the Marxism I always aspired to understand, but didn't until I found out how it worked in the seeming morass of my primary preoccupation, Sub Atomic Physics.

While Eastman seemed to be heading for a criticism of Philosophy in-terms-of-Science, I have been able to criticise Science in terms of THE premier materialist philosophy: Marxism, or Dialectical Materialism as Marx insisted upon calling it.

And, significantly, it was in a serious and detailed study of Dichotomous Pairs of contradictory concepts and the impasses they inevitably propagated within classical Formal Reasoning, plus both Hegel's critique of how these were "got around" using Pragmatism, and how they could be transcended using his method of a severe criticism and modification of the premises involved.

I am clearly discerning a misunderstanding of what Eastman calls "facts" - counterpoising them to what concepts are conjured up in the mind of any human being.

Surely, Science will never deliver-up truths entirely independent of the perceiver, but always, at best, only simplifications or abstractions of some sort, which though they can be used thereafter in a certain kind of reasoning, actually never ever contain absolutely everything about the perceived thing or event.

If he is saying that Science actually produces existing "facts" of Nature, he is wrong!

It certainly doesn't.

But, two things can be said about such an extraction: it receives its assumed validity in the human being actually using it, from its undoubted Objective Content - a collection of parts or aspects (views) of the truth. And, secondly, that Mankind using the means at his disposal, which include not only expressly-designed experiments

to confirm or deny a "fact", but also the use of dialectical methods to transcend impasses in logical reasoning involving that "fact".

You cannot establish Truth only in the mind of Man - that is correct, but you must understand how such extractions can be criticised, and sometimes effectively developed, in Thought, as well as possibly leading to misleading Error too.

Though the above conclusions are correct, it is for each student of these ideas to arrive at conclusions for him- or herself.

So, following this brief synopsis is the full Max Eastman essay, followed by a detailed Marxist critique.

Jim Schofield
February 2017

Marxism: Science or Philosophy?

by Max Eastman, 1935

The first step towards understanding Marxism is to realize that Marx himself did not wish to be a philosopher.

There were hints of this in the writings of Engels, but also evidences to the contrary. The full extent and passion of Marx's revulsion against philosophy became known only a few years ago when an old manuscript, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in which he and Engels first formulated their views, was deciphered and published by the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. This manuscript reveals an arrant rejection of the very conception of philosophic knowledge — a veritable holding of the word philosopher in contempt — lying at the basis of the whole edifice of Marx's intellectual life.

In *The Holy Family*, written three years before, Marx had rejected Hegel's metaphysics arrantly enough, describing it as "drunken speculation," and Hegel himself as the "master wizard." He had eulogized the materialist, Ludwig Feuerbach, for having "unveiled the mystery" of Hegel's system and "annihilated the dialectic of ideas," and he had endorsed the viewpoint of British materialism and of the French enlightenment, calling it "the philosophy of good sense." "It opposes philosophy to metaphysics," he cried, "just as Feuerbach opposed reasonable philosophy to exaggerated speculation on the day when he first took a clear stand against Hegel."

So Marx wrote in 1843. But in 1845 — as this old and new manuscript informs us — he did not want even a reasonable philosophy or a philosophy of good sense. He did not want any philosophy at all. He was ready to pitch Feuerbach out of the window after Hegel. Feuerbach himself had coined the aphorism, "My philosophy is no philosophy," but nevertheless Marx now rejected him as a man who never learned to see "without the eyes -which is to say the eye-glasses — of the philosopher."

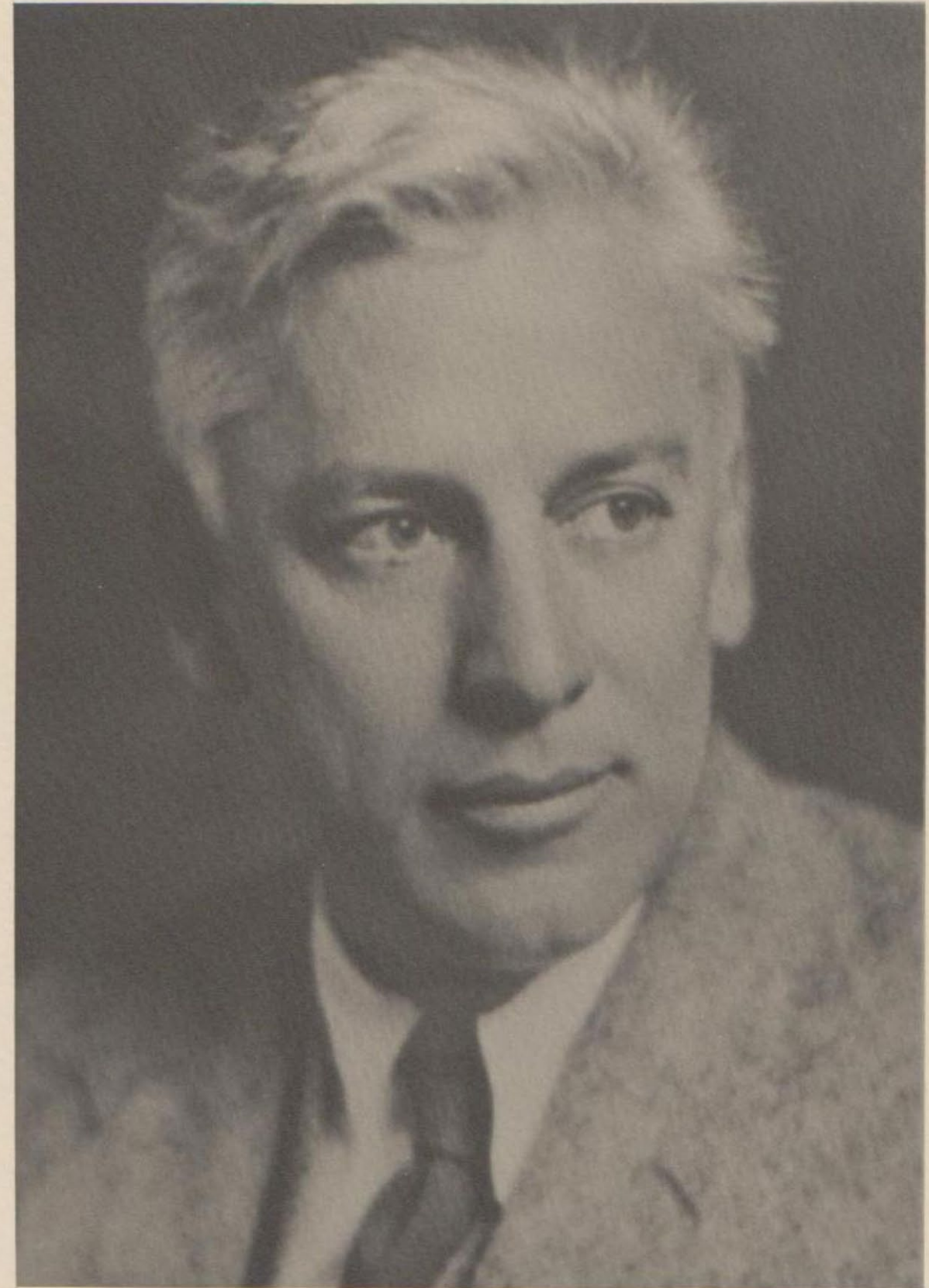
But let us read some solid excerpts from this new and yet basic document of Marxism.

"German criticism right up to its very latest achievements has not abandoned the field of philosophy; not only has it not examined its own general philosophical presuppositions, but on the contrary all the questions with which it is occupied have grown up out of the soil of one definite philosophical system, the Hegelian. There is mystification not only in its answers, but in the very questions it asks... .

"We therefore shall precede our special criticism of certain individual representatives of this movement with some general remarks (about German philosophy and about all philosophy in general). These remarks will be sufficient to make clear the standpoint of our criticism

"We recognize only one single science, the science of history. You can view it from two sides, and divide it into the history of nature and the history of people... . In direct opposition to German philosophy which came down from heaven to earth, we here intend to rise from earth to heaven — that is we will not start from what people say, imagine, represent to themselves, nor from thought-of, represented or imagined people, in order to arrive afterward at bodily people; we will start from really acting people, and try to deduce from their actual life-process the development of these ideological images and reflections of that life-process. For these misty formations in the brains of people are necessary sublimations of their material, empirically ascertained life-process, which is bound up with material conditions. In this way morals, religion, metaphysics, and other forms of ideology, lose their apparent independence. They have no history, they have no development; only people, developing their material production and their material relations, change also in the course of this activity their thinking and the products of their thinking... .

"Thus where speculation stops, that is, at the threshold of real life, a real positive science begins, a representation of the activity, the practical process of the development of people. Phrases about consciousness disappear, their place to be occupied by real knowledge. When you begin



My best greetings
to Jennie Weinwright -
Max Eastman.



to describe reality, then an independent philosophy loses its reason for being. In its place may be found, at the most, a summary of the general results abstracted from an investigation of the historical development of man... .

“We fully realise that Feuerbach ... went as far as a theorizer could go without simply ceasing to be a theorizer and a philosopher... .

“Feuerbach’s mistake lies in the fact that he could not approach the world of sensation without the eyes — which is to say, the eyeglasses — of a philosopher... .

“And by the way, with this view of things, which takes them as they are in reality, all deep-thinking philosophical problems reduce themselves to some simple question of empirical fact... .

For a practical materialist, that is for a communist, the thing is to revolutionize the existing world — that is, practically turn against things as he finds them, and change them.”

A more radical empiricism — a more “vulgar and profane” empiricism, to quote Marx’s own earlier description of his stand — is not to be found in the whole of philosophic literature, nor a more wholesale rejection of the idea that philosophy can be a guide or dictator of forms to science.[1]

Is it not surprising, then, and puzzling, that Marx should have become the founder of a new philosophy in the full sense of the term — a new theory of being — and that this philosophy should have become the equivalent of a state religion in the first proletarian republic, its teaching in the schools enforced by law, and its principles propagated throughout the world with rigid dogmatism by the supporters of that republic? It is still more surprising when you learn that he founded this philosophy, or drew the outlines of it, in the same year in which he completed this arrant attack upon the very idea of philosophy. Engels allots the old manuscript to the year 1845-6. And it was in 1845 that Marx “hastily scribbled down” — as a notation for further work along the same line — those famous Theses on Feuerbach in which, as Engels also tells us, he “planted the genial seed of the new philosophy.”

Obviously the next step towards understanding Marxism is to find out why Marx planted the seed of a new philosophy in the very labor of rooting up all philosophy forever. To this end we must recall the outlines of that Hegelian metaphysics in which he believed until Feuerbach liberated him, and then the exact nature of this liberation. After that we shall see in the Theses on Feuerbach themselves the reason why Marx did not succeed in getting rid of philosophy.

Hegel believed that the whole world is contained in, or made out of, Mind. And this Mind, when properly understood and arrived at in its totality by evolution, or by the thought of the philosopher, is the same thing as God. Hegel’s God differs from the old gods, however, in being active and changeful. He has his very being in a process of development. You can see this process in nature and world history, or you can see it in the way the logical categories work out their relations, the one merging into the other in a peculiar manner to which Hegel, following his predecessors, gave the name of “dialectics.” It consists of an affirmative assertion, and then a passing of that over into its opposite, a negation of it by its own self-active propulsion, and then a “negation of the negation,” or reconciliation of these two opposites in a higher unity which includes them both. It is astonishing how much of the change and motion in the world, as well as the relations among abstract ideas — if you examine them with a sufficiently casuistical determination to believe so, and particularly if you refrain from defining the word opposite — can be made to fit into this mould. For that reason when all the emotions attending the idea of divinity and of absolute or universal being are mixed up in a description of life and the world in these terms, you have — if you can stand the hard work involved — a great philosophical poem, a great experience for the feelings and the mind. And since we really know little or nothing about the nature of life and the world as a whole, it is easy for credulous people, or people brought up in such ideas, to lend to it the added glamor of belief. The important thing about it for us, however, is that it enabled Hegel, without ceasing to be religious, to be very matter-of-fact and hard-headed, indeed brutally realistic, about the “phases” that a divine spirit has to pass through on its dialectic pilgrimage. It enabled him to accept in the name of God the hard and bloody world of universal change and evolution that scientists were then already coming to behold, to accept and even slightly to extend the downright understanding of it. In particular it enabled him to bridge in a new way the gap between what

we know and what we want, between the “pure” and the “practical” reason as they had been separated by Kant. Kant had given a different end a firmer root in “reality” to the active side of our nature, our wilful self, than to what our minds know. And Hegel, with his doctrine that reality is a process, and moreover a mental process, had united the two. The very essence of being, he said, and therefore the highest condition of the human mind, is one in which knowledge of the real and action toward the ideal are the same thing.

“Being is Thought,” Hegel said, but thought is a “process of becoming.” “The truth is the whole. The whole, however, is merely the essential nature [thought] reaching its completion through the process of its own development... . What has been said may be also expressed by saying that reason is purposive activity.”

Such was the flavor, and such for our purpose the essential drift, of Hegel’s philosophy. The development of what he called a “scientific” consciousness was a development away from the simple condition of sense-certainty, the sensing of an object by a subject, towards a condition of pure meditation in which subject and object are both known to be thought or spirit, a condition of “Absolute Knowledge, or spirit knowing itself as spirit.” This Absolute Knowledge is “the consummation and the final cause of the whole process of experience”; but then also this Absolute is not a mere goal or consummation, it is not static, but is “the process of its own becoming.” Josiah Royce, who greatly loved this Absolute Being, or philosophic state-of-being, described it thus: “The Absolute whose expression is the world and, in particular, the world of human life, is a being characterized by a complete unity or harmony of what one might call a theoretical and practical consciousness. The theoretical consciousness is a consciousness which views facts and endeavors to apprehend them. The practical consciousness is a consciousness which constructs facts in accordance with its ideals. The absolute consciousness is both theoretical and practical.”

For Marx, too, that must have been the great thing in the Hegelian philosophy. We may imagine that even in youth he accepted somewhat perfunctorily Hegel’s conception of thought, or “the Idea,” as “demi-ourgos of the world.” But Hegel’s conception of “science,” of the highest wisdom to which a human being can attain, as a state of mind in which he is coöperating with, or rather participating in, the forward and upward going of the

world towards high ends, must have meant much to him. At any rate, Marx believed fervently throughout his young manhood in this philosophy — or in some such philosophy as I have described, for there is no use pretending that Hegel’s emotional imagination confined itself to saying things with a clear meaning. And he was awakened out of this mystical condition by Ludwig Feuerbach, who, having been a Hegelian, became a man of simple good sense, and said that the world is not really composed of a process of thought, but it is composed of objects as they appear in sense-experience. Engels describes the “rapture” with which Marx and he greeted Feuerbach. He says that no one who had not lived through it, could possibly imagine the “liberating effect” that his writings had upon them. And from that you can imagine their previous state of hypnosis, the degree of their captivity to the thought-conjurings of the “master wizard.”

Feuerbach’s revolt against Hegel must have seemed very drastic. He seems even now at a first glance to have grasped the animistic personification of a material world involved in regarding ideas as more completely real than the objects of sense. He declared Hegelism, and indeed speculative philosophy in general, to be nothing but “theology rationalized, realized and brought home to the mind.” And he seemed to strike at the heart of this whole way of thinking when he renounced Hegel’s thesis that “being is thought” and that truth is arrived at by a development of consciousness away from the obvious testimony of the senses. On the contrary, he cried: “Truth, reality, sensibility are identical. Only a sensible being is a true, a real being; only sensibility is truth and reality. Only through the senses is an object in the true sense given — not through thought in itself.”

As a revolt against Hegel’s idealism this is indeed exciting. But nevertheless it was not a hearty and thorough-going materialism like that of the British and French philosophers who grew up in a native atmosphere of sceptical common sense. For them not only were sense-objects the downright reality, but man himself with his gift of perceiving them was something of an incident in a vast world of these objects. For Feuerbach “sense” was the main thing in these “objects-of-sense,” and man himself continued to be, as with idealists, the chief concern and substance of the world. “The new philosophy,” he said, “makes man, including nature as the basis of man, the unique, universal and highest object of philosophy.”





Indeed Feuerbach proposed to replace that speculative philosophy which he had rejected, not with the general body of the sciences, as Comte at the same time was proposing, and not with a “philosophy of good sense” as other materialists had, but with “anthropology” regarded as a “universal science.”

“In this undue prominence given to man,” says Lange in his *History of Materialism*, “lies a trait which is due to the Hegelian philosophy, and which separates Feuerbach from strict materialists. That is to say, it is only the philosophy of spirit over again that meets us here in the shape of a philosophy of sensibility. The genuine materialist will always incline to turn his gaze upon the great whole of external nature, and to regard man as a wave in the ocean of the eternal movement of matter. The nature of man is to the materialist only a special case of universal physiology, as thought is only a special case in the chain of the physical processes of life.”[2]

And this is true, we may add, not only to the materialist, but to the modern courageous mind in general. “Lyric experience and literary psychology, as I have learned to conceive them,” says George Santayana, for instance, “are chapters in the life of one race of animals in one corner of the natural world.” How far removed was Feuerbach’s philosophy from this natural assumption of the mind nurtured in modern science, may be seen in his statement that “The truth is only the totality of human life and being.” I do not mean to say that Feuerbach, by and large, denied to nature an existence independent of man. He spoke expressly in other places of nature’s independence. He was a disjointed, emotional, aphoristic thinker; he was moreover not trying to understand the world presented to him by science, but wholly absorbed in the effort to find in it a place for the religious emotion. To isolate a sentence like the one just quoted and impute to him all that it implies logically would be unfair and uncomprehending. Nevertheless it is obvious that the author of that sentence had only partially emerged from the idealistic philosophy. The “undue prominence given to man” in his system was a relic of that personification of the external world — or absorbing of it up into the mind — which is the essential heart of the romantic philosophies preceding him in Germany. He was in this respect — as was German intellectual culture at large — behind the contemporary march of the scientific point of view.

This becomes still more obvious as you read further in his *Foundations of the New Philosophy*, from which I have quoted. You learn that not only is “reality” identical with “sensibility,” and “truth” with “the totality of human life and being,” but that since nothing enters human life and being or becomes an object of sensibility unless it engages a man’s interest — unless it makes some appeal to his affective nature — “reality” and “truth” are, at bottom, inseparable from human feeling. “Only that is . . .,” exclaims Feuerbach at the height of this argument, “which is an object of passion.”

By reasonings of this kind, Feuerbach managed to convert his “universal science” of anthropology into a religion of love. And although that religion seemed very large about accepting matters of fact, and Feuerbach’s love was not afraid of physiology, nevertheless it retained the essence of all religion, and of all theology too, and of that speculative philosophy which is but “theology rationalized” — namely, the personification of an objective reality or the universal reality of the world. His crowning aphorism, “not to love and not to be are identical,” is for the emotions substantially equivalent to the older aphorism, “God is love.” One need only approach Feuerbach with his own formula — the speculative philosopher is “a priest in disguise” — in order to perceive that he has merely once more altered the disguise.

And now let us see what was the nature of Marx’s revolt against Feuerbach. Did he point out the essential relic of Hegel’s idealism in Feuerbach’s philosophy, the making of “man, including nature as the basis of man, the one universal and highest object of philosophy”? Did he say that it was not really very materialistic to talk about “sensibility,” which is a mere function of the human body, as though it were identical with “reality,” which to the genuine materialist lies in the larger part outside of man? This was the course he must have taken in order to fulfill his wish to abandon philosophy altogether and adopt the method and the point-of-view of empirical science. He never dreamed of it. He was not himself liberated from the “master wizard.” He too did not, at least in his mature reflections, identify “sensibility” with the objective reality of the world, but he followed Feuerbach in talking about them as identical. He based his philosophy of action, just as Feuerbach had based his philosophy of love, upon a verbal assumption of their identity, repeating it in the very words of Feuerbach. His single objection to Feuerbach was that he had left out of this “reality,”

this “object,” this all-too-human “sensibility,” the active element, the element of “practical human action.” He had left out of it, that is, the very essence of Hegelian metaphysics as Marx loved it — as Royce loved it — the conception that reality itself is a purposive process, and that the highest state of mind a human being can attain is one in which he conceives himself as cooperating with, or participating in, the forward and upward going of that reality towards high ends.

“The chief fault of all materialism heretofore (including Feuerbach’s)” — so Marx begins — “is that the object, the reality, sensibility, is conceived only under the form of object or of contemplation,- not as sensory-human activity, practise, not subjectively. Hence the active side developed abstractly in opposition to materialism from idealism — [abstractly], since idealism naturally does not recognize real sensory activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensible objects genuinely distinguished from objects of thought; but he conceives human activity itself not as objective activity. In his *Essence of Christianity* he regards only the theoretical attitude as the genuinely human, while practise is conceived and fixed in its dirty Jew phenomenal form. Hence he does not grasp the significance of the revolutionary, of practical-critical action.”

These Theses on Feuerbach have always presented something of a puzzle to the student of Marx, but their meaning becomes utterly clear when you realize that Marx was trying to be scientific in our sense, but having grown up in the habits of the German idealist philosophy, he did not know how.[3] He is, therefore, saving two different kinds of things. On the one hand he is saying things with which every modern realistic mind can agree. He objects, for instance, to Feuerbach’s retaining an exaggerated esteem for purely theoretical thinking after he has abandoned the myth of the reality of thought’s object. But on the other hand he is preserving the essence of metaphysics, and indeed religion — the conception of the objective world and the human mind as cooperating together in the tasks that are worth while. He is insisting that, although the world is made out of material objects as given in sensation, these objects or sensations are nevertheless to be “conceived subjectively” and regarded just as Hegel regarded ideas or “reason,” as purposive activities. With Hegel, he says, reality is to be regarded as active; with Feuerbach it is to be regarded as human-sensory. And so we arrive at “the seed of the new philosophy” — the conception that all the seemingly

solid and external things in this world really are, and consist of practical “human-sensory action,” Instead of Feuerbach’s religious philosophy, which teaches love and brotherhood by identifying it with the very substance of being, we have a revolutionary philosophy which teaches “practical-critical action” by identifying that with the substance of being. But we still have “philosophy” — and philosophy in the bad sense. We have not taken one step away from it.

In his second thesis Marx takes up the problem what to do with the idea or “object of thought” now that its superior reality has been abandoned for that of the “object of sense.” And here he speaks again like an experimental scientist. Where thought adds something to the reality directly given in sense-experience, the validity of this indirect kind of reality — indeed a mere reflected image of reality — is to be tried out in action. The test of its truth, in other words, is experimental.

“The question whether objective truth reaches human thought,” he says, “is no question of theory, but a practical question. In practise man must prove the truth, that is the reality and power, the this-sidedness, of his thought. The dispute about the reality or unreality of thought — which is isolated from practise — is a purely scholastic question.”

In his third thesis, however, Marx again speaks the language of the metaphysician who has read his own ideal program of action into a world conceived as inherently purposive. He is now objecting not to Feuerbach, but to the materialists of the eighteenth century whom three years before he had been praising for their “profane” and “vulgar” materialism, and their insistence that men are a mere product of the environment. “It takes no extraordinary sagacity to discover,” he then said, “what inevitably brings them to communism and socialism... If man is formed by the environment, then we must form a humane environment.” He now objects to these same profane materialists because they have not the Hegelian wisdom to merge their own program into a conception of the environment as, by its own inherent nature, forming itself humanely.

“The materialistic teaching,” he says, “about the changing of the environment and education forgets that the environment must be changed by men and the educator himself educated. It is therefore compelled to divide society into two parts, of which the one is elevated

above the other.

“The coincidence of a change of environment and human activity or self-change can only be conceived and rationally understood as revolutionary practise.”

In other words, you cannot understand why you should want to improve the world unless you conceive the world which produced you as in a process of self-improvement.

Here a scientific mind would ask: But when you have so conceived the world, how do you explain those who don’t want to improve it, but are steady on the job of making it worse? Marx had lived too long in Hegel’s dialectics to be troubled by that question, or even to have it rise in his mind. Those ignorant miscreants are a negative and disappearing “phase,” an essential part of the very “contradiction” which is being “resolved” by your own “revolutionary practise.” The whole process is real, and it is all truth, but your part of it is more real and more true because closer to the consummation of the whole.

There is a real problem of knowledge here — the problem how there can be an objective science of social evolution when scientific ideas are themselves so potent a force in determining its course. You might call it the sociologist’s fallacy to ignore this problem. But the problem certainly is not solved for any scientific mind by this partisan personification of the whole body of the facts. We know quite well — whatever the problems involved — that no man can give a scientific account of any society without standing above it. Nor can such an account of a society be applied in an effort to guide its evolution without the problem arising how to relate those who have this scientific viewpoint to the blinder forces operating below — how to relate the socialists, if you will, to the trade unions. Marx is here merely insisting that sociology shall not become a science.

And in a subsequent thesis, numbered 6, he insists that psychology shall not become a science. Feuerbach, he says, talks about “the essence of man ...” But the essence of man is not an abstraction dwelling in the separate individual.” Which sounds promising, and reminds us of his announcement in *Die deutsche Ideologie* that he is going to abandon all philosophical abstractions whatsoever and study concrete actual men in their process of development. But then he straightway adds: The essence of man “in its reality is the ensemble of social relations,” which is pure Hegelian metaphysics. For in this saying, and others like it, Marx is not merely

insisting — as his modern champions like to pretend — upon the social nature of the mind and nervous system. He is not foretelling “social psychology.” Far from it. He is eliminating psychology altogether, eliminating “man” as a problem of study, in order to make room for a sufficiently hard-and-fast conception of “society” as a single thing — an “object,” “reality,” “sensibility” — the history of whose “practical activity” will constitute the whole essential history of man. He is making ready, in short, for the eighth thesis which reads as follows:

“All social life is essentially practical. All the mysteries which lead theory astray into mysticism find their rational solution in human practise and in the idea of this practise.”

Marx will devote his life to proving that this essentially practical object, social life, is destined by the inner law of its being to contradict itself (the class struggle) and resolve the contradiction in a higher unity (the coöperative commonwealth). True wisdom and the way out of all mysticism for man, who is but “the ensemble of social relations,” will be to abandon “theory” and join in the practical procedure of this essential reality, social life, toward its dialectically inevitable goal.

Only when you have mastered this, can you make intelligible Marx’s ninth and tenth theses, which read as follows:

“9. The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is the materialism which does not conceive sensibility as practical activity, is the contemplation of separate individuals and bourgeois society.

“10. The standpoint of the old materialism is bourgeois society. The standpoint of the new, human society or social humanity.”

What Marx is saying here is that a materialism which merely contemplates the world, and does not conceive the world and the perceiver of it to be in a state of practical and dialectic action toward something better, can not be a social revolutionist. He must not only conceive of sensible objects in general as consisting of a practical process, but he must conceive of “society” as such an object, consisting of such a process. In short, these two theses merely state succinctly that unless you read your ideal program into the movement of the objective facts you cannot believe in or adhere to it. What other connection can exist between conceiving sensation as a practical activity and believing in a new human society, a social humanity? Is it not a fact that

millions of materialists have believed in a new human society, and in social humanity, and have adopted its standpoint, who have not had the glimmer of an idea — if indeed sixty people have up to this date — what Marx meant by “conceiving sensibility as practical activity”?

Marx concludes his theses with a brilliant epigram: “Philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the thing is to change it.” In Soviet Russia this has become almost the most popular slogan in the whole literature of the state philosophy. And no wonder, for in its elusive ambiguity it epitomizes the essence of the Marxian position, the delicate equilibrium of one who abandons philosophy for practical scientific effort, and yet preserves in that very act the essence of philosophy. On its face it seems merely to repeat what Marx had said in *Die deutsche Ideologie*: “For a practical materialist, a communist, the thing is to revolutionize the existing world — that is, practically turn against things as he finds them and change them.” But if that is all it means, why mention the philosophers? Why not say “Poets have sung the world ... painters have painted the world; the thing is to change it.” Marx in this aphorism is not only saying that we should quit philosophizing and change the world; he is saying that a true philosophy of the world and a resolute program for changing the world will be one and the same thing. And that, as we have seen, is the very soul of Hegel’s metaphysics. Marx, then, was very accurate when he said in the preface to *Capital* that he had merely turned Hegel’s philosophy other side up. Hegel had been conceiving thought, or the idea, as the real thing, and the reality of the sense-object as illusory. Marx declared the sense-object to be real, and the idea a mere reflection of it. But he retained in his conception of that sense-object the essential virtue that Hegel had attributed to his idea, the property of purposive dialectic movement toward high ends. The only radical change was that, whereas Hegel’s ideal reality was travelling toward an ideal goal in the being of God, Marx’s sensible reality is travelling toward a sensible goal in the organization of the communist society. Marx thought that he had thus saved the “rational kernel” and got rid of the “mystical shell” in the Hegelian philosophy. He even thought, and tried to keep on thinking, that he had achieved his aim to get rid of “philosophy” altogether. But one does not get rid of “philosophy” by the simple device of turning a certain philosophy other side up. One does not get rid of “philosophy” without clearly understanding what one means by “philosophy,” and how it differs from the scientific point of view.

1. Riazanov himself, the Russian editor of this manuscript, a sufficiently orthodox Marxian and one sufficiently involved in the meshes of the state philosophy, feels compelled to acknowledge that this is the main revelation contained in it. “The manuscript permits us,” he says, “to establish one fact important to any scientific investigation of the development of Marxism. The conclusion familiar to us in the *Anti-Dühring* was already formulated in the manuscript on Feuerbach. Philosophy as a special science of the general connection of things and of knowledges, a summar summarum of all human knowledge, becomes superfluous. Of all previous philosophy there remains only the science of the laws of thought: formal logic and the dialectic.” This statement is inaccurate in two respects. Philosophy as a “summary” of knowledge is just what Marx in this manuscript still sanctions; anyone who seriously attacks philosophy must make allowance for a generalization and interrelating of the sciences. And moreover Marx makes no other exception; there is not a word about “logic and the dialectic” in these passages.
2. The Russian Marxist, Plekhanov, not interested in Feuerbach’s mind, but concerned only to establish the perfect truth of dialectic materialism, exclaims against this judgment of Lange’s. Plekhanov insists, even against Feuerbach himself, who expressly disclaimed the title of materialist, that his philosophy was perfectly materialistic. “Feuerbach never denied,” he cries, “that the nature of man ‘is only a special case in the chain of the physical processes of life.’” And that is true — he never denied it. He merely permitted his feelings to forget it — or, as Lange so carefully suggests, “inclined to turn his gaze” in a different direction. To assert, as Plekhanov does, that this proposition about the nature of man “lies at the basis of his whole philosophy” — in the face of such statements as that “Truth is the totality of human life and being,” “Only that is which is an object of passion,” “Not to love and not to be are identical,” “Where there is no sense there is no being, no real object” — to make that assertion and leave these statements unexplained and unalluded to, is to confess, it seems to me, that you are not engaged in a study of the man’s mind, but in a piece of special pleading.
3. In book form this essay is to be preceded by a discussion of the term science, especially significance of its relation to the German *Wissenschaft*. The present reader will have to assume that I am not ignoring that problem.





Notes on Max Eastman's Marxism: Science or Philosophy?

From his first sentence, Eastman sets up his own dolly to knock over, namely whether Marx was a willing philosopher or not.

What suits his subsequent argument is his inference that Philosophy is naturally-and-necessarily idealist, and, at the same time, insists that the alternative, Materialism, is only consistently pursued by the scientists of his day. His title "Science or Philosophy?" encapsulates Eastman's own position very well.

Yet, he was writing in 1935, only eight years after the victory of the idealists, led by Bohr and Heisenberg at the Solvay Conference, and by '35 they had more or less won the day worldwide, and they had totally abandoned explanatory theory for pragmatic and purely formal descriptive Equations -which meant a significant turn from Materialism towards Idealism!

Eastman was no scientist: that is very clear, for he never reveals that his chosen, supposedly correct stance was, in fact, even before Solvay, a bastard amalgam of Materialism, Idealism and Pragmatism. He clearly preferred non-philosophic scientists, who just delivered usable relations very effectively.

NOTE: As a fully qualified mathematician and physicist, myself, I had soon experienced the self assurance of my colleagues, who unanimously agreed that Science, itself, was the new General Philosophy, which, as the debacle of the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory has clearly shown, is nonsense!

More significant omissions by Eastman, concern so called German Idealist Philosophy (which is clearly typified by Hegel's Philosophy of Right and State on the one hand, and by his revolutionary developments which he termed Dialectics on the other).

And, though he does admit of Marx's conversion to Materialism by Ludwick Feuerbach, he then insists upon making a very early essay of 1843 (which he termed "this new and basic document of Marxism"), and the also-very-early Theses on Feuerbach (1845/6), as fully defining Marx's mature position. They don't!

Once again Eastman his choosing his perfect dolly to knock over!

He also "damns" Marx with his continuing "Hegelianism", which says more about Eastman than about Marx.

Marx was involved in the most revolutionary trajectory in Philosophy for 2,500 years, and didn't arrive at his conclusions in a year or two. And, though he rejected much of Hegel's Philosophy, he never rejected Dialectics, though he did majorly recast it beyond Thought and into all aspects of Reality-at-large.

Eastman always condemns the Dialectic as mystification, but that can't always be said of Hegel, and certainly never of Marx! For, it was about Development, at all levels, which Formal Logic could never deal with at all.

NOTE: As a philosopher myself, I, in spite of an initial commitment to Marxism when only 19 years old, did not really fully understand it for many decades: and I started from a commitment. And, remember, Marx was constructing it almost alone.

Then, Eastman includes a long quote from Marx, because, I believe, it also comes to political conclusions, which he (Eastman) regards as anathema. For, Marx in it talks about not just interpreting the World, but changing it. How very presumptuous!!!

Now, the above preamble has been absolutely necessary, because of Eastman's clear a priori stance, and careful selection of things to criticise.

As a philosopher, myself, I would never do such a thing. To make my case in a dispute, I have to be as transparently clear about my own position, as that which I am opposing.

Yet Eastman is more like a politician - starting from a previously arrived-at, steadfast stance, and carefully selecting what he will rubbish, and always it is from HIS version of his opponent. He argues cleverly, but like a devout believer, who “knows” he is right from the outset, and has merely to marshal “relevant condemnations”!

Oh, and, by the way, Marxism did not attain completeness with Marx!

For example, apart from those who have contributed since his death, it is still being developed to this very day. This Marxist philosopher alone has written many original contributions over the last decade, and is aware that the major tasks have still to be completed - which are, of course, the wholesale defeat of the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory, and the final overthrow of Capitalism.

As Eastman quotes:-
“philosophy can (never) be a guide or dictator of forms to science”.

NOTE: But in my researches (as a scientist) into the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory, no addressing of its many problems have been possible within the whole theoretical width of that theory, unless it was via the approach of the Dialectical Materialist Philosophy. As history has shown, no solutions on any other basis have proved possible.

Yet, with such a critique of both the historical-classical and the current stance of physicists, this cul de sac could never have been transcended. It clearly depends greatly upon what your Philosophy is and how clearly IT reflects Reality.

As is usual, from an opponent, when Eastman defines Hegel's Philosophy, he not only emphasizes the more obvious flaw - namely that is limited to Mind, even though that can be elevated (by Marx) to encompassing absolutely Everything: indeed, Eastman considers only Hegel's evident Idealism.

But, he also criticises what he sees as pure invention, the viewing of the whole thing as developing, due to a contradiction of opposites - the main plank of Dialectics.

Effectively to every extracted abstraction, precisely because such can never be totally sufficient, there will, necessarily, be, un-included, an exact opposite abstraction, and it is only in the resolution or transcending of that dichotomy that any real process to something else is ever achievable.

Indeed it is encapsulated in the famed:- Thesis - Antithesis - Synthesis

Though, he correctly sees how this pattern can be misused - by falsely-fitting all sorts of situations into this mould. And, he also ridicules the misdirected Absolute Idea as entirely religiously pursued, beyond its dialectical efficacy as a revelation of real higher level processes.

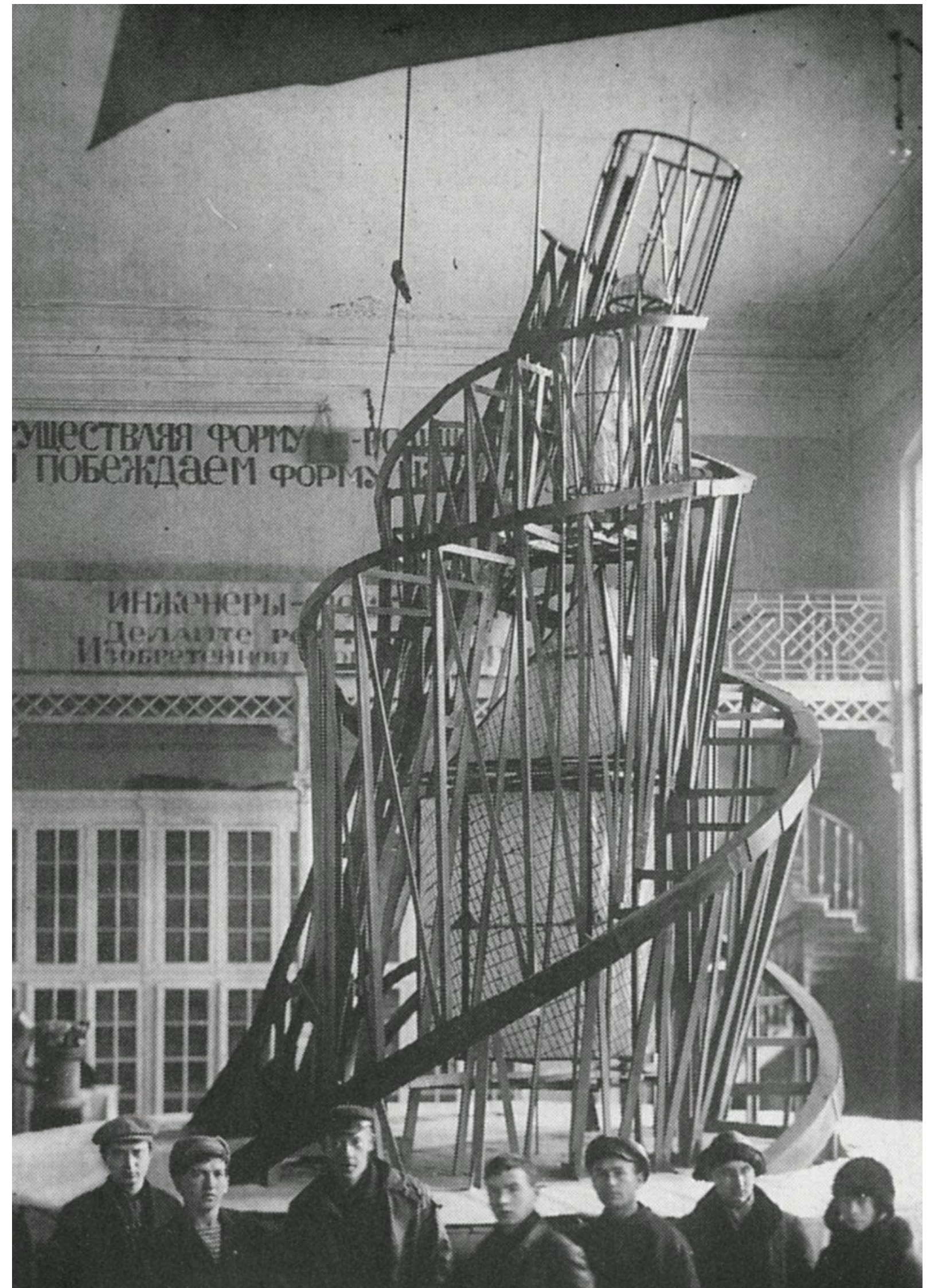
Eastman reminds us of:-
“Being is Thought,” Hegel said, “but thought is a “process of becoming.”

So, if you take the natural development of Reality out of Hegel's context of a Universal Mind, and instead place it solidly-and-solely in concrete Reality at all Levels, it then ceases to be idealist mysticism, and can, indeed, be a wholly new form of scientific investigation, very different from the jigsaw re-arrangements of fixed Natural Laws, and into the actual Evolution of Reality and the Creation of the Wholly New.

Indeed, there is no other way to explain how one level arises from a prior level without Dialectics: All specialisms, and, even the different Sciences, can never be explained in the old ways - for they refer only to stable situations, either natural or arranged-for by scientists.

Level-changes always involve the dissolution of one level, in a de-stabilising crisis situation, and the consequent emergence of another. Only the transference of Hegel's Dialectics from a purely Thought context, to also be relevant in concrete Reality itself, could ever deal with such Emergences.

Eastman makes a reasonable comparison of Kant and Hegel, but fails to see how vital Hegel was in the consequent development of Philosophy.





He says that his work was, "...towards a condition of pure meditation in which subject and object are both known", but also adds, "to be thought or spirit". And, without that last, and converting, rider, the first part was a fundamental contribution, and enabled Hegel to correctly both fault and transcend Formal Logic, and embark upon a dynamic trajectory of studying Change! True! It was in Thought, but that was because of the then level of development of Reality, and was also sorely needed to take Understanding even further.

Clearly, it was the rest of the idealist superstructure that Marx was bound to totally reject. But, he did not throw out the baby with the bathwater: he knew what was invaluable in Hegel's contribution, and he carried that over, wholesale, into a materialist standpoint.

But, NOT, it must be emphasized, the mechanical, formal materialism of the scientists, but instead to a wholly-new, Dialectical Materialism of Change and Development... including, of course, Man and his Thinking.

So, in one sense Hegel was right! Human Thinking is also a product of Reality, and in a much elevated form, he just made the classical religious mistake of making a "God" out of Man, and then inverting it to see Man (and everything else) determined by that "God".

Eastman describes that as, "The theoretical-consciousness is a consciousness, which first views facts, and then endeavours to apprehend them. The practical-consciousness is a consciousness, which constructs facts in accordance with its ideals. The absolute-consciousness is both theoretical and practical."

But, so far, there is no explanation of how remarkable Human Thinking has become, in making Abstractions from the real world, something containing increasing amounts of what should be called Objective Content - aspects or parts of the truth. Without Hegel, this side, which he called Thinking about Thought would never have developed as it has!

Eastman also insists that Marx inherited from Hegel a belief in a "Natural Purpose in all Things", but wrested it from the Absolute Idea to reside wholly in Material Reality instead. But, that is incorrect!

No Nirvana of any kind was the endpoint of Natural Development for Marx. IT had no target!

But, the study of History in a Hegelian way did reveal *progress*, though never either directed or predictable, rather it was found, and, sometimes, then lost again. Marx's politics was to learn the lessons of History: that alone determined his political purposes.

Eastman's characterisation of Feuerbach, who, he says, abandoned Hegelianism to become a "man of simple good sense" actually says volumes for his own position. It isn't a neutral review of the situation: Eastman says of Hegel that he produced the "thought-conjuring of the "master wizard", and that his effect upon the young Marx was a kind of Hypnosis!

Contrasting his description of Feuerbach with that of Hegel, you can see where Eastman stood, and remember, on reading this essay, what his objectives were and exactly what his alternative entailed.

BUT, and it is a big but, neither he nor Feuerbach realised the actual trajectory in both Real-World-Interactions, and in Thought, which was absolutely necessary to make any progress in Understanding. He says literally nothing about the crucial process of Abstraction, and its always limited Objective Content: the word "Truth" is still banded about as being directly-available. It isn't!

And, for his oft-mentioned "common sense", you really have to substitute the Pragmatism of the English materialists and, of course, all the then current position of literally all scientists! Clearly, what was colouring Eastman's view of things, was the then classical stance of scientists, which showed a line of development from Feuerbach, and via Poincare and Mach (Empirio

Criticism), into the Positivism of early 20th Century physicists, which inexorably led to the Copenhagen retreat of Bohr and Heisenberg.

And again, in rejecting the undue prominence given to Man, they were forgetting, that ALL they talk and write about is produced by Man, and by both the physical interactions, and the mental methods that Man uses to achieve them. That cannot be ignored! All conceptions are indeed the product of Man, as he struggles to Understand Reality.

Eastman, in a further analysis of Feuerbach, makes clear his own stance as part of "the march of the modern scientific point of view".

Finally, Eastman departs from Feuerbach, on the latter's religious overtones, much preferring the widespread, atheistic-scientific stance of current pragmatic Science.

Eastman then goes on to criticise Marx's abandonment of Feuerbach's position, by comparing Marx's materialism with what he calls real-materialism (by which he means that of the scientists), and, illegitimately, saying that Man was a small part of the Reality, which real materialists put first! Which is, in that particular form, of course, an indefensible position when what they were really doing was attempting, by a crude Reductionism, to reduce *everything*, including Man, to mechanical materialist and pluralistic Natural Laws, while also disregarding that whatever the chosen position was, it had quite definitely been arrived-at only in the Thinking of Human Beings.

You simply cannot espouse a standpoint that is totally independent of Human Thought - Unless, of course, you are beyond such cerebral processes, and hover, supernaturally, above and beyond Reality, either determining or interpreting things by God-like powers!

It is increasingly clear that Eastman's pet subject-to-damn, is what he calls Hegelianism, but his chosen alternative, namely, materialist Science, he doesn't understand either.

He doesn't realise the differences in thinking between pragmatic applications - Technology, and attempts at theoretical Understanding - Science.

Finally, he fails to realise that the very pinnacle of the Science, which he supports - namely, the eternal Natural Laws, and their formal embodiment in simplified and

idealised Equations, constitute the height of Idealism. And, he clearly hasn't the faintest idea of the role of actually formulating Abstractions, in thought, that attempt to approach ever closer to concrete Reality, nor the essential process of confirmation or denial, in appropriately designed practice, leading to the replacement of inadequate abstractions, by better ones with ever more Objective Content.

Eastman, as referred to earlier, spends altogether too much time on Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, despite the fact that these were very early contributions indeed, when Marx was first establishing his brand of materialism - Dialectical Materialism. And, he equates Marx's many original abstractions, which he arrived at in Das Kapital, with Hegel's poetic abstractions - related to some Overall Objective Determinator of the World - resembling the "Thoughts of GOD"

One particular point, he makes, is that "men are a mere product of the environment". And, implicit, in such a statement, is a total ignorance of the many emergent hierarchies in concrete Reality, and how they emerge to new and higher levels. Like the scientists he admires, Eastman also is a Reductionist, and in rejecting Dialectics, rejects the very feature of developing Reality that brings about such levels, developments and Emergences, including, of course, Man!

In the following quote, he illegitimately condemns the mature Marx, using his early critique of Feuerbach:- "He is eliminating psychology altogether, eliminating "man" as a problem of study, in order to make room for a sufficiently hard-and-fast conception of "society". You can't do that, especially as Marx was establishing, for the first time, the bases for a Science of Society and its development.

For unstated motives, Eastman was "doing-a-job" on Marx, and would cherry-pick whatever he could find, and from whenever and wherever it occurred, to support his own position.

I could go on, but my early characterisation of what Eastman was doing with his choice of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, has been completely vindicated by my subsequent findings (as delivered here). Eastman concludes his Comments on Marx's Theses on Feuerbach by quoting:-

"Philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways; the thing is to change it." That is, certainly, what Eastman could not stomach. He, clearly, quotes it with a curled lip!

Yet, both in his time, and since, he has gotten away with it, because of the caricature of Marxism then existing in Stalinist Soviet Union, along with the Activism as the dominant policy in professed Marxist Parties across the World. His criticisms were indeed true of them, and could well have some justification in their application to the early Marx.

But as a Marxist myself, I would be extremely angry if my conclusions as a young man (already committed to Marxism) were criticised, while ignoring my developments since, not least in my finally making significant contributions in areas previously ignored, or at best incompetently dealt with.

Ever since Lenin's purely philosophical critique of leading scientists of his day, in his Materialism and Empirio Criticism, the Key next step has always been both the defeat of the Positivism rampant in Modern Science, along with forging an essential, transcending-union with Science, to enable its necessary extensions beyond its current limitations.

That has never been effectively tackled, ever since, and without it, real progress in its increasing power, cannot be significantly extended, nor can its analytical penetration be employed effectively in all other areas either.

NOTE: And dialectically, without the revolutionising of Science by a sufficiently developed Dialectical Materialism, Science itself would continue the decline - termed The Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Theory.

This is currently well underway!



The caricature of Marxism prevailed



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