ESTERN CLARION

Official Organ of THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF CANADA

WENTIETH YEAR. Twice a Month VANCOUVER, B. C., NOVEMBER 1, 1924.

Marxism In Social Theory

A CRITICAL REVIEW No. 2.

It is of no single line of antecedents in respect of is, his postulates and preconceptions which the point of departure for all of his creative work litical and economic theory. By his earlier training e is Hegelian in his method and conception of the procons (its scheme of causation.—"C") of social development. By his later training under the English classical school of ics he is un uncritical subscriber to the metaphysics of the system of Natural Rights and Natural Liberty. . . (Vebleu)

It is fairly safe to say that never before in the history of mankind has there existed a social situthe demands of the constitution of his intellectual sire," has it not inspired? a whether objectively true or not, has ex-

evolutionary process. By, "causation" we mean, how it happened." Broadly these schemes of causation group themselves into two kinds-the teleological, of which Hegelianism is an example, and the non-teleological characteristically the scheme associated with Darwinism, which achieves its purest and strictest expression in the mechanistic conception used as a working hypothesis in enquiry into phenomena of existence by the later post-Darwinian science of our day. A teleological conception of evolution means evolution to a goal or end, implying purposive direction in the "trend" of things; generally, in the apprehension of old-fashioned evolutionists, a meliorative trend is conceived of, indicating a belief in a benign order of nature. The conception is shot through and through with the "animism" referred to in last issue. An element of personality is projected into the process which the nonteleological Darwinism sees as an impersonal, mechanical play of brute forces looking to no end. It is claimed that that science which aims at a statement of the phenomena of process in terms of the "noral" or of states of "equilibrium" or "rest," and "trends" to those states, exhibits thus vestigial remains of the animistic propensity. Be that as it may, let us ask what lies behind the belief in a trend in things to a goal, so characteristic an element of Hegel's philosophy, since it is he whom we have to consider next, because Marx adopted the Hegelian dialectic method and scheme of causa; tion. I suggest, for whatever there may be in it, we peer behind Hegel's conscious thought procesa for some irrational primitive urge as a cause of his bellef.

isms wherein life awakens; then in animals, in which the where reason rises into mind and achieves self-consciousness and freedom. As self-conscious mind it expresses itself in the history of peoples, in religion, art, philosophy, in human institutions, in the family and in law, until it realizes itself in the State as its latest and highest object. According to Hegel, then, the universal Idea develops into Godhead in proportion as the material world rises from the inorganic to the organic, and, finally, to man. In the viental part of man, the Idea arrives at self-consciousnes and freedom and becomes God - the Absolute."-(M. Beer.)

What is this Hegelian "Absolute," this final goal of evolution, but perfection and, here deep calls to ation to which the terms "moving" and "dynamic" deep; perfection means rest, rest from the contracould be so justly applied as to modern society un dictory elements that make for a changing world. der the machine process and the regime of capital predicating the disturbing unfamiliar and the un-Coincident with this "moving" and "dynamic" forseen, the unforseeable and the chances of consituation modern thought has been seized flict and failure ever dogging our footsteps in life. with the conception of the world, both the social The desire for rest of this over-driven, calamity ridworld an dthe universal world of nature, as in a den humanity has its corollary in a "love of ease," process of evolution. In accordance with his anc-lent practice, the reasoning animal man, perhaps by How many "Heavens, the visions of unfulfilled de-

> nder diverse intellectual skies," days John Dewey, "the idea has assumed diverse forms and colors. But all of them have involved the conception of a completed activity, a static perfection. Desire and need have been treated as signs of deficiency, and endeavor as proof not of power but of incompletion. In Aristotle this conception of an end which exhausts all realization and excludes all potentiality appears as a definition of highest excelence. It of necessity excludes all want and struggle and all dependencies. It is neither practical nor social. Nothing is left but a self-revolving, self-sufficing thought engaged in contemplating its own sufficiency. Some forms of Oriental morals have united this logic with a profounder psychology, and have seen that the final terminus on this road is Nirvana, an obliteration of all thought and desire. In medieval science, the ideal reappeared as a definition of heavenly bliss accessible only to a redeemed immortal soul. Herbert Spencer is far enough away from Aristotle. medieval Christianity and Buddhism; but the idea reemerges in his conception of a goal of evolution in which adaptation of organism to environment is complete and final. In popular thought, the conception lives in the vague thought of a remote state of attainment in which we shall be beyond 'temptation,' and i nwhich virtue by its own inertia will persist as a triumphant consummation. . . The fallacy in these versions of the same idea is perhaps the most pervasive of all fallacies in philosophy. So common is it that one questions whether it might not be called the philosophical fallacy. . . . It is forgotten that success is success of a specific effort, and satisfaction the fulfillment of a specific demand, so that success and satisfaction become meaningless when severed from the wants and struggles whose consummation they are, or when taken universally, all-inclusively."

tual work, is seen to be very useful, because, out of the Idea attains to the twilight of reason; finally, in men, clash of opinions, it brings forth the truth and stimulates to deeper thought. Hegel seized hold of this expression and named his logical method after it. This is the dialectic method, or the manner of conceiving things and beings of the universe as in a process of becoming, through the struggle of contradictory elements and their resolution. . . . It is precisely opposition or antithesis, which sets things in motion,, which is the mainspring of evolution, which calls forth and develops the latent forces and powers of being. Had the earth as a fiery, gaseous mass remained in that state, without the contradiction, that is, the cooling and condensation taking place, then no life would have appeared on it. Had the State remained autocratic,, and the contradictory principle, middle-class freedom been absent, then the life of the State would have become rigid, and the bloom of culture rendered impossible. Had Capitalism remained without its proletarian contradiction, then it would have reverted to an industrial feudalism. It is the contradiction, or the antithesis, which brings into being the whole kingdom of the potentialities and gifts of nature and of humanity. Only when the contradictory begins to reveal itself does evolution to a higher plane of thought and existence begin. The thing or being, against which the contradiction operates, was called by Hegel the Positive, and the contradiction, or the antagonistic element, or the antithesis, he , called the Negation. 'The contradiction, however,' says Hegel, 'is the source of all movement and life; only insofar as it contains a contradiction can anything have movem power and effect."

HETORY BCONOMICS

PHILOSOPHY

FIVE CENTS

. This thought of Hegel's is of extraordinary importance for the understanding of Marxism. It is the soul of the Marxian doctrine of the class-struggle, nay of the whole Marxian system. One may say that Marx is always on the look-out for contradictions within social development, for wherever the contradiction (antithesis-class struggle) shows itself, there begins, according to Marz-Hegel, the progress to a higher plane.

"We have now become familiar with two expressions of the dialectical method, the positive and the negation. We have seen the first two stages of the process of growth in thought and in reality. The process is not yet complete. It still requires a third stage. This third step Hegel called the Negation of the Negation. With the continued operation of the negation, a new thing or being comes into ex-

"To revert to our examples: the complete cooling and condensation of the earth's crust: the rise of the middleclass State: the victory of the Proletariat: these things represent the setting aside or suspension of the Negation: the contradiction is thus resolved, and a new stage in the process of evolution is reached. The expression Positive (or affirmation), Negation, and Negation of the Negation, are also known as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis,

"In order to understand this more distinctly, and to visualize it, let us consider an egg. It is something positive but it contains a form which gradually consumes (i.e., negatives) the contents of the egg. This negation is, however, no mere destruction and annihilation; on the contrary, it results in the germ developing into a living thing. The negation being complete, the chick breaks through the egg shell. This represents the negation of the negation, whereby there has arisen something organically higher than the egg. "While the Hegelian cosmology is mystical and Hegel an idealist, in exploring by means of this method the wide expanse of human knowledge he scattered an astonishing abundance of materialistic and strictly scientific observations and suggestions, and inspired his pupils and readers with a living conception of history, of the development of mankind to self-consciousness and freedom, thus rendering them capable of pushing their studies further, and em cipating themselves from all systicism.

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Hegel was an idealist: The origin and essence of the of growth was to be sought, according to him, not material forces, but in the logical idea, reason, the iversal spirit, the absolute, or in its religious expresd. Before He created the world He is to be rea an Idea, containing within itself all forms of blob it develops distoctically. The idea creates objects of inorganic nature; then in plants, organ-

So much for Hegel's goal and other like "perfectionists" ideals. In the actual practice of life, goals and "ends" we aim for are merely turning points to fresh courses of activity and another future full of contingencies. - Let me now turn to Hegel's dialectic, his scheme of causation of the evolutionary process, of how he conceives it hap-Dens :---

"By the dialectic the old Greeks understood the art of discourse and rejoinder, the refutation of an opponent by the destruction of his assertions and proofs, the bringing into relief of the contradictions and antitheses. When examined closely, this art of discussion, in spite of its contradictory and apparently negative (destructive) intellec-

"As a guide to his studies from 1884-4 onwards, Marx "As a guide to his extents in method of investigation, used the conception of history, or method of investigation, history of Hegel-was named materialistic. As its nature is dialectic -as it seeks to conceive in thought the evolv-

(Continued on page 3) .