

Many of us who ~~are~~ non-Marxists are beginning to be convinced that Marxist philosophy is unique ^{in its effectiveness.} It is precisely as a philosophy of human society in process of historical development that it manifests its uniqueness. Engels' speech at the graveside of Karl Marx on March 17, 1883 expresses this view "Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of the development of human history"

The scientific study of human development enables not only to satisfy our curiosity about how the process takes place, but also to control and direct it. This element of control and direction of social processes cannot be independent ^{or over above} of the laws of the process itself. On the contrary, conscious control and direction by human effort is part of the process. ~~Itself. Now~~

Since Marx himself tried to dissociate the processes of development from the element of human volition integral to it, he stressed the notion of 'historical necessity', which sounds almost like a determinist or fatalist way of thinking. But Marx was aware of the

1. * Marx-Engels, Selected Works, II. pp 153-154.

artificiality of the dissociation between 'natural necessity' and human volition. He sought to overcome the dissociation by insisting upon the indissociability of theory and ~~practice~~ praxis. This means that the theory focuses on the element of historical necessity while the praxis orients human volition along the lines shown by theory.

Is it true however to say that theory is science and praxis is technology; ~~is~~ that in the scientific study of societal processes of development we study what is objectively given, while in praxis we use techniques to modify, control, direct and manipulate what is given?

In Darwin's theory of evolution, whatever the species does for its own survival is itself determined by the laws of natural necessity. Is it the same in the Marxian theory of social development? It seems Engels in his Anti-Dühring tried to make it so. Human volition, or moral effort, was by Engels traced back to the development of the classes. There are no eternal moral laws, but only those laws which are dictated by the interests of the class in power. All morality so far is class morality; "a really human morality, which transcends class antagonisms and their legacies in thought, becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class contradictions, but has even forgotten them in practical life" ^x In chapter XI of Anti-Dühring Engels deals with the ~~false~~ inescapable problem of freedom

^x Engels, Anti-Dühring. ch. IX. Eng. Tr. in Lewis S. ~~Feuer~~ Feuer, (ed) Marx & Engels, Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, Doubleday Anchor, 1959. p. 272

and necessity. Engels ^{cites} ~~quoting~~ with approval Hegel's view of freedom as the appreciation of necessity.

"Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws," says Engels, "but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends".^x

Freedom or human volition is thus a matter of "control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development."

For a Christian like the present writer, the parallelism ^{seems} striking indeed, with certain ways of western Christian thinking about human freedom and God's will. Human freedom for these thinkers means primarily control over oneself and one's irrational impulses, and action in accordance with the will of God.

In Engels' thought the notion of the will of God is replaced by the concept of natural or historical necessity.

This parallelism is made more understandable by Joseph Dietzgen, a disciple of Feuerbach, who influenced many thinkers of his time, ^{and} who insisted^x that "God, truth and nature are names for the same thing"

3. Anti-Duhring ch XI. Eng. Tr. op. cit. p. 279.

xx. Dietzgen, Das Wesen der menschlichen Kopfarbeit, Hamburg, 1869, cited by George Lichtheim in Marxism, An Historical and Critical Study, New York, Praeger, 1961, p. 242

This relation between what takes place independently of human volition, and ~~the~~ what is the result of human will and action, remains the key problem in seeing the role of philosophy in changing society.

Mary was to the end reluctant to give full endorsement to Engels' view of historical necessity as deterministic ~~as~~ in the same way as the outcome of biological evolution is deterministic. Engels in fact came to regard historical development as part of natural or biological evolution, basically subject to the same laws. In his Dialectics of Nature, (Introduction), Engels waxes poetic in describing the process of nature as coming into being and going out of being as a matter of natural necessity. "It is an eternal cycle in which matter moves, ... in which every finite mode of existence of matter, whether it be sun or nebular vapour, single animal or genus of animals, chemical combination or dissociation, is equally transient, and wherein nothing is eternal but eternally changing, eternally moving matter and the laws according to which it moves and changes" ^x

These twin principles of the eternality of matter, and the permanence of change, belong

Karl Marx + Friedrich Engels, Selected Works II,
Moscow, 1951, p 72.

already to the ^{western} Pre-Socratic view of life reality and is no original creation of Engels. The rigid determinism of the so-called laws of Nature and the analysis of their dialectic character comes from Marx and Engels.

~~But is there a difference between Marx & Engels at this point?~~

I wonder if Marxist philosophers would accuse me of misinterpreting ~~Marxist~~ Dialectical Materialism if I characterized it in the following way

The universe is material. Its stuff is what contemporary science calls matter-energy. This universe is one inter-connected whole and is in a process of continuous change, change regulated by the ^{three} laws of dialectical materialism i.e.

- (1) the Law of the Mutual Interpenetration of Opposites
- (2) the Law of the Negation of the Negation, and
- (3) the Law of the Transformation of Quantity into Quality.

This change is set in motion by internal forces without any external intervention from a 'prime mover'. Human knowledge is also derived from objectively existing matter-energy, which being infinite can never be fully known. Human knowledge grows with time, especially as it is applied to practice and experience is gained. Thought has its roots in ~~the~~ man's biological apparatus which he shares with other living beings, but language is specifically human, and therefore historically and culturally conditioned. ~~I know this is against the views of Stalin~~

If what I have awkwardly summarised above constitutes an approximate general statement of the Dialectical Materialist position, my question is

under
Marxism

What exactly is the role and function of the human volitional effort in the process of dialectical materialist change?

Human beings, by understanding themselves as an inter-connected part of the world in process of change, ~~see~~ ^{can see} themselves both ^{as} subjects and objects of change.

The question of Causality is relevant here. But causality itself is inconceivable without a linear notion of time, for the cause has to precede the effect in time (unless one resorts to the scholastic notion of 'final cause'). Clearly we have as yet no objective ~~experience~~ or definition of time, but only agreed ones, in relation to agreed reference systems.

Is the Causal-Consequential structure of the world an objectively given fact? We can observe it on the micro-scale of our own experience as creatures who are born and who die after some time. But on a wider canvas, where time-space unity is basic, causality seems a difficult concept to sustain.

We will limit our discussion here only to ^{the dialectic between} human causality and natural necessity, on the shorter time-scale of our history. To what extent can we as human beings, by our voluntary action, alter the course of nature? That we do so seems quite obvious. When we build a dam or shoot a rocket, ~~we are~~ ^{we may well be} doing something against natural necessity, but we are altering the course of nature, aren't we? Or are we? For it is only by working along the path of natural necessity ~~to~~ to exploit the gravitational force

of a body of water, or over the ~~gravitational force~~ force of a body like the rocket by shooting it with sufficient energy into orbit.

Are we changing nature when we build a city or construct a dam? Not if we regard human ~~acts~~ beings themselves as part of nature. If man is part of nature, then his actions are also the acts of nature, and the emergence of a megapolis is not a violation of nature, but something that happens within nature according to its own laws and not an interference from outside, for there is nothing outside nature to intervene.

If this is basically true, we are still confronted with the question of man's choosing between alternative ways of dealing with his environment. Though man is part of nature, he transcends it precisely at the point at which he makes his own decisions independent of antecedent causes.

If Man is part of Nature, and if Nature is guided by 'inevitable laws', is Man also completely under the sway of the same laws? or is he under a different set of laws which 'nature' has set for him? Or, does he make his own laws as to how man should behave in relation to each other and in relation to nature? Would it be true to say that all this is ~~1-~~ ¹⁻ ~~half~~ true? That is, to