

Development and Resolution of Contradictions

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*In this passage from Deborin's introduction to the Russian edition of Hegel's collected works, he outlines his conception of the relation between Hegel's dialectics and Marxism, and development and resolution of contradictions in particular. It shows that Deborin adopted Hegel's view that the resolution of a contradiction means incorporating the two sides into a higher unity in which the sides no longer contradict each other. This view would soon be sharply attacked by Soviet philosophers. Mao discusses Deborin's views in "On Contradiction." The passage translated here comes from Deborin's book *Filosofia i Marksizm* [Philosophy and Marxism], Moscow, 1930.*

[303] To return to our specifying the basic defects of the Hegelian logic, we must recognize that in general the Hegelian construction must be considered correct also from the materialist point of view. By this we do not want to say at all that all of Hegel's categories stand firm in their proper place and that any movement whatever of them is absolutely impermissible. It is only important for us to emphasize that the *basic line* in Hegelian logic is correct in outline....

[304] Thus in place of the self-development of the idea [in Hegel] we put the self-development of the material world, and in place of logical transitions we put *real transitions* in the process of development. In Hegel we have, despite the artificiality of the transitions from one category to another and the idealistic character of all his logic, an *abstract theory of dialectics*, which in general expresses—although in mystified form—the whole *real process of development*....

[339] Dialectics is defined above all as the theory of development. Development only takes place where opposites and contradictions exist. Therefore Lenin correctly speaks of the inner impulses to development, given by contradictions. All development is the result of the struggle of opposites. An absolutely uniform medium cannot be developed until it is formed because of this or that condition of opposition. Development arises from the division of unity, [where] opposite determinations are revealed in one

[thing]. Therefore Lenin emphasized that the division of unity constitutes the basic property of dialectics, a basic law of the objective world and of cognition. The identity or unity of opposites means "the recognition (revelation) of opposites, mutually excluding and opposing tendencies in all phenomena and processes of nature (including both mind and society). A condition for the cognition of all processes in the world in their "self-movement," in their spontaneous development, in their lively existence is the cognition of them as a unity of opposites."¹

The process of development consists, therefore, in the revelation and the display of the properties and determinations inherent or established in the given phenomenon. Therefore every process of development is rise from a lower form or state to a higher one, from abstract, meager determinations to richer, more concrete determinations with greater content. The higher state contains the lower state within itself as "overcome," that is, as previously independent but become dependent. The lower form is developed into the higher; it did not disappear without a trace, but was transformed into another, higher form. "The bud will disappear in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit

¹ Lenin, "K voprosu o dialektike [On the question of dialectics]," *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*, 1925, no. 5-6, p. 14-15.

now emerges as the truth of it instead. These forms are not just distinguished from one another, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole.”²

The higher form arises thanks to the contradictions that come to light in the lower form. These oppositions and contradictions lead to the formation of a new, higher unified whole, containing within itself an overcome form of the lower form. Without development of the lower form [340] the higher form does not arise....

The dialectical method does not have for its task to insert anything into the object, but it should observe the course of development of the object itself. In this sense the dialectical method is the really unified science, the *objective method*. The dialectical method only *reproduces* the course of development of the object. Therefore, dialectics, as the theory of development, sets itself the goal of revealing the basic laws of development, inherent in reality itself....

[341] Contradiction, being the expression of the *struggle* of opposites, finds its resolution. In the struggle a given form of existence is destroyed, the positive and negative sides overcome each other and their opposites, recognizing that “the truth” is neither the one nor the other, but a new form, a new unity. This is the sense in which it is necessary to understand the words of Hegel, that essence returns back into itself, in [its] ground.

[342] “The immediate result of opposition, determined as contradiction, is *ground*, which contains in itself identity and difference as determinations which are “overcome” in it and form only its ideal moments.”³

Therefore the dialectics of development does not stop short in the recognition or

establishment of opposites, as this would be wanted in bourgeois ideology, which tends to immortalize “social polarity”; it requires necessarily the *resolution* and *destruction* of these “polarities” by means of the struggle of contradictions and their surmounting or “overcoming.” Therefore Marxism denying the theory of blunting or reconciliation of social oppositions, insisting on the necessity of revolutionary “conflict,” the revolutionary mode of resolving contradictions. In this connection it would be relevant to focus on the *law of the negation of the negation*, to which is generally attributed no significance. Along with Engels and Lenin we have another view of this issue. But we cannot continue with this question here.

² Hegel, *Fenomenologiia dukha [Phenomenology of Spirit]*, p. 2. [quoted here from *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, A. V. Miller, trans., Oxford U. P., 1979, p.2].

³ Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, Section 120.

