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POPPER AND DIALECTICS.

I. DIALECTICAL ELEMENTS IN POPPER'S CRITICISM OF DIALECTICS

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Popper's objections raised in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*¹ and in his article "What is Dialectic?"² about dialectics' claim to possess an absolute and, for that matter, historical knowledge of the world bring home several intricate points. His criticism of dialectics, however, though probably unconsciously, makes good use of that distinctive presupposition of any dialectical epistemology according to which the knower as well as the process of knowing constitute part of the object to be known. The dialectical element of his methodology remains, in the main, a somewhat implicit and latent moment, though thoroughly utilized in certain parts of *The Open Society* as well as in *The Poverty of Historicism*³. This fact requires furthermore a re-examination of several major issues concerning dialectical methodology and absolute knowledge.

Before proceeding to illustrate my thesis, I think it necessary to elucidate some preliminary problems concerning terminology and method. Dialectics and historicism appear in Popper's philosophy mostly as two issues which may sometimes be combined (Hegel and Marx, for example, utilize dialectics within the edifice of their "historicist" philosophies, so in their case we might speak about dialectical historicism), but are generally treated as independent. Popper considers dialectics mainly as a method which claims to be rigorously scientific. His refutation of it rests on the demonstration that such a claim is thoroughly unjustified; the existing sciences not only do not apply dialectical methods, but the latter are *eo ipso* incompatible with any scientific method⁴. Dialectical knowledge is thus dismissed. The objection that, though not as a *scientific* but as a *philosophical* method, dialectics might be of use, would probably fail to strike home, for it rests on the assumption that there may be a radical difference

¹ K. R. POPPER, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd revised ed., 1952.

² K. R. POPPER, "What is Dialectic?", in: *Conjectures and Refutations, The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd revised ed., 1965, pp. 312–335.

³ K. R. POPPER, *The Poverty of Historicism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957.

⁴ "What is Dialectic?", op. cit. p. 321 f.

between scientific and philosophical knowledge, and that, moreover, the latter may possess an independent method. Popper's standpoint, in this respect, is not quite unambiguous: departing from the positivists of the Vienna Circle, he does not restrict philosophy to the application of scientific methods, but at the same time he denies the possibility (or the necessity) of any strictly independent philosophical method.⁵ Accordingly, if we pass over Popper's works, we see on the one hand, that they treat the epistemological and methodological problems of science, but in doing so, do not, in fact, possess an established method⁶; on the other, that his works on history and society are admittedly what come close to personal remarks lacking again in established methods⁷. Thus we might say that Popper's attitude to philosophy is undoubtedly more mitigated than that of the positivists proper, for he permits philosophy to depart from scientific methods. But this concession goes only so far as the conceded methodological liberty does not come to clash with scientific methods. (If such limits are observed, even metaphysical theories are justified.⁸) Also, in treating such topics as concern society and history, he frequently applies methods and procedures of the natural sciences. (A considerable part of his conceptual framework is derived from such preferences: for example, the distinction between essentialism and nominalism, which we shall treat later on.)

I am bound to dwell upon further terminological problems (which, as a rule, are far from being mere verbal subtleties), if my themes are to be made sufficiently clear. As a further consideration, I would suggest that methodology, in Popper's thinking, is kept radically apart from ontology. The scientific character of a method is guaranteed to Popper, if and only if it proceeds in accordance with, and observes, certain procedures, logical and institutional. Not because a method describes its object as it is "in itself", is the method considered as scientific (to speak of the "in itself" structure of any object would appear to him sheer mythology!), but because it satisfies certain formal rules previously and inter-subjectively agreed upon.⁹ It follows, then, that we can hardly speak of ontology in Popper's thought or, which amounts to much the same, methodology (as well as logic) and ontology remain isolated for ever; science, with all its intricate methods, can never reach (to adopt a Kantian term) the "noumenon"; it

⁵ "... no such methods or techniques exist; in philosophy methods are unimportant; any method is legitimate if it leads to results capable of being rationally discussed" (K. R. POPPER, "The Nature of Philosophical Problems and their Roots in Science", in: *Conjectures and Refutations*, op. cit. p. 72.).

⁶ "There is no method peculiar to philosophy." (K. R. POPPER, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, London: Hutchinson, 1975, Preface to the First English Edition, p. 15.).

⁷ Cf. *The Open Society*, vol I. p. 3.

⁸ Popper does not rule out metaphysics as sheer nonsense, nor does he attribute to it any kind of independent cognitive value, but accepts it mainly on *heuristic* grounds: "I do not even go so far as to assert that metaphysics has no value for empirical science. For it cannot be denied that along with metaphysical ideas which have obstructed the advance of science there have been others [...] which have aided it". (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery* op. cit. p. 38.)

⁹ In this connection Popper even adopts the characteristic phrase, reminding us of the late Wittgenstein, of "scientific game"; cf. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. p. 280.

does not provide real, but at best phenomenal knowledge of the world. What we obtain by it are "hypotheses", or "conjectures".¹⁰

The radical separation of methodology and ontology¹¹ is relevant for us because, as opposed to it, it is the close connection or the unification of the two that dialectics claims to be based upon. In the light of such a claim, dialectics cannot sufficiently be described as a pure (or formal) method, or it can, at best, be characterized by the somewhat clumsy "definition" that it is a method inseparable from its object¹². This character of dialectics is responsible for the charge often brought against it by Popper and others that it does not easily lend itself to definitions, formalizations, etc. To treat dialectics as a *direct rival* of established and already functioning scientific methods is a misunderstanding which Popper, actually, is not the first to fall victim to, and which dates back to the last decades of the last century. It would be quite out of place to dwell upon the historical roots of this misunderstanding, but it should be mentioned that it was largely due to the rapidly developing natural sciences that dialectics, which, according to its original claim, represented the first great attempt at generalizing *philosophically*, and overcoming the limitations of, the accepted scientific methods, became again taken for a direct rival of scientific methods. It implies that, if dialectics is interpreted to be a direct rival of existing scientific methods, then any criticism directed against it is justified. In this respect, also Popper's criticism of it in his "What is Dialectic?" holds perfectly true. Only we should not forget that he directs his attack against a pre-conceived and distorted conception of dialectics¹³. To give terminological prominence to this distinction, I shall adopt the terms "scientific" versus "philosophical" conceptions of dialectics. In terms of this distinction, it may become clear that Popper's criticism of the scientific conception of dialectics is thoroughly justified, whereas his criticism does not even touch the philosophical conception of it. It is in the latter sense that I wish to speak about the presence of dialectical elements in Popper. In other words: while he criticizes a restricted and distorted conception of dialectics, he adopts,

¹⁰ The highly vague concept of "genuine conjectures" seems destined to distinguish, in my opinion unsuccessfully, his position from the instrumentalist view of science; cf. "Three Views Concerning Human Knowledge", in: *Conjectures and Refutations*, op. cit. p. 115. See also: *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. pp. 278 ff., and *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. pp. 12. ff.

¹¹ It is to be noted that in the light of *Objective Knowledge. An Evolutionary Approach*, we may speak about an "ontological turn" in Popper's thinking. However, it should be borne in mind that even if that is the case, it is a definitely phenomenal knowledge that became ontologized.

¹² Cf. G. W. F. HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, (Kritische Ausgabe, Band II., Leipzig: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1949.) pp. 19 ff.

¹³ His definition of dialectic as a "theory which maintains that something — more especially, human thought — develops in a way characterized by what is called the dialectic triad: *thesis*, *antithesis* and *synthesis*" ("What is Dialectic?", op. cit. 313.) is extremely naive and misses the whole point. Dialectic is apparently conceived here as a kind of formal logical theory. Dialectic's original claim to be a method inseparable from its object is totally overlooked.

although, of course, not consistently and systematically (mainly in historical analyses), certain elements of the philosophical dialectics.¹⁴

This much about dialectics. The second important point to be elucidated preliminarily is *historicism*. This holds, in Popper's view, that there are "laws", "patterns", "trends" in history¹⁵ whose scientific discovery is indispensable for us if we are to act "correctly" in our historico-social world. As to method, historicists are mostly *methodological essentialists*.

They

"are inclined to formulate scientific questions in such terms as 'what is matter?' or 'what is force?' or 'what is justice?' and they believe that a penetrating answer to such questions, revealing the real or essential meaning of these terms and thereby the real or true nature of the essences denoted by them, is at least a necessary prerequisite of scientific research, if not its main task. *Methodological nominalists*, as opposed to this, would put their problems in such terms as 'how does this piece of matter behave?' or 'how does it move in the presence of other bodies?' For methodological nominalists hold that the task of science is only to describe how things behave. . . ."¹⁶

I think this passage sufficiently illustrates my point that Popper derived his *philosophical* concepts mainly with an eye to natural sciences, and also that his criticism of historicism (methodologically built upon essentialism) rests upon what I called the ultimate separation of methodology and ontology. For historicism stands here for a philosophical conception which claims to have access to an "in itself", that is, to history. In the field of the theories regarding nature such a combat seems to be needless any more: from the decline of the qualitative philosophy of nature flourishing in the Renaissance (only occasionally revived later, like e.g. in German Idealism), and especially from the Kantian Criticism down to our own days, the philosophical foundations of natural sciences have, in the main,

¹⁴ Sometimes Popper's description of dialectics, interestingly enough, comes quite close to the original conception of it as conceived by Hegel. He writes for example: "It is not scientific reasoning itself which is based on dialectic; it is only the history and development of scientific theories which can with some success be described in terms of the dialectic method." ("What is Dialectic?", op. cit. p. 328.) That scientific reasoning is not based on dialectics is an assertion that Hegel would readily have subscribed to. Only for him the term "scientific" was equivalent to "dialectic"; and what Popper calls "scientific", he would have labelled as "pre-scientific" or "aggregate of facts". The main task of such a method is primarily to reconstruct the *historical process* (not only that of scientific theories, as Popper contends) from a retrospective point of view, to make history intelligible retrospectively, as it were.

¹⁵ Cf. *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 3. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. pp. 269 ff.

¹⁶ *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 29.; see also "Three Views Concerning Human Knowledge", op. cit. pp. 103 ff. Here the criticism of essentialism rests on admittedly utilitarian grounds, whereas in *The Poverty* the only argument against essentialism and in favour of nominalism is that the latter "has been victorious in the natural sciences" (ibid.), or "is nowadays fairly generally accepted in the natural sciences" (*The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. I. p. 32.). See also *Objective Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, 1972. pp. 194 ff.

given up the assumption that nature or, more precisely, what appears in the scientific constructions as "nature" is an "in itself". The case has been different, however, regarding philosophies of history and society. A number of philosophers who have more or less subscribed to the Kantian conception of natural sciences have endeavoured to develop a "realist" or methodologically autonomous science of "culture" or of "history",¹⁷ holding that in history a kind of "in itself" becomes unfolded and revealed to us whose description requires the establishment of a science methodologically different from the natural sciences. Popper's attack against essentialism as the methodological basis of historicism is derived, in fact, from his preliminary assumption (resting, again, upon what I called separation of ontology and methodology) that in history nothing like an "in itself" operates, and accordingly, a radically new methodology, in lack of its appropriate object, is needless. This assumption is likely to have been imported from the natural sciences which, as I have indicated, have long got rid of looking upon their theoretical constructions as revealing "nature in itself". So what Popper conceives as "the unity of the methods of the natural and social sciences" turns out to be *not* a unification of their methods, procedures and interests, respectively, but mainly the expansion of the methods of natural sciences to the domain of the social sciences. In fact, Popper readily admits in parentheses: "[...] my interpretation of the methods of sciences was not influenced by any knowledge of the methods of the social sciences; for when I developed it first, I had only the natural sciences in mind, and I knew next to nothing about the social sciences."¹⁸

(In this connection it might perhaps be of use to mention what seems to be a major contradiction of Popper's philosophy from *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* down to *Objective Knowledge*. It may be formulated like this: science is a form of knowledge that gives us only a "hypothetical" knowledge of the world; but if somebody argued that there was a "higher" that is, less imperfect form of knowledge, we should unanimously dismiss his claim because we could not possibly judge it by *scientific methods*. We should not overlook the fact, however, that Popper's thought has undergone a considerable development. He has even gone so far as ontologizing as a "third world" this imperfect form of knowledge.)

Now, if we approach the social sciences with a philosophical outlook built upon the standards of the natural sciences, "we should expect methodological naturalists to favour nominalism"; but we find to our surprise that "essentialism seems to have the upper hand here"¹⁹. This holds true not only for the naturalist, but apparently for the anti-naturalist party: "in fact, nearly every historicist I know of takes this attitude"²⁰. Metho-

¹⁷ Cf. W. DILTHEY, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften* (1883);

W. WINDELBAND, *Präjudien* (1884);

H. RICKERT, *Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung* (1896–1902) etc.

¹⁸ *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. pp. 137–138.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 29.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 30.

dological essentialism shows affinity to qualitative description²¹ which, as we have seen, in the realm of the natural sciences is no more tenable.

I think it is sufficiently clear by now that a great part of Popper's criticism is based upon methodological preferences of the natural sciences. (Another part of it rests on purely moral grounds, but it is not relevant for our present analysis, and Popper himself does not mean it to be scientific.²²) It is in the light of this preference that Popper finds historicism to be a poor method. All this is to be emphasized because dialectics, in sheer opposition to Popper's "phenomenal" historical knowledge (based methodologically upon "situational logic"²³) claims to be a historical methodology capable of having access to an "in itself", that is, to history. In fact, if I said above that from a purely methodological point of view, dialectics can at best be characterized by the clumsy definition that it is a method inseparable from its object, then, this assertion may now be made more concrete by adding that this object is *history*. Dialectics is eminently historical. So much so that to speak of a "historical dialectics" would amount to a mere tautology.

I think I am now in a position to sum up what is meant by the subtitle of this paper. By the second part of the title, "Popper's Criticism of Dialectics", I mean, in the light of the preliminary remarks, not only that part of Popper's philosophy which explicitly deals with this theme, but, in a certain sense, the whole body of his system, especially his criticism of *historicism*. For the main tenets of his philosophy — science giving us "conjectural" knowledge, the dualism of facts and decisions²⁴, the irreducibility of morality to science, the impossibility to lay the foundations of a philosophy of history²⁵ —, which we may perhaps be entitled to call "Kantian", are all in direct opposition to the major presupposition of Hegelian dialectical philosophy, that is, to the doctrine of the identity of subject and object. This identity is often referred to, as also by Popper²⁶, as an identity of reason and reality. Although this is not wrong, I would prefer to speak about the identity of subject and object for two reasons: first, this characterization is more "epistemological", and is closer to dialectics' original metaphysical position; secondly, it sets the charge frequently brought against Hegel for "moral positivism" to a more "scientific-

²¹ Cf. *ibid.* p. 31.

²² As regards the relation between science and morality, Popper contends that no kind of moral decision can be "scientific"; whether we should accept a morality is itself a moral rather than a scientific question (cf. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. p. 206., p. 238; see also *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, p. 37.). His condemnation of historicism from this point of view rests on the fact that historicism, claiming to possess knowledge of the future, does not render morality possible, or more precisely, it represents an escape from taking the responsibility for one's deeds. Man, therefore, is claimed to be basically free. This view of Popper's may be called his "voluntarism" (in the sense of Duns Scotus or Kant).

²³ Cf. *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. pp. 147 ff., and *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. pp. 97 ff.

²⁴ Cf. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. I. pp. 62 ff., and vol. II. pp. 278 ff.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.* vol. II. pp. 269 ff.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.* vol. II. pp. 40 ff., and "What is Dialectic?" op. cit. p. 329.

ly" criticizable level. Speaking about this identity, we should immediately add that it is a process of identifications, and not a direct one²⁷. As a metaphysical presupposition, it is the beginning and the ending point of Hegel's system, but is in fact present all along as "Bei-sich-selbst-sein im Anders-sein"²⁸.

As to the first part of the title, I wish to speak about "dialectical elements" in Popper whenever, in his analyses, he departs from his main standpoint (which, as a summary of the above listed points, may be called a radical and ultimate dualism of subject and object, and also of methodology and ontology), and makes implicit use of the contrary presupposition²⁹.

* * *

²⁷ Cf. G. W. F. HEGEL, *Phänomenologie*, op. cit. p. 21.: "Es ist von dem Absoluten zu sagen, daß es wesentlich *Resultat*, daß es erst am *Ende* das ist, was es in Wahrheit ist; und hierin eben besteht seine Natur, Wirkliches, Subjekt, oder Sichselbstwerden zu sein."

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.* p. 20.: „Die lebendige Substanz ist ferner das Sein, welches in Wahrheit *Subjekt*, oder was dasselbe heißt, welches in Wahrheit wirklich ist, nur insofern sie die Bewegung des Sichselbstsetzens, oder die Vermittlung des Sichanderswerdens mit sich selbst ist. Sie ist als Subjekt die reine *einfache Negativität*, ebendadurch die Entzweiung des Einfachen; oder die entgegengesetzte Verdopplung, welche wieder die *Negation* dieser gleichgültigen Verschiedenheit und ihres Gegensatzes ist: nur diese sich *wiederherstellende* Gleichheit oder die Reflexion im Anderssein in sich selbst — nicht eine *ursprüngliche* Einheit als solche, oder *unmittelbare* als solche — ist das Wahre. Es ist das Werden seiner selbst, der Kreis, der sein Ende als seinen Zweck voraussetzt und zum Anfange hat und nur durch die Ausführung und sein Ende wirklich ist.“

²⁹ In the light of the sheer absurdity, often claimed by positivists and also by Popper, of such a presupposition, I would like to quote a passage which, I think, elucidates sufficiently the *problem situation* leading to Hegel's metaphysical edifice: "Common sense and traditional scientific thought take the world as a totality of things, more or less existing *per se*, and seek the truth in objects that are taken to be independent of the knowing subject. This is more than an epistemological attitude; it is as pervasive as the practice of men and leads them to accept the feeling that they are secure only in knowing and handling objective facts. The more remote an idea is from the impulses, interests, and wants of the living subject, the more true it becomes. And this, according to Hegel, is the utmost defamation of truth. For there is, in the last analysis, no truth that does not *essentially concern* the living subject and that is not the subject's truth. The world is an estranged and untrue world so long as man does not destroy its dead objectivity and recognize himself and his own life 'behind' the fixed form of things and laws. When he finally wins this *self-consciousness*, he is on his way not only to the truth of himself but also of his world."

(H. MARCUSE, *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969. pp. 112–113.) I think this summarization of the interests underlying Hegel's system makes somewhat more intelligible — but, of course, not justified, — the claim that Hegel's answer to the epistemological question: "How can our mind grasp the world?" was not utterly absurd. (The answer being: "Because the mind is the world", cf. "What is Dialectic?", op. cit. pp. 325 f.) As to the question whether it makes sense or not, I think, there are basically two answers: The world is essentially *other* than the mind (or subject), or the world is essentially mind (an intermediate position being that of Kant: the world is mind-like). For someone who presupposes that the mind is utterly different from the world, the contrary assertion does, of course, sound pure rubbish. Since here we are faced with ultimate presuppositions concerning *Weltanschauung*, there can hardly be any decision based on "rational" argument. The choice is, rather, between two kinds of faith. This much is admitted also by Popper (cp. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. pp. 230 ff.)

In spite of his opposition to dialectics, Popper occasionally admits that it may be of some use. As an "empirical descriptive theory"³⁰, he argues, the dialectical method may help us to understand, retrospectively, the history and development of scientific theories.³¹ It, of course, breaks down the very moment we want to apply it to the description of scientific reasoning, or, according to the dualism of facts and decisions, when we intend to attain knowledge regarding not past, but future events. It is mainly the latter point that motivates Popper's criticism of the historicist (that is, essentialist) method of defining social entities. This method actually holds that "the way of obtaining knowledge of social institutions such as the state is to study its history [. . .]"³². As opposed to this, Popper contends that no history of a social institution can tell us what purpose we should assign to it in the future, and I think this argument is fully justified. But dialectics, as indicated above, tries to respond to another need, that is, to the need to look upon our past history as a more or less intelligible whole. Now, since Popper himself is often engaged, in *The Open Society*, in such analyses (after all he gives us an account of the history of historicism, as it were), it is to be assumed at first sight that historicist methodology will occasionally, though unconsciously, be resorted to. His presentation of the history of historicism is combined with the analysis of the connection of historicist theories with history in a double way: first, Popper frequently shows the sort of historical and social background that inspired the historicist theory being analysed (his main thesis, in this connection, is that historicism flourishes at times of great social change³³); second, he occasionally examines the extent to which the theory affected or influenced the social setting from which it originated³⁴. This double way of analysis, though remaining a more or less *ad hoc* method, contains, however, the germs of a dialectical methodology at work. Popper, of course, never gives prominence to this problem, so, it, as it were, only "shows itself". In order to prove my thesis, I had better sum up first what I think a dialectical methodology (or epistemology) is characterized by.

Dialectics, as I sustained above, is a method inseparable from its object, that is, from history. Now, the specific demand dialectics responds to is to give what may be called a "logic" of historical development, or a *philosophical* theory of history. This claim, so far, does not represent the

³⁰ Cf. *What is Dialectic?*, op. cit. p. 322.

³¹ Ibid. p. 328.

³² *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. p. 37.

³³ *The Open Society*, op. cit. p. 16.: "Heraclitus' dynamics of nature in general and especially of social life confirms the view that his philosophy was inspired by the social and political disturbances he had experienced." "It seems as if historicist ideas easily become prominent in times of great social change" (ibid. p. 17.); "Plato [. . .] found that his contemporaries were suffering under a severe strain, and that this strain was due to the social revolution which had begun with the rise of democracy and individualism" (ibid. p. 171.); "It can hardly be doubted that Hegel's and Marx's historicist philosophies are characteristic products of their time — a time of social change" (ibid. vol. II. p. 212.).

³⁴ Most systematically this way of analysis is adopted in the chapters on Marx (ch. 13–22), especially in chapters 18, 19 and 20.

"newness" of dialectics. History may or may not be conceived as a process of development or of degradation or as a heap of random changes, etc. If we take it under closer examination, we find that in the course of history there arise a lot of different theories concerning man, the universe, etc., and what is most important for us, history itself. Now, if we realize that it is always through the prism of a specific theory that we look upon the world, that there have been in the past several other theories claiming to be "true", and that ours is only one in this series, how are we to justify our demand that our theory is *the* adequate one? The recognition of this fact may lead us to a kind of scepticism or relativism from which we may escape only with the help of explicit, but wholly unjustified, presumptions (as is the case, for example, of the sociology of knowledge³⁵). It is this problem upon which dialectics reacts with great vehemence, and attempts to solve it. A philosophy of identity, dialectics strives to attain and implement philosophical monism (as opposed to all kinds of dualism), that is, it tries to conceive history as an essentially *unified* process part of which are also the theories dealing with it. This realization leads up to the main presupposition of dialectical methodology or epistemology according to which the knower as well as the process of knowing constitute part of the object to be known. This is, so far, simple enough. The point at which enormous difficulties arise is when we try to develop this recognition into a "methodology". For we cannot apparently avoid getting involved into a series of paradoxes, caused by the logical "asymmetry" of the two processes: first, the process of history, second the historical process of the theories, philosophies, etc., itself part of the first process. The situation becomes even more complicated if we realize, intending to remain faithful to our basic presupposition, that *our* theory describing the two parallel but asymmetrical processes, least it should be self-destructive, is to be conceived as part of *both* processes, as the point in which the two processes culminate. Of course, this latter consideration may be neglected, but it would then make the whole "theory" or methodology unfounded and logically untenable. For, if we consider our theory to belong only to the second process, that is, to that of the historical series of philosophies, then we are bound to finish up in relativism. If, on the other hand, we maintain that our theory, in opposition and sheer contrast to the preceding ones — of which it, accordingly, does not partake —, describes *the* adequate picture of the world, then this would amount to a most dogmatic assertion, and would be wholly unfounded, for, if we declare that our theory (claimed to be "true") represents a radical split from the preceding ones (considered to be "inadequate"), by what criteria should we judge such a claim? Evidently not by those of the preceding, or the other contemporary, theories because they are preliminarily assumed to be false. But, then, there are no criteria to judge it, and the theory is to end up in dogmatism. There is, of course, a third possibility: not to raise the issue of the status of our

³⁵ Cf. Popper's criticism of the sociology of knowledge: *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. pp. 212–223.

theory, but this, apart from the fact that thus the theory would lose its claim to be *philosophical*³⁶, would be much the same as the latter dogmatic position.

Thus, if the theory that sets out to describe the course of history together with the development of theories regarding history (and part of history, at the same time), is to be "objective", it should somehow derive itself from the "Aufhebung" of the preceding theories.

These are still very formal or purely methodological considerations. Let me now try to exemplify what a theory basing itself on such assumptions looks like. A very rough and to a great extent simplified example may be the following sketch of Hegel's philosophy³⁷: on the one hand, there is a "substance" or a "substratum" (which may, if you like, be called the "world"). It undergoes development from a relatively simple structure to a highly complex one. This is an "objective" process. On the other hand, there is the reflection or the consciousness of the developing substance, which is a "subjective" process, but pertains essentially to, and is wholly determined by, the development of the substance. The subjective process is posterior to the objective one, and is, as it were, lagging behind it. This means that the substance, at any stage of its development which it undergoes, is already more complex than its reflection or consciousness represents it(-self) to be. In other words: at the moment of man's appearance in the world, the world has already arrived at a relatively complex degree of development. That the world is a developing whole means that ever more complex structures emerge in it. Now, man's specific character consists in his capacity to reflect the world, that is, man's distinctive feature is

³⁶ It is my contention that what makes a theory *philosophical* is essentially its attempt at self-reflection. Popper treats this problem as somewhat irrelevant (cf. "The Nature of Philosophical Problems and their Roots in Science", in op. cit. pp. 66 – 69., see also footnotes 5 and 6) which is not at all surprising in view of what has been said above about his radical separation of methodology and ontology. It is characteristic enough, however, that he *does* consider the same problem to be of primary importance as regards science. Actually, it is from this problem that his philosophy originated ("Is there a criterion for the scientific character or status of a theory?" "Science: Conjectures and Refutations", in: *Conjectures and Refutations*, p. 33., see also: *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. pp. 34. ff., and *Unended Quest*, London: Fontana/Collins, 1976. pp. 13 ff.).

I think Popper is right in so far as combatting certain fashionable trends of contemporary philosophy, he insists that we should *do* the philosophizing rather than *speak* about what philosophy is. Nevertheless, I think that the question: "What is the character of philosophical problems?" is a sensible and highly relevant one, and may be answered by showing the self-reflective attitude of the different philosophies. This attitude, also, explains the fact why most philosophies end up in paradoxes. I cannot dwell upon this problem here but as a summary, I would say that self-reflection means, from an intrinsic point of view, a philosophy's trying to problematize its own presuppositions, an attitude definitely missing in science. Externally, that is, in its relation to science philosophy can be characterized by saying that it investigates the conditions of the possibility of (scientific) knowledge. This makes it a kind of meta-theory. In this respect, philosophy tends to be "transcendental"; the Kantian mode of asking questions about the possibility of something that already exists is, in this respect, a typically philosophical one.

³⁷ In the following description I have made use of Lukács's exegesis of Hegel; cf. G. LUKÁCS, *Der junge Hegel*, G. Lukács, *Werke*, Band 8, Luchterhand, 1948, especially the chapter: "Skizze des Aufbaus der 'Phänomenologie des Geistes'", pp. 572 – 655.

his consciousness. But, at the beginning of man's history, man's reflection of the world is very simple and primitive, which, of course, does not alter the fact that the world, and in it, man, is already highly complex. The future line of development is this: man's consciousness of the world undergoes development, but the object of this consciousness, the world, far from remaining the same, also develops. At the end of this double process, man's consciousness catches up with the objective development of the world, and arrives at a truly "scientific" or "objective" view of the world. This means, on the other hand, that also the world has attained self-consciousness in and through man. In Hegelian terms: the subject has become substance, and the substance subject. History is over. The form of knowledge in which the historical development of man's forms of consciousness culminates is what Hegel calls "absolute knowledge" or "science". This eliminates and solves all the limitations, consisting in the contradictory character of subject and object, of the previous forms of knowledge³⁸. The whole process is

³⁸ The metaphysical foundations (concerning the identification of subject and object) of what Hegel calls *science* are clearly formulated in the following passage: „Das *reine Selbsterkennen* im absoluten Anderssein, dieser Äther *als solcher*, ist der Grund und Boden der Wissenschaft oder das *Wissen im allgemeinen*. Der Anfang der Philosophie macht die Voraussetzung oder Forderung, daß das Bewußtsein sich in diesem Elemente befinde. Aber dieses Element erhält seine Vollendung und Durchsichtigkeit selbst nur durch die Bewegung seines Werdens." (*Phänomenologie*, op. cit. p. 24.)

It is also clear that in order that science (as a form of knowledge, that is, the highest grade of the development of human consciousness) may be possible, the world (the objective historical process) must also have developed to its highest point. If we bear in mind Marcuse's account (footnote 29.), then this, in Marxian terms, means that science is not independent from its substratum, society; and that Hegel's view of science may rightly be called "revolutionary". This concept of science radically differs from a positivistic one. The latter, neglecting historical considerations, holds that science, essentially, is always or at any time possible. That a positivistic concept of science *did* have metaphysical foundations, (duality of subject and object, etc.), although it rejected metaphysics, was clearly seen and demonstrated by Hegel:

„Die *konsequente* Durchführung des Empirismus, insofern er dem Inhalte nach sich auf Endliches beschränkt, leugnet aber das Übersinnliche überhaupt oder wenigstens die Erkenntnis und Bestimmtheit desselben und läßt dem Denken nur die Abstraktion und formelle Allgemeinheit und Identität zu. — Die Grundtäuschung im wissenschaftlichen Empirismus ist immer diese, daß er die metaphysischen Kategorien von Materie, Kraft, ohnehin von Einem, Vielem, Allgemeinheit, auch Unendlichem, usf. gebraucht, ferner am Faden solcher Kategorien weiter *fortschleift*, dabei die Formen des Schließens voraussetzt und anwendet und bei allem nicht weiß, daß er so selbst Metaphysik enthält und treibt und jene Kategorien und deren Verbindungen auf eine völlig unkritische und bewußtlose Weise gebraucht.“

(G. W. F. HEGEL: *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Erster Teil, Die Wissenschaft der Logik, § 38., in: Hegel, *Werke*, Theorie Werkausgabe, Suhrkamp Vlg., Band 8, 1970. pp. 108 – 109.)

Another characteristic passage about the relation of science and metaphysics, and of metaphysics and man is this:

„Wenn noch heutzutage die Atomistik bei solchen Naturforschern, die von Metaphysik nichts wissen wollen, in großer Gunst steht, so ist hier daran zu erinnern, daß man der Metaphysik und näher der Zurückführung der Natur auf Gedanken dadurch nicht entgeht, daß man sich der Atomistik in die Arme wirft, da das Atom in der Tat selbst ein Gedanke und somit die Auffassung der Materie als aus Atomen bestehend eine metaphysische Auffassung ist. Newton hat zwar die Physik ausdrücklich gewarnt, sich vor der Metaphysik

described in two steps. First, Hegel gives us the "subjective" process, that is, the development of man's forms of consciousness in history up to "science" (*The Phenomenology of Mind*); secondly, the "objective" process of the development of the "world" is reconstructed from the point of view of "science", reached at the culmination of the first process (*Encyclopaedia*).

As will have been seen from this short sketch, the major methodological difficulties arising from the demand of constructing a theory embracing the process of history in close connection with the development of human knowledge (in which both processes are distinct but correlated at one and the same time) in such a way that the theory should account also for the "false opinions"³⁹, but in sublating or preserving their principles, should derive itself from them, and, should, accordingly, justify its claim to "objectivity", are quite about overcome. But the price "paid" for it is the evidently shocking recognition that all this is possible only on the assumption that history is over, all kinds of development are closed. If we try to get rid of this obviously strange assumption, but still intend to stick to the basic presupposition of dialectical methodology that the knower and the process of knowing are part of the object to be known, we soon get involved into technical difficulties. Modifying the Hegelian conceptual framework but retaining its basic principles means that the knowledge of history we thus obtain is no more "absolute", but gets degraded to a phenomenal level. If history is not yet "ready", if it is to be completed only in the future, then there is nothing to guarantee that in the light of new developments and newly emerging future theories, the present one will go on holding true. And a theory which is only "temporarily" true can hardly be ranked as scientific. To put it in Hegelian terms: if to every stage of development of the substance pertains an appropriate level of self-consciousness, then historical prophecy is altogether impossible⁴⁰. (In this issue, Hegel is in full ac-

zu hüten; zu seiner Ehre muß indes bemerkt werden, daß er selbst sich dieser Warnung keineswegs gemäß verhalten hat. Reine, pure Physiker sind in der Tat nur die Tiere, da diese nicht denken, wohingegen der Mensch, als ein denkendes Wesen, ein geborener Metaphysiker ist. Dabei kommt es dann nur darauf an, ob die Metaphysik, welche man zur Anwendung bringt, von der rechten Art ist, und namentlich, ob es nicht, anstatt der konkreten, logischen Idee, einseitige, vom Verstand fixierte Gedankenbestimmungen sind, an welche man sich hält und welche die Grundlage unseres theoretischen sowohl als unseres praktischen Tuns bilden." (ibid. § 98. p. 207.)

³⁹ It is a characteristic feature of philosophical thought (in contradistinction to science) that in trying to problematize its main presuppositions and found them, it considers also its primary task to be able to account for "doxa". Thus, on its way to describe the world, it continuously attempts to justify itself, and vice versa, to explain the possibility of "error". Plato, e.g. constructs his metaphysical speculations in "The Sophist", one of his greatest dialogues, starting from a very common-sense problem which may be put like this: "How are sophists possible?" See also part IV of Descartes's *Meditationes*: "How is error possible?"

⁴⁰ This is what Hegel's well-known phrases indicate in popular form stating that philosophy cannot overstep its age:

"Um noch über das *Belehren*, wie die Welt sein soll, ein Wort zu sagen, so kommt dazu ohnehin die Philosophie immer zu spät. Als der *Gedanke* der Welt erscheint sie erst in der Zeit, nachdem die Wirklichkeit ihren Bildungsprozeß vollendet und sich fertig gemacht

cord with Popper, although, as can be seen, for radically different reasons.) It is also impossible because the development of the substance and its self-consciousness is a singular and necessary process in which also science appears only when its time has come⁴¹. In the framework of the Hegelian philosophy, in which every moment is necessary⁴², such a correction is hardly conceivable without the demolition of the whole system.

I think it would presently be superfluous to dwell further upon the problems arisen by the Hegelian issue of the end of history. (I shall return to it later on.) Be it as it may, it remains a fact that Hegel's dialectics was the first attempt at conceiving, in terms of a metaphysics of Spirit developing through a process of self-differentiations and self-identifications, a unified picture of history in which the historical movement was systematically connected with the development of human consciousness. This dialectics made it possible for him to grasp, in the temporal sequence of philosophical, artistic, etc. works, the underlying objective historical tendency. Thus, history was conceived by him as working itself through the succession of people's lives, their artistic, religious, philosophical works⁴³, and not as a kind of "occult" process going on under the surface. (To conceive it in the latter way would, again, lead to the problem of foundation discussed above.) Another advantage of such a conception of history is that it is framed

hat." (G. W. F. HEGEL, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Theorie Werkausgabe, Band 7, Suhrkamp Vlg., pp. 27 – 28.)

„Die Philosophie fängt an mit dem Untergange einer realen Welt; wenn sie auftritt mit ihren Abstraktionen, grau in grau malend, so ist die Frische der Jugend, der Lebendigkeit schon fort, und es ist ihre Versöhnung eine Versöhnung nicht in der Wirklichkeit, sondern in der ideellen Welt.“

(G. W. F. HEGEL, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I*, Theorie Werkausgabe, Band 18, Suhrkamp Vlg., pp. 71 – 72.)

⁴¹ „Was aber das *Dasein* dieses Begriffs betrifft, so erscheint in der Zeit und Wirklichkeit die *Wissenschaft* nicht eher, als bis der Geist zu diesem Bewußtsein über sich gekommen ist. Als der Geist, der weiß, was er ist, existiert er früher nicht, und sonst nirgends als nach Vollendung der Arbeit, seine unvollkommene Gestaltung zu bezwingen, sich für sein Bewußtsein die Gestalt seines Wesens zu verschaffen, und auf diese Weise sein *Selbstbewußtsein* (*Phänomenologie*, op. cit. p. 557.)

„Wir müssen überzeugt sein, daß das Wahre die Natur hat, durchzudringen, wenn seine Zeit gekommen, und daß es nur erscheint, wenn diese gekommen, und deswegen nie zu früh erscheint, noch ein unreifes Publikum findet [...]“ (ibid. p. 58.)

⁴² Cf. ibid. p. 27.

⁴³ Hegel's account of Socrates (cf. *Werke*, Theorie Ausgabe, Band 18, op. cit., especially the part entitled „Schicksal des Sokrates“, pp. 496 – 516.) provides, in my opinion, one of the best examples of how to grasp, through the lot and teachings of a historical personality, the underlying historical tendency of an age. I would like to stress that the great advantage of this method consists in the fact that, on the one hand, a man's life is shown completely permeated by objective historical "forces"; on the other, history appears as wholly human, as something that far from working in the back of, or behind, people's lives as a dark substratum, completely "soaks" itself into people's lives. Thus: man is thoroughly historical and history is thoroughly human. If we do away with this reciprocal permeation, then, we shall have something not wholly accounted for at both ends: history appearing as not completely explicable in terms of human lives, and vice versa, a (great) part of people's lives left unaccounted for, or explained only with the help of some kind of "psychology" conceived, by necessity, as ahistorical.

with an eye to the historical "facts" handed down to us by the ages, which it claims to fit into an intelligible whole. So, if we happen to ask for example "How can you prove that this or that objective historical 'force' really existed at the time you indicated?", we can get an answer like this: "It became manifest in scientific, philosophical theories, in works of art, in the lives of certain personalities, in such and such a way". Of course, this "verification procedure" hardly meets Popper's demands, but it can at least offer some empirical evidence, whereas the contrary view (which separates the "objective" historical process from people's lives), apart from the technical difficulty of its foundation, cannot possibly be supported even by such evidence. If history works itself in and through people's lives, we can at least grasp its working through human manifestations. If not, then, the theory amounts to an "a priori" construction.

History working through human manifestations — this point is to be emphasized because what Popper gives us in the chapters of *The Open Society* on Marx, turns out, at a closer survey, to be a piece of XXth century history presented in the form of apparently immanent analyses of Marx's thought: a piece of history viewed through the lot of a theory. Of course, this is not what Popper intends to do, but in so far as his examination of Marx proceeds in accordance with the method of showing the historical origin as well as the historical "feedback" of the theory, his investigations somehow cannot help depicting a slice of the historical panorama of the past hundred years — and a very important one at that — leading from the formation of the theory and the socialist movement up to the two world wars. I may be justified to adopt this point of view all the more because Popper's motives in attacking historicism go back to his contention that historicism leads, *historically*, to definitely negative consequences⁴⁴.

Popper shows us the process in which a theory of history emerges from, and joins in, history. The situation is eminently paradoxical, for, in order that the theory may meet its claim to objective and absolute historical knowledge, it ought to contain knowledge of the future in such a manner that itself, and the movement it gives rise to, should be incorporated in the events of the future, as a newly born historical force among the many other already existing forces. I think this is the root of the difficulties, theoretical and practical alike, that have accompanied the history of the socialist movement in our century, and that are seized upon occasionally by Popper, without, however, a theoretical systematization. The alleged impossibility on the part of a theory to fulfill such a demand is the main argument upon which Popper's refutation of historicism is based. This point is of ut-

⁴⁴ I think it highly probable that the original motive of both *The Poverty of Historicism* and *The Open Society* is this moral repugnance against the representatives of historicism; the examination of the consistency of the theories they claimed to base their actions upon may be considered as a secondary step. (Cf. *Unended Quest*, op. cit. p. 34.: "It was a terrible thing to arrogate to oneself a kind of knowledge which made it a duty to risk the lives of people [...]"; "Once I looked at it critically, the gaps and loopholes and inconsistencies in the Marxian theory became obvious.")

most importance for our present examination, so I shall follow his argument in details. The refutation goes like this⁴⁵:

- "(1) The course of human history is strongly influenced by the growth of human knowledge. [...]
- (2) We cannot predict, by rational or scientific methods, the future growth of our scientific knowledge. [...]
- (3) We cannot, therefore, predict the future course of human history."

We can dispense with points (4) and (5) now, but some of Popper's further remarks are decisive. He claims that the decisive step of the argument is (2):

"if there is such a thing as growing human knowledge, then we cannot anticipate to-day what we shall know only tomorrow"; for "no scientific predictor — whether a human scientist or a calculating machine — can possibly predict, by scientific methods, its own future results."⁴⁶

In view of my above remarks concerning the problem situation of dialectical methodology, I think, it is clear that Popper's argument amounts to a kind of dialectical refutation of (dialectical) historicism, arrived at in the course of the self-reflection or self-reference of the theory. Moreover, it might be said that the difficulty indicated in point (2), the decisive step of the argument, far from being unknown to dialectics, was, in fact, the challenging problem dialectics responded to, and that led to its specific constitution *qua* dialectics. In summing up the Hegelian metaphysics, I have, actually, touched upon this problem, which now, in Popper's argument, appears in a somewhat formalized form. Popper's refutation of historicism, thus, neglects the fact that a specific kind of historicism — dialectics — was quite aware of the difficulty rendering, according to Popper, all kinds of historicism impossible, and that it, in the last analysis, constituted itself *qua* historicism upon an attempt to counter this difficulty. Whether this attempt was successful or not is, of course, quite a different question; and we may raise doubts about it. At any rate, it would require close examination. This, apparently, is nowhere provided by Popper.

The registration of the same problem however, as will have been seen, is the only point where Popper and dialectics are in accord. Popper infers from this difficulty that historicism, or which amounts to the same, absolute historical knowledge is altogether impossible (although, as I have indicated in footnote (44), this inference is, on account of purely moral considerations, somehow prior to the examination itself); whereas dialectics, in an attempt to counter it, persists in its claim to obtain objective historical knowledge. (I think this fact sufficiently illustrates that purely "logical" considerations can hardly account for the contrary ideological positions of different thinkers.)

⁴⁵ *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. ix-xi.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

I shall return to the point whether and to what extent dialectics' attempt can be regarded as successful. I would note for the time being that its solution of the problem gave definitely rise to a series of new ones of which I have already alluded to one of major importance concerning the end of history.

But what is the extent to which Popper's argument can be characterized as dialectical? I have already indicated that the recognition of the above difficulty may lead us towards three directions: relativism, dogmatism and dialectics. Popper's attitude in this respect is, I think, a kind of relativism which, to paraphrase his characterization of Hegel as reinforced dogmatism⁴⁷, may be called "reinforced relativism". For what distinguishes his position from a "naïve" relativism is the fact that he strikes upon the problem in explicit terms, and then dismisses the possibility of its solution once for all. (Considering, however, the fact that he admits that historicism responds to a real human need⁴⁸, and that he himself, in viewing history as the eternal battlefield between the representatives of the open and closed societies, is engaged in a kind of historicism, this answer is hardly satisfactory.) This position, furthermore, can be found in Hegel's system who considers it as the first dialectical step which, rejecting the common-sense views, leads up to his dialectical knowledge, but, being one-sidedly negative, is lower than that.⁴⁹

But what are the "negative" consequences? And is it only the alleged inconsistency of the theory that brings them about, or are they doomed to come about in any case in so far as the theory, as Popper contends, is a "historicist" one? And furthermore, if the latter is the case, is the problem lying hidden at the root of a theory's clash with reality of a purely empirical character, or is it perhaps of a kind that may be called *philosophical*, and can, therefore, be treated as such? I think my analysis of Popper's dialectical refutation of historicism already indicates the presence of a philosophical problem. (The theoretical dilemma of the interaction of theory and praxis is considered by Hegel to be solvable through a process of identifications, whereas for Popper, who denies the possibility of any kinds of "historical logic", this consideration serves for the basis of a historical scepticism.) The elucidation of this problem requires a gradual unfolding of several points.

* * *

A considerable part of Popper's analysis of Marx which treats what I called the historical "feedback" of the theory, that is, the effects of the theory upon recent European history, is dedicated to the examination

⁴⁷ Cf. "What is Dialectic?", in op. cit. p. 327.

⁴⁸ Cf. *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 148.

⁴⁹ Cf. G. W. F. HEGEL, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*. Erster Teil. Die Wissenschaft der Logik, § 81.; see also G. LUKÁCS, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, in: Werke, Band 2, Luchterhand, Neuwied und Berlin, 1968., pp. 373 f.

of the ambiguity of violence and the ambiguity of power-conquest.⁵⁰ In this section of his criticism of Marxists, Popper speaks of "the systematic ambiguity of their attitude", which, considering the historical background of the age, led to the admittedly unintended, and definitely negative consequences of, first, failing to carry out the socialist revolution at a time when there was an opportunity to do so (end of World War I)⁵¹, and second, of not offering serious resistance to the fascist power-conquest⁵². The ambiguous practical attitude amounted in both cases, in Popper's formulation, to a policy of waiting and doing nothing, thus missing the opportunity at hand in the first case, and contributing, in the second, to the producing of "that anti-democratic reaction of the bourgeoisie"⁵³ which the theory, in fact, predicted, but claimed (with ambiguity) to abhor.

Before proceeding to analyse this issue, I wish to remark that Popper, in viewing history as working itself through human manifestations (as I called it above), or as being moulded by conscious or at least intelligible human actions, does, in spite of all assertions to the contrary, adopt the methodology of that dialectical historicism which he most definitely rejects, and which I have above characterized. (This is what I meant by saying on page 258 that the germs of a dialectical methodology are at work, or "show themselves" in Popper.) The admission of self-verifying or self-falsifying predictions⁵⁴ proves to be highly similar to the Hegelian conception according to which what we find in history is our own, but unconscious or often unintended creation⁵⁵. These are, of course, yet very formal, or "extrinsic" considerations, but indispensable to prove my preliminary thesis and to fix the methodological framework of Popper's analysis.

Returning to the examination of the above points, they might partly be explained, in Popper's terms, by what he calls the doctrine of the impotence of politics. According to Popper, this doctrine, seemingly paradoxically, but, in fact, logically, follows from a determinist view of history⁵⁶; for

"the allegedly scientific prophecy provides, for a great number of people, a form of escape [...] from our present responsibilities into a future paradise; and it provides the fitting complement of this paradise by overstressing the helplessness of the individual in face of what it describes as the overwhelming and demoniacal forces of the present moment."⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Cf. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II., ch. 19. IV – VI, pp. 157 – 165, also II – III, pp. 149 – 156, and as an introduction to it, the ending part of ch. 18, pp. 143 – 145.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 143 – 145.

⁵² Ibid. pp. 162 – 165.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 160.

⁵⁴ Cf. *The Poverty of Historicism*, op. cit. p. 14, ff.

⁵⁵ „Das Bewußtsein ist sich daher durch seine Erfahrung, worin ihm seine Wahrheit werden sollte, vielmehr ein Rätsel geworden, die Folgen seiner Taten sind ihm nicht seine Taten selbst; was ihm widerfährt, [ist] für es nicht die Erfahrung dessen, was es an sich ist[...]" (*Phänomenologie*, op. cit. 265 f.)

⁵⁶ Cf. *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. ch. 17, pp. 118 – 134.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 139.

It should immediately be noted that the recognition that a theory (philosophical or religious) may represent a form of escape from reality within reality, far from being unknown to Marx, was actually the basic point of his criticism of Hegel and the "German Ideology"⁵⁸. This, again, does not settle the problem, but it clearly illustrates my thesis that a good number of the charges Popper brings against historicists are such as have not escaped their attention either. Thus, however, the situation becomes even more complicated, but in any case, it should be pointed out that the difficulty arising from the expected fulfillment or "verification" of a "historicist" theory in terms of waiting and doing nothing, does not necessarily lead to anti-Marxist consequences. One can admit the difficulty, try to counter it, and still remain a Marxist, as was the case of prominent XXth century thinkers (Lukács, Korsch, Horkheimer, Marcuse, etc.) who complemented their practical opposition of this policy with the theoretical rejection of the interpretation of Marxism as a kind of "positive science" or "traditional theory" (Horkheimer).

This point requires further elucidation. For, apparently, what else can the "objective truth" of a theory (even of a historicist one) mean that the events predicted by it *will* actually take place, and that those interested in the verification of falsification of the theory will *not* interfere either in favour of, or against bringing about the events predicted in order to find out the "objective" truth or falsity of the theory? (If they do interfere, it might be claimed, then whether the events predicted occur or not, we can hardly consider it either as a verification or as a falsification of the theory.) In the light of XXth century theory of science, and due especially to Popper's investigations which proved that the case is far from being as simple as stated above even in the field of the natural sciences (where the falsification of a theory cannot wholly dispense with an irrational or an

⁵⁸ Cf. K. MARX, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844*, in: Marx-Engels, Werke, Ergänzungsband, Dietz Vlg., Berlin, 1968. (especially the chapter „Kritik der Hegelschen Dialektik und Philosophie überhaupt" pp. 568–588.); further:

„Diese Forderung, das Bewußtsein zu verändern, läuft auf die Forderung hinaus, das Bestehende anders zu interpretieren, d.h. es vermittelt einer anderen Interpretation anzuerkennen" (*Die Deutsche Ideologie*, Werke 3, Dietz Vlg., Berlin, p. 20.).

„Die absolute Kritik jedoch hat von der Hegelschen Phänomenologie wenigstens die Kunst erlernt, reale, objektive, außer mir existierende Ketten in bloß ideelle, bloß subjektive, bloß in mir existierende Ketten und daher alle äußerlichen, sinnlichen Kämpfe in reine Gedankenkämpfe zu verwandeln" (K. MARX–F. ENGELS, *Die heilige Familie*, in: Werke, 2, Dietz Vlg., Berlin, p. 87.).

„In Hegels ‚Phänomenologie' werden die materiellen, sinnlichen, gegenständlichen Grundlagen der verschiedenen entfremdeten Gestalten des menschlichen Selbstbewußtseins stehengelassen, und das ganze destruktive Werk hatte die konservativste Philosophie zum Resultat, weil es die gegenständliche Welt, die sinnlich wirkliche Welt überwunden zu haben meint, sobald es sie in ein ‚Gedankending', in eine bloße Bestimmtheit des Selbstbewußtseins verwandelt hat und, den ätherisch gewordenen Gegner nun auch im ‚Äther des Gedankens' auflösen kann" (ibid. p. 203.).

"interfering" step, that is, the selection of the "basic statements"⁵⁹, the above question may seem extremely naive. But in the second half of the last century, when in the field of both natural and social sciences "inductionist" views were at their highest, and "verificationist" theories flourished, far from being counted as naive, it was actually an accepted dogma. Thus, if Marxism was to be taken for a scientific theory, so its representatives argued, its truth was to be brought to light by future events without our direct intervention. Moreover, all kinds of interventions were to be avoided if the theory's claim to *scientific* character was to be maintained. So, in a certain sense, the policy of waiting and doing nothing was a "logical" consequence of the theory's observing the prescriptions of what "objectivity" and "truth" meant in the "theory of science" of the day.

I think then that to speak of "tactical absurdity"⁶⁰ in connection with such a policy is hardly satisfactory, for it performs the analysis of the connection of theory and praxis only on an *empirical* level which may be summarized like this: (1) Marx's views about the coming of socialism were inconsistent; (2) historical events disproved his prophecies concerning the development of capitalism towards a revolutionary situation; (3) the representatives of the theory were compelled, *therefore*, to resort to politically "ambiguous" or "absurd" measures. It misses the point precisely to the extent to which it falls back upon the methodological standpoint of "verificationism", according to which, *first*, there is the theory "in itself" (consistent or not), *second*, the theory becomes confronted with "reality" (and "theory" and "reality" are two separate entities and we have a possibility to compare them from "above"), and *third*, there are the contradictory practical steps following from, and proving, the falsity of the theory. Thus, the dialectical character of Popper's analysis, indicated above, is after all suppressed and reduced within the framework of an empirical examination.

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If, in order to make them somewhat more coherent, we try to formulate Popper's considerations upon the connection of theory and praxis in terms of a dialectical methodology, we may put the problem like this: Popper depicts fairly convincingly, although on a purely empirical level, the process in which a form of knowledge or consciousness (that is, a theory) turns into a form of being (a part of history) and, incapable of catching up with this fact, becomes immediately inadequate. Its becoming "untrue"

⁵⁹ The fact that "considered from a logical point of view, the situation is never such that it compels us to stop at this particular basic statement rather than at that" (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, op. cit. p. 104.) brings to light the same difficulty as was inherent in the inductionist theory. In the latter, from a purely logical point of view, the difficulty was that after the examination of a finite set of events we must sooner or later decide to stop and go on to a generalization. But why stop at this event rather than at that? This fact shows that the difficulties of an inductionist and verificationist theory do survive in a deductionist and falsificationist theory.

⁶⁰ *The Open Society*, op. cit. vol. II. p. 159.

is due to the fact that the very moment when it becomes a form of being, its previous picturing the world, precisely in so far as it was a "total" picturing embracing all the (historical) world, becomes out of date, for it does not take notice of the fact that itself has ceased to be *solely a form of knowledge*, but has also become a *form of being*. As a form of being, it will further contribute to the shaping of the historical world, but this remains concealed before itself.

Let us consider a very formal and much simplified example which may perhaps illustrate the difficulty in a more concrete form. Suppose there is a philosopher (or anybody else) who sets out to describe the world. In doing so, he takes an inventory, as it were, of the objects he finds, then describes the properties and relations of the objects, etc., and finally he presents his investigations in a book. In order to test his observations, we examine whether he has really succeeded in giving us a full picture of the world, whether he has described *all* the objects that exist, with *all* their properties, relations, etc. Let us suppose for easiness' sake that there exist firm criteria to carry out this critical examination, and that at last we find that his description of the world is really complete and adequate. But then, someone of us may put forward the following objection: "If I compare the world with your description of it, I find tables, people, houses, etc. in both of them, and so far your picture is quite correct. But I behold at least one thing which you do not speak of, and which is most definitely part of our world. It is your book. So, your claim to have represented the *whole* world is not fulfilled. Something is left out. There is a part of the world, an object whose place is *empty* in your system." (This example can be considered as a common sense argument supporting the main pre-supposition of dialectical epistemology according to which the knower and the process of knowing are part of the object to be known. Also, it is an argument in favour of the thesis that the world, that is, the object of knowing, is not static.) This objection cannot be countered by writing a second book in which the first book occurs, because thus we would be involved in an infinite regress.

Does this difficulty mean that, from a purely methodological point of view, no total picture of the world is possible? Hegel, who was conscious of this difficulty, tried to counter it by conceiving a system of which paradoxically, the system itself was part. Again, I wish to postpone the further examination of this problem, and concentrate upon the implications of the above difficulty. The book's "absence" in the otherwise total picture of the world means that the place of the knower (and also his many-sided relations with other objects) is left empty, or his place, as it were, only "shows itself", but is not "said"⁶¹. The theory, at the moment of coming into being, may be quite adequate since in it, by way of a "contraction", the whole world becomes reflected, and the theory itself, at that moment, exists only *qua* theory. At a second moment, however, when the theory becomes "Being", or part of the world, "Being" or the world has grown to be *more* than that

represented by the theory. (It can be seen now that the Hegelian inadequacy between the world's objective development and man's consciousness lagging behind it is not a mere metaphysical fiction.) From a purely logical point of view, there are two possibilities now: first, realizing the difficulty, we may reformulate our theory (but far from a gradual adjustment by way of mere additions, it implies a radical transformation); or, secondly, we may go on sticking to it, and the more we do so, the more inadequate the theory may become. In the first case, the series of theories obtained by the constant reformulations will hardly constitute an intelligible whole (since we excluded the possibility of gradual adjustments); in the second, the theory is and remains an intelligible whole (here, partial adjustments may be admitted). Its confrontation with the reality, however, once the theory has become firmly established, may be carried out only in terms of the awaited verification or falsification of it. The fact that in the theory's picture of the world, the place of itself as well as its further possible interferences with the formation of the historical events are lacking, accounts for the otherwise hardly understandable (or understandable only in such terms as "tactical absurdity" or "practical ambiguities") consequence that any further happening, in the eyes of the representatives of the theory, will appear as a thoroughly "objective" development, whose coming about they have not more than passively assisted, but not in the least influenced.

My analysis may be considered to amount to something as a dialectical formulation of the problem concerning the relation between theory and praxis. In his description of the historical origin and "feedback" of the Marxian theory, Popper undoubtedly provides the elements of such a dialectical approach, but in the connection of the two, he rejects, by virtue of his anti-historicist attitude, to see a problem worthy of, or capable of being treated theoretically.

Let us try to single out another consequence following from the above difficulty. The thesis that for consciousness, once it looks upon the world through the prism of previously established views, opinions, or theories (since the fact that it always does so is undeniable), the world will by and large appear as the place of completely objective goings-on which may corroborate or frustrate its expectations, but are, on the whole, independent of its working (whereas, in fact, it does contribute to their coming about), implies furthermore that for consciousness, its own imprinting upon the world, *at the moment of its activity*, remains hidden, and becomes known only *post festum*. This amounts so far to what may be called a classical Kantian or Hegelian position. But both these thinkers did make an attempt at such a *post festum* reconstruction of consciousness' working; Kant from a transcendental, Hegel from an historical point of view. If we, however, dispense with the *post festum* point of view, and endeavour to get hold of consciousness "at work", then we find, in view of what has been said, that consciousness conceives itself at the moment of activity, as a purely passive reflection of objects or events, in other words: as nothingness. (This explains why external events appear to it as going on thoroughly independent of its activity.) The theory of consciousness as nothingness has been

⁶¹ Cf. L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, 4.1212

developed most explicitly, and has been struck upon with greatest vehemence in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, a philosophy seemingly very far from the ones discussed so far. Sartre writes:

"The being of consciousness qua consciousness is to exist *at a distance from itself* as a presence to itself, and this empty distance which being carries in its being is Nothingness"⁶²

With Sartre means by emphasizing the nothingness of consciousness is that consciousness is a formal power working under the necessity of obtaining its matter from "facticity"—a view very much Kantian. This point is of interest for us because it complements as well as supports, from the point of view of Husserlian phenomenology, the most efficacious method so far of analysing consciousness "from inside", the results we have arrived at in the course of a *historical* analysis (that is, an analysis performed "from above") discussing the relation of theory and praxis.

To sum up. Popper's exposition of Marx's thought, by virtue of his method of combining the analysis of the Marxian theory with the description of its effects upon historical events, somehow cannot help providing an historical panorama. (Although that is not his intention.) This historical panorama is presented, dialectically, as being moulded and shaped, not by some "occult" or "transcendent" forces of which human thought and actions would be only "second-rate" reflections (this would amount to a non-dialectical or a "mechanical" view of history), but by the interaction of conscious and intentional human plans and actions. The view of history we thus obtain conceives history as a process in which even the unintended consequences may be accounted for in terms of consciously planned human actions. His criticism of Marx, however, is one-sided in so far as he overlooks the fact that certain theoretical difficulties, which he singles out and adopts as conclusive arguments against Marxism, were clearly seen by Marxist thinkers. Also, in lack of an adequate understanding of dialectical methodology, his linking the history of a theory with practice (though, I wish to stress again, he proceeds in full accord with the presupposition of Hegelian dialectics according to which history works itself through human manifestations), remains mostly on an empirical level, and thus, he does not give theoretical treatment to several problems of great importance. In my above analyses, I wished to show that, on the one hand, Popper's considerations do contain the possibility of a dialectical interpretation; on the other, I attempted to formulate in explicit terms the theoretical problem that Popper's descriptions only hinted at. The dialectical elements showed thus far in Popper are of two different sorts: first, a mostly instinctive dialectics is at work in Popper's historical analyses (in conspicuous contrast to his declared conception of history); second, some of the problems brought to light in these analyses are such as play an important part in dialectics, so they call for a dialectical discussion.

⁶² J. - P. SARTRE, *Being and Nothingness*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1956, p. 78.