DIALOGUE

between

DENIS DIDEROT AND KARL MARX

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The present writer is aware that the task before him requires of him what he does not possess, i.e., a comprehensive knowledge of the philosophy of, the historical background for, and the possible cultural relations between, the two characters who appear in this dialogue.

Presumptuous as it may seem, the task here attempted is by no means due to any farcical intent. The relation between the French materialists and Karl Marx is, be one a Marxist-orthodox or heterodox, significant and well-worth trading. Whether or not this specific form of dialogue (and the writer feels pain in calling this a dialogue) is appropriate for the purpose is not to be questioned under the present circumstances. The time and place of the interview are also made irrelevant to its nature, in so far as such an interview did not and could not actually take place.

One may get the impression that undue favor is done to Marx in the greater part of this dialogue. The writer con-
fesses that his knowledge of the two men is not balanced. He believes also that Marx was more competent in reasoning than Diderot.
Marx: Since my father Heinrich was a great admirer of French 'philosophes' of the Enlightenment, I had the occasion to read in my youth most of your works in translation and enjoyed them tremendously. 'Rameau's Nephew,' in particular, I read it repeatedly, always with a fresh appreciation. I think Jour Jannan's interpretation of that work represents a retrogressive metamorphosis. He seems to think that he has discovered the cause of Rameau's wholesale inversion in the fact that Rameau was not of aristocratic origin and that he was conscious of it. I should say Hegel was more appreciative of your intention. At any rate, I always felt indebted to French materialists for the formulation of my dialectic materialism, and above all to you. Because, in a way, you represent a dissenter within your camp and serve as a kind of bridge for the dialectic development of materialism. It is as if you dip your gigantic feet in the pool of the 18th century materialism and reach out with your arms, though gropingly, to the dialectic my synthesis which developed through Hegel only after your death. I feel especially grateful for the opportunity of seeing you here to-day and thus the possibility of clarifying some of the points concerning your philosophy of which I am not quite convinced..."}

Diderot: My delight for this opportunity, I assure you, is no less, if not more, than yours. In one of your casual moments, I remember, you said to one of your daughters that as a prose-writer you liked me best. I have long been puzzled..."
with this remark, because I am accused, as you may know, by my contemporaries of being an intolerably muddy essayist...

Marx: Pardon my interruption. Don’t forget, M. Diderot, that many of my critics think that the reputed profundity of my work Das Kapital is due to the dogmatic obscurity of my style and . . . .

Diderot: And the magnetic popularity of your personality is due to your patriarchal beard and moustache. Am I right? Well, I knew it. Let us not waste our time on the demagogues. At any rate, just as I cannot agree with you upon the matter of my literary capacity, I find your philosophy significantly at odds with mine. But it is with the happiest feeling that I can confess my sense of unison with you in aiming towards the salvation of the oppressed majority. Misery there is in harsh intensity; and miseries there are in great numbers. It would be far more important to work for the prevention of misery, than to multiply places of refuge for the miserable.¹

Marx: Exactly! Though I am more certain that there are some things that a human being ought to do than I am that those things will bring pleasure and not pain, I agree with you in that we ought to transform this realistic sense of impugnation against inhuman wretchedness into scientific composure of a planned and systematic approach. Yes, the prevention of misery instead of the multiplication of its refuge! But how are we to go about it? My opinion is that an essential, though not
wholly sufficient, requisite is the correct understanding of the primary causes of misery.

Diderot: It seems that we are more alike in our opinions than I first thought. Each stage in the history of human society is infested by one or more systems of false beliefs and creeds of moral conduct. Such things blind the masses to the real means of salvation and induce them to feel contented with the status quo. We have to eradicate those false ideas and substitute solid truth. It is necessary for us to perceive, however, that mere rationalistic attacks upon the sacred books, upon the miracles, upon the moral types, of Catholicism, for instance, could only be partially effective for destruction, and could have no effect at all in replacing the old and false ways of thinking by others of more solid truth. The attack, I am of the opinion, must begin in philosophy. The first fruitful process consists in shifting the point of view, in enlarging the range of the facts to be considered, in pressing the relativity of our ideas, in freeing ourselves from the tyranny of anthropomorphism. 

Marx: I am afraid, M. Diderot, that I must announce my dissention in spite of your expectations. Here I shall refrain from wandering into the metaphysical question of mind and body. Let us talk about it later, because the present issue involves it. My teacher, Bruno Bauer, used to say that the real source of social evils was the lack of a rational, idealistic, and
critical attitude on the part of individuals. The masses, for him, were a social expression of the metaphysics of matter. He landed finally upon historical fatalism. That is to say, he was candid enough not to conceal from himself that critical logic solved none of the concrete problems. (5) I think your standpoint coincides roughly with my teacher's. The spirit you express is Enlightenment, enlightening of masses of people toward rational and scientific approach to every problem. I myself think that it is very important. For instance, the consciousness of a Proletarian that he is a Proletarian does not dawn upon him automatically or by a mysterious power of social evolution. The vanguard of this class has to organize every possible means of agitation and propaganda into the most effective ideological force. But in this way we do not touch on the basic question in social reform. We spoke of, and agreed upon, the necessity of correctly understanding the primary causes of misery. What are they? Now, this, in my opinion, is a scientific problem; that is, we can arrive at the conclusion only through careful observation of facts and organization of them. As you know, I made it my life-work to disentangle the complicated mechanism of the capitalistic society. I found through my study that the principal cause of the present-day misery is neither ignorance nor inability, but that all of these three things are equally dependent upon a much more fundamental material cause, namely productive relationships.
Diderot: Pray don't go into the maze of your economics here. I think I have caught the drift of your argument. What you are doing is to minimize the efficacy of human being in a human society. The great masses of people in the feudal period remained wretchedly poor and miserable. Why is it? They, not trees or rivers or tools or cattle, but they were ignorant of what they could have done. Why were they ignorant? They didn't have anybody to teach them how to read. Even if they could read, there weren't enlightening books accessible. You organized the First International. Was it other than human beings that was primarily concerned with it? No, it was the aspiration, consciousness, ideal, convictions, and what not, of you people that gave birth to that significant organization, not machines, nor railroads, nor pen and paper. I think, an attempt first to change the society you live in as a material preparation for the education of masses is just like an attempt first to study calculus as a groundwork for algebra.

Marx: It is the human being, no doubt, that suffers from misery and hopes for the better. But let us not forget that we are here talking about the method by means of which we may be able to eradicate the misery from which so many of our fellow beings are suffering at present. You remember, I presume, what Catherine of Russia once said to you. You forget, she said, in all your plans of reform the differences in our positions; you only work on paper, which outlives all
things; it opposes obstacle either to your imagination or to your pen. But I, poor Empress as I am, work on the human skin, which is irritable and ticklish to a very different degree. You saw what she meant, didn't you? Only intellectually, but not experientially. Of course, I do not mean to approve of what Catherine did as an Empress of Russia, but I think she knew what reforming meant. It is the human being, if I may repeat what I said before, that suffers from misery and hopes for the better. But what we are concerned with is the eradication of those conditions which make such misery possible on this earth --- not only misery in general, but specifically ignorance, for instance. Since you forbade me the use of my primary weapon, Political Economy, I shall only refer you to a simple but significant relation which stands between poverty, which is a material condition, and ignorance, which is an ideological reflection, or between leisure and culture. Is it not too much to ask a man who comes back exhausted from his daily manual work of ten to twelve hours, with all of his sense of insecurity, with half a dozen of under-nourished children to feed and each harsh manifestation of nature to prepare against, to ask such a man to open a page in your Encyclopaedia or in my Das Kapital and to concentrate his attention in order to learn and to have himself enlightened?

Diderot: I am glad you have put your thought into such a tangible form. The very form in which you lodge your interrogation reveals our difference in something more fundamental.
I watch those labourers, too. In the morning I hear them under my window. Scarcely has the day dawned before they are at work with spade and barrow, delving and wheeling. They munch a crust of black bread; they quench their thirst at the flowing stream; at noon they snatch an hour of sleep on the hard ground. But they are cheerful; they sing as they work; they exchange their good broad pleasantries with one another; they shout with laughter. At sundown they go home to find their children naked round a smoke-blackened hearth, a woman hideous and dirty. And is their lot any different from yours or mine? If I am sound in mind and body, if I am a man of worth and of pure conscience, if I know the true from the false, if I avoid evil and do good, if I feel the dignity of my being, if nothing lowers me in my own eyes, then people may call me what they will, 'My Lord' or 'Sirrah.' Certainly, the orientals have aptly said: a single candle for the poor is equivalent to ten thousands for the rich. One works harder than the other to procure that single candle, but it is a source of greater happiness for him than ten thousands for the other.

Marx: I think you are advocating the philosophy of pig's contentment. If I am not mistaken, you are falling into the intellectual pitfall of the quietism latent in every cosmic idealism. One usually does not reflect as you do unless one has leisure. One does not hyostatize happiness into pig's contentment when one is confronted with the problem of life or
death. If one is led to do so, it is the deceptive trickery of religion. Furthermore, our economic system is not something built on the consent of the people and remains constant or changeable according to our organized will and intention. But it has its own laws discernible and to a certain extent controllable or modifiable by us human beings but fundamentally irreversible and intractable. The system which is built on the material conditions of productive relationships develops through its own contradiction within itself. That is the reason why I said in one of my 'Thesen über Feuerbach' that 'Das Zusammenfallen des Andern der Umstände und der menschlichen Tätigkeit, oder Selbstveränderung kann nur als revolutionäre Praxis gefasst und rationell verstanden werden.'

Diderot: I wonder if you are not confusing 'What is' with 'What ought to be.' The analysis you make of the present capitalist society is in the realm of 'What is.' We may differ in our description or explanation of what this economic system is. But we could agree in the question of 'What ought to be,' and the question of happiness is in this latter realm. I always recognized the confusion between these two things among my contemporaries, especially those who speak about natural order.

M Marx: I agree with you about the confusion of your contemporaries. But I was not, and still am not, conscious of my making a similar blunder. For me, 'What ought to be' arises
out of 'What is,' and the realization of the former demands the correct understanding of the latter. I think we were speaking first about the cause of misery, that is, about 'What is' with a common presupposition on 'What ought not to be,' and then about the method of remedy, which is neither 'What is' nor 'What ought to be' but that which brings 'What is' to the level of 'What ought to be.' I think, however, your suspicion was not wholly ungrounded. Because I took too much for granted about your conception of 'What ought not to be.' But let us drop this chain of argument here and approach the point of our difference from another angle, namely the question of religion. Would you mind giving a summary presentation of your view on religion at this moment?

Diderot: Certainly not. I once wrote a dialogue between a philosopher and a certain Maréchale in which I tried to condense my objections to the creed of the church. You might have read it. The question, it seems to me, turns on the point whether one can live a good life without being a Christian or a believer in any other religion. What is a good life? I think we have no absolute rule of right and wrong or of good and evil. Circumstances are an important factor. S'il prenait en fantaisie à vingt mille habitants de Paris de conformer strictement leur conduite au sermon sur la montagne! One speaks about the necessity of having a recompense for a good deed and a penalty for an evil deed. The question here is whether there is such a thing or not. If there is, that's that.
If there isn't, we can't create it no matter how badly we need it. Readers of our Encyclopaedia may get the impression that our attitude toward religion was nothing more or less than that of rationalistic scepticism. We didn't enjoy enough freedom to express our viewpoint on such a thing in public.  

In my private letter, however, I often burst into a candid explosion against Christianity.

Marx: Yes; on such an occasion your rhetoric seems to outrun your reason. You remember you wrote to Damilaville once: 'The Christian religion is to my mind the most absurd and atrocious in its dogmas; the most unintelligible, the most metaphysical, the most intertwisted and obscure, and consequently the most . . . . .

Diderot: That's enough, Mr. Marx. I recall it well. I now smile on those things though. Yes it was more of an euphemism than reason. But I seriously believe that by annihilation of Christianity ce serait toujours un terrible préjugé de moins. In the early spring of 1784, when my last moment was in sight, the priest of Saint Sulpice used to visit me two or three times a week, hoping to achieve at least the semblance of a conversion. We found, to his amazement, that we had such ample common ground in matters of morality and good works that he finally ventured to hint that an exposition of such excellent maxims, accompanied by a slight retraction of my previous works, would have a good effect on the world. I told him that I wouldn't make any word of retraction-
tion. It would have made no difference to my fate.

Marx: Did it ever come to your mind, M. Diderot, that religious sentiment (das religiöse Gemüt) may be a social product and not solely a product of a handful of emotionally maladjusted individuals?

Diderot: No, I do not think so. Religion may have certain social consequences; but it is essentially an anti-social element in a society, arising in its first instance out of fantasies of abnormal individuals.

Marx: Anti-social element, no doubt. But only in one sense. In the sense that it stands in the way of any real betterment of a society. But when I used the word 'social,' I meant it in somewhat different sense. I am focusing upon the genesis, and using the word 'social' in a descriptive sense. Your able exposure of the folly in Christianity is no less acceptable to me than Bauer's amazingly acute criticisms of the gospel. But both of you have the emphasis on individual motives as accounting for the presence of certain doctrines and ritual forms. At best you could explain why some one belief rather than another was imposed upon the society; but how could you explain, on the basis of your methodological assumption, why the community believed at all, and further, how could you explain the general patterns of belief within which the specific religious ideas of specific religious leaders were set? Moreover, what is your effective method of attacks other than the piling up of mere atheistic literature?
I think, your fault, as well as Bauer's, lies in the complete disregard of the social character of religion. You may, as in Feuerbach did, 'lös en das religiöse Wesen in das menschliche Wesen auf.' But my point is that 'das menschliche Wesen ist kein dem einzelnen Individuum innewohnendes Abstraktum. In seiner Wirklichkeit ist es das Ensemble der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse.' Such a standpoint almost compels us to adopt a historical approach to the question of religious dogmas. These latter are reflections of succeeding periods in history or of different places in space. They reflect the hierarchy of the 'weltlichen Grundlage.' Therefore the only effective opposition to religion consists in the abolition of such a hierarchy.

As you recognize easily the line of my attack in this case is identical with the one I employed in connection with the question of social reforms or public misery. I may summarize them by saying that there are significant laws in society which incorporate historical changes. They are in many cases, at least they have been in the past, unknown or unfamiliar to our consciousness. So long as they are unknown to us, they may work blindly and malevolently against us; and we often get the illusion of homo-centrism. But once we discern them and come to be able to control a part of them, we can utilize them to our advantage.

Diderot: I think you stated your case most admirably. But what would you have had to do in order to make such ideas of yours known to public, when we reflect that I had to borrow the
mouth of a dreamer in presenting a novel view of the concept of 'matter'? Even that, I didn't publish in my lifetime. Coming back to the point of our disagreement, however, it seems now obvious that the main issue is whether or not there are any historical laws derived from empirical observation and by the help of our reasoning power, isn't it?

Marx: Yes and no. It is a main issue, but not the only one. In anticipation of the difficulties which are bound to arise, I may say here that it is one thing to recognize the objective 'Gesetzmäßigkeit' within social phenomena, and it is quite another thing to admit the objectivity of historical laws.\(^{(b)}\) I think you will not object to the former, but may to the latter. This, however, is not the main issue. The significant problem arises as to what is the decisive factor. Some claim that it is 'human nature.' If I am not mistaken, you share this opinion in a modified form.\(^{(w)}\) Some others project something more abstract and say that it is 'reason.' Hegel marks the culmination of this tendency. In contrast to these, I have been hinting, during the course of our discussion today, at something different. It is 'the material foundation' of a society or 'the mode of production' which, in my opinion, plays a dominant role in the development of our human society. Hunger is hunger, I do not deny it. But the hunger that is satisfied with cooked meat eaten with knife and fork is a different kind of hunger from one that devours raw meat with the aid of hands, nails, and teeth.
Diderot: I see your distinction of objective lawfulness in social phenomena from objective historical laws is a very helpful one. Necessity in the sense of the essential causal relationships, as distinguished from mere causality, is certainly a fruitful category of which I could have made use had I known of it.\(^{(18)}\) But as to the nature of the essential factor, as you abstract it, a number of questions come to my mind. Of course, the most general, naive questions are: 'Why the mode of production?' and 'What is this mode of production?' But I shalln't pursue you along this line on this occasion. Limiting myself within the field of philosophy or methodology, I should like to have you enlighten me on the following two questions; first, 'What are the peculiar relations of the mode of production to the institutional and ideological structures?' and secondly, 'Is the mode of production the sole governing cause in the history?'

Marx: In answering your... ...

Diderot: Pardon me. Before you answer my question, I should like to develop their implications in order to enable you to focus your retort to the point. Now, the relation between your basis and superstructure cannot be, in the first place, that of a locus standi or the habitat, just as a glass which contains a liquid or a powder does not determine the nature of the liquid or of the powder. In the second place, it cannot be that of priority. We know well that...
priority is not causation. Likewise, genesis hardly supplies an adequate explanation of this relation. Because a man, who was struck with a hammer by his foeman, cannot justifiably blame the miner who had mined iron of which the hammer was made. What, then, is your explanation?

Marx: Do you have any amplification or elaboration to make on your second question? If so, I suggest that you do it now. For, I have a suspicion that I can answer both of your questions by one stroke.

Diderot: Well, enough amplification or elaboration seems to be supplied by history itself. You know about history more than I do. So I shan’t multiply illustrations beyond minimum necessity. In ancient Greece and Rome, for instance, the productive order was based on slavery. Ought we not to expect, therefore, the same kind of state, the same type of government, the same type of ideology in both countries? Well, what do we find? Again, do not some other phases of human society have just as much decisive influence under certain circumstances as the mode of production? Why is it that you have to pick the particular one in exclusion of others? In short, is the mode of production the sole governing cause in the history?

Marx: I said a while ago that it is one thing to recognize the objective 'Gesetzmäßigkeit' within social phenomena, and it is quite another thing to admit the objectivity of historical laws. I think I can help you more by developing the impli-
uestion of this statement than by answering your questions
directly. It is the question of causal relationships which
is implied in both of your questions. Now, what is
causality commonly understood to be? It is supposedly a re-
relationship between two phenomena, is it not? Yes; but two
phenomena in abstraction. And abstraction is an artificial
interference. What we presuppose when we abstract
a causal relationship is the objective 'Gesetzmaessigkeit' I
spoke of.\textsuperscript{(20)} I said that causality is a human abstraction.
But please note I am not siding with Hume or Kant. They do
not postulate the 'Gesetzmaessigkeit' upon which causality
depends. Now, the complex of social phenomena implies (unter-
stellen\textsuperscript{(31)}) a certain kind of objective 'Gesetzmaessigkeit'! This is my fundamental proposition. There
is no one cause, which I understand to be only a human abstrac-
tion, that determines unilaterally all the other 'Momente'
in society. But to state that there is an objective 'Gesetz-
maessigkeit' in society is to invite only a confusion in our
mind. Thus arises the necessity of distinguishing the essen-
tial from the accidental. That is the reason why I reiterated
the remark that it is another thing to admit the objectivity
of historical laws. The distinction of the essential from the
accidental, however, is not that among causes as metaphysical-
ly understood. That is to say, to enumerate many causes for
one certain effect and to pick one or a few out of the many
as the essential causes for that effect is not what I propose
to do. I start out from a certain whole, commensurate with the plane of my investigation, and observe its self-motion which in due course of time turns that whole into something other than itself through certain principles which I call 'Dialektik' after Hegel's usage. As for my 'Dialektik,' we shall probably have an occasion to discuss later. The so-called causal analysis, therefore, is incorporated into the dialectic analysis, only in so far as it is useful in finding out the relationship between two phenomena in isolation.\(^{(21)}\)

You can easily see from the foregoing presentation of my view on causality how erroneous it is to translate my Hegelian term \(\textit{bestimmen}\) into 'to determine,' and to understand by that term the unilateral causal relationship of metaphysical nature. Coming, then, back to your original question, I am sure that all I need to say is that the relation between basis and superstructure is that of 'Bestimmung' within a whole or a society as a whole which implies (unterstellen) an objective 'Gesetzmäßigkeit.' Mutual interaction is undeniably there. Otherwise, what did I write my \textit{Das Kapital} for? But what is more important than to recognize a mutual interaction is to recognize the self-motion and the essential factors in that self-motion. Historical laws are objective and essential in this sense.

At this moment, Mr. Brinton Crane, who was instrumental in making this interview possible, interrupted them by saying: "Gentlemen, tea is ready for you, if you please." Both Diderot and Marx stood up from their seats and walked toward the adjoining room as they conversed the following:
Diderot: I wish if you were born hundred years earlier and could have helped us in completing our Encyclopaedia by contributing such articles as on 'history,' 'causality,' and, of course, on 'das Kapital.'

Marx: Had I not, however, have the privilege of making use of what you people, the 18th century French materialists, had achieved during your life-times, I am sure I would have never been able to formulate my theory of dialectic materialism.

After about half an hour, they came back from the dining-room, both laughing cheerfully. They must have had some delightful conversations over the tea-table.

Diderot: Early in our conversation to-day, you mentioned about the problem of mind and body and we postponed our discussion on it. I take it that your pet-idea of 'Dialektik' is closely connected with the problem. I should very much like to know the way in which you treat it. As you know, I had various novel ideas about 'matter,' but never had courage enough to state and publish them in straightforward manner. I put them in the mouth of dreaming D'Alembert, because I thought it better to have people think that my ideas were less foolish than had been expected than to have them sit in front of me and to say that I was going to deliver them the truth.

Marx: Personally I x favor an unreserved publication of
of one's works. Perhaps you never realized that within less than twenty years after your death some of your ideas expressed in your Dialogues were to be presented by one of your fellow countrymen and to be labelled as revolutionary in his name. When we reflect that even his doctrine was sneered at on the occasion of his funeral, I have to admit with regret that the date of the publication of your Dialogues was only too appropriate. (12) Be that as it may, the insight which enabled you to become a virtual, though not official, pioneer in the field of natural science owes its efficacy to your fundamental belief in materialism. Unquestionably you have a host of able predecessors, such as Toland, Hartley, and La Mettrie. But I think you differ from them in some important respects.

Diderot: The point which interested me most was the question whether there is an unsurmountable gulf between so-called 'matter' and that which is predicated as it living. The conclusion at which I arrived was only the necessary implication of my fundamental ontological propositions. One of the grossest mistakes of the Newtonian world-machine idea seems to me to consist in the abstract notion of motion. They separated motion from matter and naturally emphasized the change in location as the primary characteristic of motion. To my mind, a still body is 'in motion' just as much as a moving one. The idea that motion is inherent in matter and that matter cannot be conceived without the attribute of motion fits in more adequately with all the findings of natural sciences. Linked with
the inseparability of motion and matter, is the idea of the 
uniformity of nature, thus the inextricable interrelationships 
within itself. If we start out from these assumptions, we 
cannot avoid the conclusion that sensitivity, in one form 
or another, is a universal attribute of matter. Stone may not 
think as we do, but who can prove that stone does not have a 
certain kind of sensitivity? The more important question, how-
ever, seems to lurk in the fact that marble can be turned into 

 flesh and vice versa. Or as I was fond of doing, we might 
pick up a chicken's egg and look for the implications of it. 
We can destroy the entire edifice of Christian theology with a 
single egg!

Marx: Uniformity of nature, organic development of matter, 
and sensitivity as a universal attribute of matter --- these 
ideas are consistently and systematically blended within 
your mind. They constitute, with a slight modification, the 
fundamental tenet of modern materialism. And we have no quar-
rel on them. The difficulty arises when we ask: 'what is the 
difference between sensitivity of a human being and that of 
a stone?' 'is the difference between them not significant 

enough to demand separate names for them?' and further 'is the 
difference between them significant enough to incapacitate a 
uniform basis of explanation for all the phenomena in nature?'

Diderot: The issue is essentially the one which D'Alembert 
once posed to me and which I explained by the illustration of
a harpsichord and a philosopher. D'Alembert accused me of being inconsistent in admitting the ability of a philosopher-harpsichord to pass a judgment on the tone-quality of which he (or it) creates. I answered it by pointing out that the only difference between a harpsichord and a philosopher-harpsichord is that the latter possesses memory and a certain kind of sensitivity which the former does not, but which are nothing but more than functions of matter. D'Alembert, then, objected that matter is divisible, whereas sensitivity is not. And it was then that I brought out one of my cardinal objections to my contemporary materialists. Matter is divisible only when we apply an artificial measure of quantity. But matter in its essential character is just as indivisible as sensitivity. There is an eye, but there is no half of an eye. There is a half of a circular body, but there is no half of a circularity. Once you break up a certain shape, the essence of the shape is gone. I proposed to him to substitute a principle best verifiable through experience for a principle which introduces a new factor as a cause of a certain set of phenomena, but which at the same time introduces a host of other unexplainable difficulties. There is only one entity in this universe. A 'serinette' is of wood, a man is of flesh, a 'serin' is of flesh, and a philosopher is of more complicated flesh --- each may give an empirically different appearance, but essentially is of the same origin, of the same formation, of the same function, and of the same purpose. Certainly there
there is a difference between the predictability of a temperamental person getting angry at an insult and the predictability of a certain material object moving toward the direction it is pushed. But the difference is only due to the difference in the number of causes or factors involved, and not due to any unbridgable gulf of fundamental nature.

**Marx:** Do you think, then, that the relation of our mental activities to our brain is essentially similar to the relation of bile secretion to the liver?\(^{(24)}\)

**Diderot:** I admit a difference there; but not of any fundamental nature. A fundamental difference is such a difference as calls forth a factor other than those latent in nature itself.

**Marx:** Do you mean to say that all the phenomena in this universe are potentially explainable in terms of one uniform set of principles? Do you mean to assert, in other words, that the change in your or my mental attitude toward a certain object can be explained in terms of molecular activities?

**Diderot:** I think that the development of science will constantly approximate toward that perfection. I am not saying, of course, that quantitative analysis will exhaust all that is to be explained, though it may be of some assistance.

**Marx:** What I said at the beginning of our interview...
to-day seems to stand out more clearly than ever. You have many common elements with your contemporary materialists, but you distinguish yourself equally on account of your disagreement with them. I think the peculiar sense of reality which you possess is responsible for this dual aspect of your philosophy. For D'Holbach, for instance, a motion of a certain object was the sum-total of motions of its parts. Thus it was conceivable for him that a digestive function of our stomach be explained in molecular activities. You, on the other hand, are not satisfied with such a simplification and propose an indivisible character of each quality. I should like to go one step further and say that a different plane of an objective 'Gesetzmäßigkeit' is to be assigned to each successive forms of matter, from simple to complex. Causal relationships on the plane of physics and chemistry are qualitatively different from those on the plane of psychology; and the latter are again different from that on the plane of social sciences. This implies that a new functional unity is established as the result of a certain quantitative change. I think I can best elucidate my standpoint by an illustration of bricks and a brick-building. Your antagonists, namely theologians, maintain that bricks by themselves do notbuild themselves into a brick-building; somebody else, a person or an agency, who is capable of designing a form and putting a purpose therein, takes a hand in building it. They call thisagency a God, or whatever else name they may choose. Now most of the materialists con-
temporary with you do away with this agency and attribute a power of motion to these bricks. The building is built automatically, as it were. Then they go further and say that the building can be explained in terms of bricks. You recognize, however, if I understand you correctly, the indivisible character of the building as it is, while admitting on the other hand the uniform 'Gesetzmüssigkeit' for both bricks and the brick-building. My contention is that as you increase the number of bricks, you are only increasing a number of certain things with a uniform quality until you increase them enough to complete a brick-building, when a new quality emerges through the change in quantity. The new quality, or the brick-building, which has thus emerged, has its own 'Gesetzmüssigkeit' and can in no way be exhausted in its explanation by laws abstracted from the 'Gesetzmüssigkeit' of bricks.

Diderot: I am tempted to suggest, Mr. Marx, that here the difference between you and me is less than commonly supposed. Your refinement was made possible, I think, through the development of mental and social sciences after my death --- development which has revealed necessary implications of my abstract presupposition in much more concrete forms. I feel in your statement rather a confirmation of my ideas than a refutation.

Marx: I agree with you. The difference is a matter of emphasis. You emphasize an indivisibility of quality and 'democracy' among various qualities; I emphasize the hierarchy
of 'Gesetzmässigkeit' into which all the qualities are 'aufgehenoben.' But what I characterized as the matter of emphasis may be traced back to a certain qualitative difference, namely the difference in the weapon of reasoning.

Diderot: You mean to say that you are armoured with 'Dialektik' whereas I am not, don't you? Is 'Dialektik' however, merely the weapon of reasoning?

Marx: Yes, if you are talking about a dialectic method. But 'Dialektik' implies something more than that. In the first place, it is a mode of existence. And it can be a method of reasoning only because it is a mode of existence. If it is your will, I shall gladly join with you in roaming through this field of abstraction.

Diderot: By all means, do!

Marx: There is one thing which has to be understood clearly before 'Dialektik' can be explained. That is the true nature of categories. There is a net of natural phenomena in front of mankind. The instinctive man, namely the primitive savage, does not separate himself from nature, but the conscious man does. Category is various steps in this process of separation. That is to say, it is the various steps of the cognition of the world, it is knots of net which help man to cognize and grasp this net. Unfortunately, these knots are given their names at a certain stage in their development. The name may persist, but the knot behind it may turn into some-
thing else. We insist, and this is the most important preliminary point, that categories by their very nature are bound to be static. A and A is not non-A only in the realm of categories. What \underline{impossible} in reality corresponds to A at a certain moment in \underline{im} its historical development (because everything changes) may not be A at another moment.

Diderot: In most cases, this difficulty seems to be taken care of. Take, for instance, an egg. As it develops into a full-fledged rooster, we provide with a series of names applying to \underline{im} its successive stages. We give different names to different things as much as we can, do we not?

Marx: Difficulties, of course, do not usually arise in connection with chickens, nor in connection merely with giving different names for different things. We spoke about bricks and a brick-building a while ago. Let us take that as an illustration again. When we increase or decrease the \underline{im} number of bricks, we are mainly concerned with variation in quantity. Now note this term 'quantity,' define it, and keep it in your mind. Would you say, then, that an increase or a decrease of the number of bricks is a matter of variation in quantity and nothing else? We shooed it before, didn't we, that a change in quality may emerge through a sufficient change in quantity. This process, when curtly expressed, is called 'passing of quantity into quality.' What has been done \underline{im} often is to let the fixed definition of quantity interfere, so to speak, with
the actual process, resulting in the complete disregard of a consequent change in quality. A similar mistake is prevalent in connection with contrasting concepts of absolute and relative and of necessary and accidental. In short, 'Dialektik' makes it its first task to discern the true nature of categories and of names. Then it sets out to establish a number of positive propositions, all of which are nothing but the result of the best attempt to understand the objective reality in its entirety. The universe is in process, or, more exactly, in a self-moving process. And the most important generality in this self-moving process is the contradiction of opposite opposites. This latter . . .

Diderot: Just a minute, Mr. Marx. I followed you well all but the last sentence. What do you mean by 'the contradiction of opposites'? Is it the only form of development or of change? Does there have to be a contradiction of opposites for any change in quality?

Marx: A process of development is inherent in each empirically definable object or event, isn't it? Such a process of development involves, in its first instance, the internal conflict of that which is and that which is not. We are born, live, become old, and die. We don't merely exist while we live. But we keep on growing, becoming, slowly changing into something else. There is this constant conflict between opposites, namely life and death. Any process of development involves this con-
tradition. Otherwise there will be no development.

Diderot: You seem to have left the clear definition of 'opposites' carefully out of picture. Now what is the criterion of 'opposites'? When do A and non-A constitute 'opposites' and when do they not?

Marx: The very form in which you pose your question misleads you. 'Opposites' are inherent within A itself, or within any particular non-A. 'Opposites' are 'opposites' within a unity, and they are not two independent opposing forces. Between any pair of 'opposites,' one horn presupposes the other, and vice versa. But the conflict results in an 'Aufhebung' of 'opposites,' enabling the emergence of a new quality which on its own plane produces its own opposite in its process of development. Thus goes on a never-ending 'Dialektik' of the universe.

Diderot: What assurance is there for the superiority of your single hypothesis --- I think you admit that it is a hypothesis --- over scientists' hypotheses of various and flexible kinds? Are not observation and experimentation the only weapon with which we can verify the truth of any hypothesis? And the history of science seems to show that observation and experimentation abhor any single-handed systematization, like of which you are now attempting at.

At this moment, Mr. Brinton interrupted again by saying: "May I remind you, Mr. Diderot, that the time
for your next appointment is now within a few minutes?" The conversation was brought to an abrupt halt at this juncture, and Messrs. Diderot and Marx stood up and shook their hands, promising each other to meet again for a further elucidation of important points in 'Dialektik! Mr. Diderot expressed his desire to learn something about Political Economy also. To this remark, Mr. Marx responded quickly and said that he wished Mr. Diderot to teach him some fundamentals in Court Etiquette.

Notes:

(1) cf. Rysanov; Marx and Engels, chap.2
Marx's letter to Engels April 15, 1869
Deborin, History of Marxism materialism, ch.9 § 12

(2) cf. Diderot's articles on Alm-House and Hospital

(3) cf. Hook; Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx, p.100

(4) cf. Morley; Diderot and the Encyclopaedists, vol.I. pp.97-8

(5) cf. Hook; "Karl Marx and Bruno Bauer" The Modern Monthly April, 1933 (pp.160-174)

(6) Ségur, iii. p.34

(7) cf. O'Byes, xviii, p.431

(8) cf. Morley, op. cit. vol.II. p.225


(10) cf. Morley, vol. II.p.245

(11) cf. Marx, Die Thesen über Feuerbach, §7
(12) cf. Hook; "Karl Marx and Bruno Bauer" The Modern Monthly
April, 1933
(13) from Marx's Die Thesen über Feuerbach § 6
(14) cf. Ibid, § 4
(15) cf. Engels, Anti-Dühring, Internationale Bibliothek
pp. 300-301
(16) cf. Doi; "Social Democratic' Methodology" Chuo-Koron
December 1931
(17) cf. Deborin; op. cit. pp. 392-396
(18) Friedrich Engels criticized French materialists as
having the mechanical notion of causality.
(19) cf. Bober; Karl Marx's Interpretation of History, ch. 14
(20) cf. Engels; Anti-Dühring, pp. 5-8
(21) this expression is used by Marx in his famous pre-
face to the Critique of Political Economy
(22) cf. Engels; Anti-Dühring, pp. 5-8
(23) Lamarck's Système des animaux sans vertèbre was published
in 1809 and he died in 1829, while Diderot's Dialogues
were not published until 1830, though they were written
in 1769.
(24) Ideas expressed here can be referred to Entretien entre
D'Alembert et Diderot
(25) cf. Ibid.
(26) cf. the famous dictum of Büchner to the effect that
human brains secrete ideas just as livers secrete bile
(27) cf. Lenin; Collections of Lenin's Materials (Russian
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